

Structure of Modern English: Sounds and Words

ENGL 330 98A

Instructor:
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Course Description

This course explores and examines contemporary English phonology, morphology and lexical semantics. It begins with the study of speech sounds in English. We apply methods for phonetic transcription and study distinct sounds and possible sound combinations in English (phonology). We study the processes of word formation and word classification in English (morphology). We also study word meaning (lexical semantics) using a variety of approaches.

Course Focus:

This is a fact-based course. The aim of the course is to teach a body of information and a mode of inquiry. Students will need to use their problem-solving skills and the course will also involve building skills in using and applying the techniques learned, based upon examples. Students have several resources to rely on: the instructor, the textbook and associated workbook of exercises, online discussion forums and group work, and their own understanding and consideration of the content and the text.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students will have:

- a knowledge of the English sound system, including sounds that are used in speech production and their patterning in use
- an understanding of the rules of English word formation and grammatical modification
- a knowledge of different approaches to understanding lexical meaning
- an appreciation of the nuances of meaning in human language and an acquaintance with the conceptual system underlying meaning.

Course Evaluation:

There will be 5 quizzes of equal weight (25%), 3 group assignments (each worth 10%), a final assessment (40%), and a class participation mark (5%) based on participation in 5/6 discussion forums. The quizzes are not cumulative, and students may have 2 attempts. The final assessment is cumulative and a passing grade of 50% is required.

Withdrawal Dates:

Monday, May 25, 2026: Last day for changes in registration and for withdrawal from most Summer Session full-session courses (Terms 1 and 2) without withdrawal standing of W recorded on a student's academic record. [Workday](#) is open for course withdrawals with a W standing. Refer to the online [Course Change Dates](#) for specific course drop/withdrawal dates.

Friday, July 3, 2026: Last day for withdrawal from most Summer Session full-session courses (Terms 1 and 2) with withdrawal standing of W recorded on a student's academic record. Refer to the online [Course Change Dates](#) for specific information.

Readings:

*The required textbook is L.J. Brinton and D.M. Brinton's [The Linguistic Structure of Modern English](#) (2010). **Registered students may access online version for free:** Click "Library Online Course Reserves" on the left column of the course page in Canvas. Once in the Library system, click the pdf to view a copy of the book online. You may need to register using your UBC cwl.*

There is a workbook for this textbook (also accessible on the left column of the course page) in Canvas and students are expected to make use of this workbook and complete all assigned self-directed exercises.

Several other optional texts are included in the library course reserves.

Scheduling

There is a weekly schedule of assignments and activities on Canvas. Students should familiarize themselves with this schedule in the first days of the course. Detailed descriptions and expectations for each of the required course components can be found in the Assignments section in Canvas.

For full details of the expectations and timing for each of the class components **please consult the online schedule** at the bottom of the syllabus and the individual descriptions for the various activities on Canvas modules.

Group Assignments:

There are some scheduling requirements for participation in group assignments, with some timing to be determined by members of the group. Students will stay in the same group for the duration of the course.

Quizzes:

Quizzes will be open for a period of at least 2 days and students will have 2 attempts to write each quiz. Before the first graded quiz there is a practice quiz that students can complete to become familiar with the format.

Policies

English 330 98a covers the content of the UBC ELL Language Program's required course on the Linguistic Structure of Modern English Sounds and Words, while providing the flexibility for students to work on their own schedules and from different time zones. The course is asynchronous and combines a mixture of readings, self-directed exercises, lectures, discussion contributions and collaborative group work. There are five optional Zoom sessions, one at the beginning of the course, one at the end, and three other lectures through the term. Recorded slides and any additional content covered during the Zoom meetings will be posted on Canvas following the sessions. Using generative AI for assessments is not permitted.

The required components of the course follow:

1. Five online quizzes worth 5% each (25%)
2. Participation in 5/6 discussion forums worth 1% each, including posting at least one contribution and responding to one contribution. (5%)
3. Three collaborative group assignments worth 10% each (30%)
4. A final, timed assessment/exam (open book, 2.5 hours) to be completed on a scheduled day with a flexible starting time (40%).

Class recordings:

Any recordings of lectures or other classroom activities are considered to be the intellectual property of the instructor who makes the recordings and may not be shared outside the class. No recordings may be distributed beyond the course or reposted elsewhere.

Online participation:

For the online classes, keep in mind that some UBC classes might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, human rights, representative government, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and historical or current geopolitical controversies. If you are a student participating in classes from abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you. UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,86,0> for an articulation of the values

of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have concerns regarding your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses. For further information and support, please visit:

<https://academic.ubc.ca/academic-community/academic-freedom/academic-freedom-policies-documents>

Support

For information about technology support, accommodations, and how to contact the instructors consult the Canvas course page.

Course Schedule

Module completion dates	Modules/ Lessons	Self-Testing Exercises	Activities and due dates for submission of work
MODULE 1: Introduction to the Nature of Language and Linguistics (tentative schedule while we wait for the problem with Canvas to be resolved)			
May 13 -22	Lesson 1: The Nature of Human Language	Exercise 1.1	Zoom meet and greet: date TBA (sometime between May 20 and May 27, from 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm) Read: <i>LSModE</i> Chapter 1 Practice: Self-testing exercises as assigned Additional (optional): Stephen Frye’s ‘Don’t Mind Your Language’ and Stephen Pinker’s TED talk about Language and Thought Discuss: Individual introduction in a discussion forum AND Muddiest point/eye-opener contribution to discussion forum #1 by date TBA (between Thurs, May 21 and Fri. May 29)
	Lesson 2: Language as a Rule-governed System	Exercise 1.2	
	Lesson 3: The Nature of Grammar	Exercise 1.3	
	Lesson 4: The Components of Language		
MODULE 2: Phonetics and English Phonology			
May 29- June 5	Lesson 5: Spoken vs. Written Language	Exercise 2.1	View posted lecture - Speech sounds: Friday, May 29 Read: <i>LSModE</i> Chapter 2 Practice: Self-testing exercises as assigned
	Lesson 6: The		

	Production of Speech Sounds		<p>Discuss: Muddiest point/eye-opener contribution to discussion forum #2 on speech vs. writing by Thursday, June 4</p> <p>View: http://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/correct-pronunciation-of-often</p> <p>Assignment 1 completion timeline: Communicate with your group, divide the work and make the recordings for Assignment 1 by Thursday, June 4</p> <p>Complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 2 Quiz by Friday, June 5
	Lesson 7: Consonant Sounds	Exercise 2.2	
	Lesson 8: Vowels and Diphthongs	Exercise 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5	
	Lesson 9: Consonants vs. Vowels	Exercise 2.6	

MODULE 3: Phonology, Phonotactics, and Suprasegmentals

June 9- June 22	Lesson 10: Phonemes and Phonemic Rules		<p>IMPORTANT: STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR GROUP ON COLLABORATIVE ASSIGNMENT 1!</p> <p>Read: <i>LSModE</i> Chapter 3</p> <p>Practice: Self-testing exercises as assigned</p> <p>Zoom Lecture – suprasegmentals and syllable structure (recorded slides to be posted). (Zoom Q and A, Assignment 1) Tuesday June 9, 2:00-3:00pm</p> <p>Discuss: Muddiest point/eye-opener contribution to discussion forum #3 on phonology by Thursday, June 11</p> <p>Complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 3 Quiz by Friday, June 12 <p>Assignment 1 completion timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part 1 Submission: Submit data tables and questions on Canvas by Monday, June 15 Part 2 of Assignment 1 Due Monday, June 22
	Lesson 11: Phonological Processes	Exercise 3.1 Exercise 3.2 You may omit question 3 of Exercise 3.2	
	Lesson 12: Phonotactics		
	Lesson 13: Stress	Exercise 3.3	
	Lesson 14: Intonation	Exercise 3.4	
	Lesson 15: Syllable Structure	Exercise 3.5	

MODULE 4: Morphology

June 25- July 3	Lesson 16: Words, Morphemes and Morphs	Exercise 4.1 Exercise 4.2	<p>View posted lecture - morphology Thursday, June 25</p> <p>Read: <i>LSModE</i> Chapter 4</p> <p>Practice: Relevant self-testing exercises</p>
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		Exercise 4.3 Exercise 4.4	<p>Discuss: Muddiest point/Eye-Opener contribution to discussion forum #4 on morphology by Friday, June 26</p> <p>Complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 4 Quiz by July 3
	Lesson 17: Allomorphs and Morphemic Rules	Exercise 4.5	
	Lesson 18: Processes of Word Formation: Derivation	Exercise 4.6 Exercise 4.7	
	Lesson 19: Processes of Word Formation: Reduplication, Conversion, Compounding	Exercise 4.8	
	Lesson 20: Processes of Word Formation: Blending, Back Formation, Shortening and Root Creation	Exercise 4.9	

MODULE 5: Grammatical Categories and Word Classes

July 6-July 17	Lesson 21: Nominal Categories	Exercise 5.1	<p>Be in touch with your group for COLLABORATIVE ASSIGNMENT 2 by Monday, July 6</p> <p>Read: <i>LSModE</i> Chapter 5</p> <p>Practice: Relevant self-testing exercises</p> <p>Zoom Lecture – grammatical categories (recorded slides to be posted). Zoom Q and A, Assignment 2 Friday July 10, 2:00-3:00pm</p> <p>Discuss: Muddiest point/Eye-Opener contribution to discussion forum #5 on grammatical categories and word classes by Friday, July 10</p>
	Lesson 22: Verbal Categories	Exercise 5.2 Exercise 5.3	
	Lesson 23: Determining	Exercise 5.4	

	Word Classes	Exercise 5.5 Exercise 5.6	Complete: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 5 Quiz Due Monday, July 13 Assignment 2 Due Friday, July 17
MODULE 6: Lexical Semantics			
July 20- August 7	Lesson 24: Traditional and Structural Semantics	Exercise 6.1 Exercise 6.2 Exercise 6.3 Exercise 6.4	Be in touch with your group for COLLABORATIVE ASSIGNMENT 3 by Monday, July 20 Read: <i>LSModE</i> Chapter 6 Practice: Relevant self-testing exercises View: James Geary Metaphorically Speaking https://www.ted.com/talks/james_geary_metaphorically_speaking a bit of comic relief from Fry and Laurie http://youtu.be/ZFD01r6ersw Zoom Lecture – lexical semantics (recorded slides to be posted). Q and A, Assignment 3 Wednesday July 29, 2:00-3:00pm Discuss: Muddiest point/Eye-Opener contribution to discussion forum #6 on lexical semantics by Thursday, July 30 Complete: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 6 Quiz by Tuesday, August 4 Assignment 3 Due Thursday, August 6
	Lesson 25: Semantic Features (nouns and verbs)	Exercise 6.5 Exercise 6.6: you may omit questions 3 and 4.	
	Lesson 26: Semantic Features (modals) and Prototypes	Exercise 6.7 Exercise 6.8	
	Lesson 27: Semantic Anomaly	Exercise 6.9	
	Lesson 28: Cognitive Semantics		
Zoom Wrap-up			
August 7	Zoom wrap-up Friday, August 7 at 2:30 pm – 3:00 pm		
Final assessment			
August 12	Date to be confirmed.		