

## How to prepare the exam

**This document will be updated over time. Make sure you have the final version.**

Last update: Saturday, December 22, 2018.

The class “Levels of linguistic analysis” has two parts.

To pass the exam you need to pass, independently one from the other, **both these two parts** (i.e.: it is not sufficient to be very good in one of these two parts, if the other one is too weak). The final evaluation of the exam will be the mean of the evaluation of the first and the second part.

The two parts are: part I - phonology; part II - grammatical categories.

We will here describe how to prepare for these two parts.

### ***Part I - Phonology***

During class you wrote two short essays about (1) the essential characteristics of human language, and (2) the concept “phoneme”.

Those two assignments have been evaluated in order to assess whether you are sufficiently competent in the topic. All of you were (i.e. the ones who already sent the essays [17/12/2018]) considered to have reached at least the minimal level.

The last assignment will assess:

- 1- what you have learned in terms of methods and theories about the description of phonological knowledge and of phonological systems.

Remember that we extensively talked about “phone”, “phoneme”, and, especially, “phonological features” and their relevance to represent phonological knowledge. We have then introduced “syllable structure”, and “supra-segment features”;

- 2- how you apply the knowledge you acquired.

Provide pertinent examples and describe them using transcriptions and glosses;

- 3- your critical attitude towards the knowledge you are acquiring.

This is actually a minor criterium for introductory classes like “Levels of linguistic analysis”;

- 4- how effective you are in organizing the flow of your argumentation (i.e. reasoning systematically in support of what you describe, and how you describe it);

- 5- the degree of independence you may show in finding extra sources pertinent to the treated topics.

This is actually another minor criterium, albeit welcome, for introductory classes like “Levels of linguistic analysis”.

### **Main sources for part I - Phonology**

A-- Presentations uploaded on moodle

B-- Handbook: Hayes, *Introductory Phonology*.

The parts (§§) listed below of Hayes, Introductory *phonology* are mandatory.

- Chap. 1
- §§ 2.1 – 2.8.2; 2.10 – 2.10.4
- §§ 4.1–4.8
- §§ 13.1 – 13.8

Your essay will be evaluated accordingly.

## ***Part II – Grammatical Categories***

In this part we have learnt:

- A. the Part-of-Speech (PoS) system
- B. Gender and Number
- C. Leipzig Glossing Rules

As for (A) we have discussed about the terminology (namely the metalinguistic labels) of the PoS system and its roots in Western grammatical tradition. In particular, we came back to the philosophical speculation of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, later developed in Greek and Latin grammatical systematization, mostly represented by Apollonius Dyscolus, Priscian and Donatus.

The written assignment focused on the modern description and analysis of the category of Articles, as well as a further part in which you were asked to describe such a category in a language of your choice.

As for (B), we have dealt with Gender and Number, exploring their possibilities in the languages of the world, mostly referring to the WALS database online. The notion of agreement, the distinction between sex-based and non-sex-based gender system, and further expressions of Number beyond singular and plural (e.g. dual, paucal etc.) are among the topics discussed during classes.

As for (C), you should pay attention to the theoretical grounds of such a convention, and you are expected to be able to use the glosses as they are greatly useful for the linguistic research in general, especially for the lesser known languages.

## **Studying for the exam**

**You should make sure to:**

1. know theories and methods involved in the PoS (see A) and in the categories Gender and Number (see B); be aware of the existence of different theories and methods in the linguistic descriptions, also in reference to the history of the linguistic thought;
2. apply this knowledge to the description of a linguistic expression in a given language, using the conventional system of rules provided by the Leipzig Glossing Rules (see C);
3. provide a critical discussion both on theories and metalanguage, even though it is not a central element in such an introductory course;
4. organize in an effective way your argumentation;

5. be able to establish conceptual links with other fields or disciplines you have dealt with or you are still dealing with in your academic career, and also to find extra references in supporting your argumentation. This last point, in particular, is of minor importance, but still it is appreciated.

During the final exam, you will be asked to discuss with us a couple of topics among those presented in class. This evaluation will be added to the evaluation accordingly given to your written assignment and then to the first part.

### **Main sources:**

For this part, you should study all the materials uploaded on Moodle, sections:

- Parts of Speech (for A and C)
- Grammatical Features (for B)

You will also find some other papers in the section “Further readings”: if you are interested in, they could be useful in preparing the exam, but not required.