

# LINGUIST 168: Introduction to Linguistic Typology

Stanford University

Spring 2021

<b>Canvas link:</b>	<a href="https://canvas.stanford.edu/courses/136730">https://canvas.stanford.edu/courses/136730</a>
<b>Instructor:</b>	Ksenia Ershova (she/her) <a href="mailto:kershova@stanford.edu">kershova@stanford.edu</a>
<b>Office hours:</b>	M 1:30-2:30pm in Zoom (drop in; link on <a href="#">Canvas</a> ), or by appointment
<b>Class schedule:</b>	MW 10:00-11:20am (synchronous; lectures recorded)
<b>Location:</b>	Zoom (link on <a href="#">Canvas</a> )

## Description of the Course

This course covers the foundations of the linguistic subfield concerned with comparing and classifying world languages. The course provides an overview of the analytic tools which may be used to identify and classify a language based on its phonological, morphological, and syntactic properties, and explores the major ways in which languages may be similar or different in these domains. Students will acquire a useful toolkit for studying novel, unusual, and typologically diverse linguistic data, and for conducting fieldwork on understudied languages.

By the end of the quarter:

- You will gain an understanding of the range and distribution of structural diversity across languages of the world, the goals and methods of typological analysis, and the application of typology in other subfields of linguistics.
- You will be familiar with the major typological classifications of world languages and be able to assess the basic characteristics of a language based on its typological profile, e.g. you would be able to understand each component of the following characteristic of Turkish: “agglutinating, primarily suffixal, head-final, with nominative-accusative alignment and vowel harmony”.
- You will have acquired a terminological and analytical toolkit which can be used in the analysis of unfamiliar language data, fieldwork, and even practical language learning.
- You will have experience analyzing primary linguistic data of various typological profiles, giving you hands-on exposure to linguistic diversity beyond English and the Indo-European language family.

## Prerequisites

One of: Linguist 110, 121A, 121B, 130A, 130B, or permission of the instructor.

## Course components

1. **Class participation (15%):**
  - (a) Discussion posts on Canvas (due before each class): (i) most interesting thing you found out from the assigned reading; (ii) one question about the assigned reading.
  - (b) Class attendance and participation in class activities, such as (ungraded) quizzes or calls for discussion.
2. **Homework assignments (70%):** Homework assignments are due every Monday before class. In addition to the required homework assignments, an optional bonus assignment will be due on Monday of week 11. The grade for this assignment will replace the lowest homework grade, if higher than the old grade.
3. **Final assignment (if enrolled for 4 units; 15%):** write up a typologically informed description of language X, based on a set of data provided by the instructor. See section on final assignment for details.

## Due dates

- **Canvas discussion posts:** before every class when a reading is assigned.
- **Homework assignments:** every Monday before class weeks 2-10.
- **Bonus homework assignment:** Monday of week 11 (June 7).
- **Final assignment:** Friday of week 11 (June 11) for non-graduating students; Monday of week 11 (June 7) for graduating students.

## Textbook

Velupillai, Viveka (2012) An Introduction to Linguistic Typology. John Benjamins.  
Digital access through Stanford: <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/13016081>

Readings from other sources will be occasionally assigned. If not available through the Stanford Library, digital copies will be provided on Canvas.

## Class schedule (subject to change)

Week 1	Defining typology
Week 2	Lexical typology
Week 3	Phonological typology
Weeks 4-6	Morphological typology
Weeks 7-8	Syntactic typology
Week 9	Speech act typology
Week 10	Typology and language change

## Final assignment (for 4 units)

Write up a typologically informed description of language X based on the dataset provided by instructor. The description should cite the provided data to justify the claims and should address the following questions:

- Are there any observable phonotactic constraints, e.g. on syllable structure or vowel harmony?
- What type of language is this, based on morphological classifications?
- What is the argument alignment in the language? How does it manifest itself?
- Is the language head or dependent marking?
- Is the language head initial or head final, and what is the basic word order?

## Collaboration and academic integrity

You are expected to follow [Stanford's Honor Code](#) in all matters relating to this online course. You are welcome to collaborate and discuss the homework assignments with your fellow classmates, but you are individually responsible for understanding the material and your written work must be your own in accordance with the University's guidelines on academic honesty. Your submitted work should include the names of those you have discussed it with, and if you make use of someone else's idea, they should be explicitly credited for it. The University provides the following [recommendations](#) specifically for upholding academic honesty with remote learning.

## Provisions for COVID and remote instruction

I recognize that remote learning is difficult, and the ongoing pandemic may present unanticipated challenges to your learning experience. I am willing to provide extra flexibility with late assignments and class attendance if necessary, and I ask that you likewise remain patient with me if problems arise on my end. If you have suggestions for how I might support your learning in this course during this difficult time, please let me know. For further support you can always reach out to the [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) via their website or by calling [650-723-3785](tel:650-723-3785), available from any location 24/7.

If you are experiencing difficulties with submitting your assignment on time due to illness, family emergency, logistical obstacles, etc., please reach out to me *prior* to the submission deadline and we will negotiate a later due date.

If there are circumstances which impact your ability to participate in classes synchronously or otherwise impact our learning, please reach out to me to discuss your options. While you are highly encouraged to attend the class synchronously, I recognize that this might not always be possible. Recordings of past classes will be available through Canvas for such circumstances. If you require technical support, a range of resources are offered by [The Hub](#).

## Course privacy

The University's [recording and broadcasting policy](#) does not allow audio or video recording class meetings without permission of the instructor. If the instructor grants permission, you may keep recordings only for personal use and may not post recordings on the Internet, or otherwise distribute them.

Recordings of the class will be made by the instructor and posted on Canvas; these recordings are strictly for individual use by the students in the class and may not be further shared or distributed. There may be a delay in the availability of the Zoom recordings; if you need lecture recordings to be immediately available to you for the purposes of academic accommodation, you should contact the [Office of Accessible Education](#). These policies protect the privacy rights of instructors and students, and the intellectual property and other rights of the University. You should also not share our course Zoom links with anyone outside of our course to protect the privacy of everyone in the course.

## Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request, review appropriate medical documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty. The letter will indicate how long it is to be in effect. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since

timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. Students should also send your accommodation letter to instructors as soon as possible. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://oae.stanford.edu>).

## Diversity and Inclusion Statement

Linguistic typology, while striving to be as objective and non-discriminatory as possible, is still largely built on a small sample of privileged voices. If any of the language used in the assigned readings or lecture materials strikes you as problematic or there are any other concerns you wish to raise, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly, or via the anonymous survey link available through [Canvas](#) which will be active throughout the quarter. Likewise, if something that is discussed in class or said by another student makes you uncomfortable, please let me know via one of the above options. If you are uncomfortable discussing these issues with me, you can also reach out to the [Diversity and Access Office](#) or explore the resources provided by the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#).

To help create a comfortable learning experience for all students, a short questionnaire will be circulated in the first week of the quarter which will include the option of indicating your preferred pronouns and/or name, and to select whether you would like that information to be available to your classmates.

Finally, as a participant of this course, I ask that you strive to maintain a respectful environment and honor the diversity of your fellow classmates.