Linguistics 120A: Phonology I **Fall 2025**

SYLLABUS

Time	Tuesdays & Thursdays 8:00-9:50
Place	Public Affairs 2242
Web	On bruinlearn.ucla.edu

Prof.: Kie Zuraw [ˈkaɪ ˈzəɪˌɔ] pronoun: she

Mailbox	In Campbell 3125		
Phone	310-825-0634		
Student drop-in hours	Thursdays 2:00-400 In Campbell **3122A (my office)**	AND	Fridays 3:00-4:30 tentatively in Campbell **2122 (conference room)**
Email	kie@ucla.edu		

This course aims to equip you with the tools to understand sound patterns in the world's languages. Building on the basics you learned in Ling 20 and what you learned about sounds' physical properties in Ling 102/103, we'll look at how languages differ and how to explicitly capture these differences with rules and representations.

What to remember from Ling 20 & 102/103

- Break words into morphemes
  - choose among multiple possibilities
  - **you can review in chapter 5 of textbook**
- Use phonetic symbols
- Use phonetic terms for place of articulation, manner of articulation, phonation type, vowel height/advancement/rounding, etc.
  - **you can review in chapter 1 of textbook**

Highlights of what you'll learn how to do

- Identify *phonotactic patterns*—which sounds can occur in which environments in a language
- Identify *alternations*—how a morpheme's pronunciation changes as its environment changes
- Understand how our *model* of phonological grammar gets from underlying representations to surface representations
- Use *features* to describe classes of sounds that pattern together
- Recognize cases where *syllable* structure can improve rules
- Analyze *stress* languages and *tone* languages
- Recognize restrictions that *morphology* and *syntax* place on a rule
- Solve a *phonology problem*: given surface forms, determine underlying forms, rules, and their order

What is knowing phonology useful for?

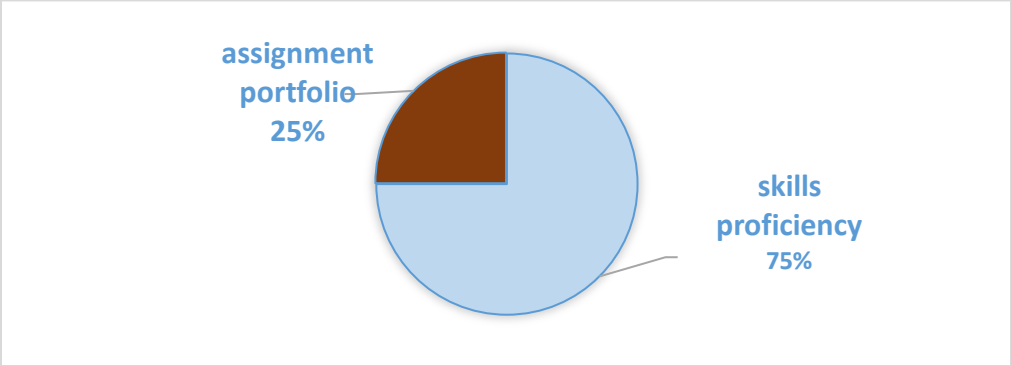
- Learning more phonology ☺
- Studying other aspects of language (acquisition, processing, bilingualism, neurolinguistics...)
- Language technology (speech synthesis, speech recognition)
- Language learning and language teaching
- Education, especially reading and language arts
- Speech and language therapy
- Studying and creating literature, especially poetry and songs

Textbook: **Hayes, Bruce.** ***Introductory Phonology.***
about $40 new, $15 used

Course outline

Week	*Date*	*Topic*	*Problem-solving*	*Textbook reading*	*Assignment due* ***Monday night***
0	Sept. 25	Alternations driven by rules	How the basic model works		
1	Sept. 30	Alternations driven by rules	Finding rules	ch. 6 Phono. Alternation I	
1	Oct. 2	Alternations driven by rules *QUIZ 1			
2	Oct. 7	Features and natural classes *QUIZ 2		ch 4 Features	HW I
2	Oct. 9	Features and natural classes	Choosing an underlying form		
3	Oct. 14	*CATCH-UP EXAM #1			resubmit HW I
3	Oct. 16	Contrast vs. predictabiliy (phonemes, allophones) *QUIZ 3		ch. 2 Phonemic Analysis	
4	Oct. 21	Contrast vs. predictabiliy (phonemes, allophones) *QUIZ 4		ch. 3 More on Phonemes	HW II
4	Oct. 23	Rule interaction	Finding rule order	ch7 Altrntn II	
5	Oct. 28	Rule interaction *QUIZ 5		ch. 8 Morphophon	resubmit HW II
5	Oct. 30	Productivity: rules' applicability to new words		ch. 9 Productivity	
6	Nov. 4	*CATCH-UP EXAM #2			HW III
6	Nov. 6	Phonology's relation to morphology and syntax *QUIZ 6	Solving full phonology problem	ch. 10 Role of Morphology & Syntax	
7	Nov. 11	HOLIDAY			resubmit HW III
7	Nov. 13	Syllables *QUIZ 7		ch. 13 Syllables	
8	Nov. 18	Stress and syllable weight *QUIZ 8		ch. 14 Stress, Stress Rules, & Syll. Weight	HW IV
8	Nov. 20	Tone and intonation		ch. 15 Tone & Intonation	
9	Nov. 25	Phonology in language change *QUIZ 9		ch. 11 Dia- & Synchrony	resubmit HW IV
9	Nov. 27	HOLIDAY			
10	Dec. 2	Abstractness underlying forms *QUIZ 10		ch. 12 Abstractness	HW V
10	Dec. 4	Course wrap-up			
exam	Monday, Dec. 8 3-6 PM	*CATCH-UP EXAM #3			resubmit all assignments for final portfolio

Requirements



Skill proficiency

There are **60 skills** in this course for you to become proficient in. *(This is more than in previous years, but that's because I've broken them down more finely, not because we are covering more!)* To show that you've achieved proficiency on a skill, correctly answer a question testing it on a quiz or exam. You'll get **multiple opportunities** for each skill, with no penalty for wrong answers.

We'll talk more about this in Week 1, and I'll show you how the **gradebook** works and how to use it to track your progress.

Why do this? Much research finds that traditional grading is inaccurate at assessing proficiency, and ineffective in promoting learning. I want us to do better.
We published an article about it! See Zuraw, Aly, Lin & Royer 2019 at kiezuraw.com/#Papers

#_of_skills_proficient means all the skills you're proficient in, including the ones you're advanced in.

How does this translate into a number?

- *final_skills_percentage* = 25 + *#_of_skills_proficient* + *#_of_skills_advanced*
  - suppose you're proficient in 55 skills, of which you're advanced in 9. Then your grade is 25 + 55 + 9 = 89
  - proficient on 30 skills, of which you're advanced on 5: 25 + 35 + 5 = 65 (middle of D range)
  - proficient on all 60 skills, advanced on none: 25 + 60 + 0 = 85 (middle of B range)
  - proficient on all 60 skills, of which advanced on 10: 25 + 60 + 10 = 95 (middle of A range)

Opportunities you'll get to demonstrate skills

- 10 **quizzes**: opportunities for the latest skills, plus a selection of old skills
- 3 "**catch-up exams**", including one during finals week: opportunities for all skills seen so far (except those that everyone is already proficient in)
- All quizzes and exams will be in-person (unless you have a CAE accommodation to take them at the proctoring center)
  - **No electronic devices** (unless you have a CAE accommodation for one)
  - You can bring **1 sheet of notes**, plus the sheet I'm providing you (skills checklist and features reference)

Assignment portfolio (25% of final grade)

In addition to mechanical and problem-solving skills, in this course it's important to learn how to write an analysis of a set of data. Phonology has its own way of doing this, but it's an instance of a **bigger life skill**: precisely explaining facts and your conclusions about them to a reader, including justifying your conclusions and laying out what facts you'd need to know in order to nail down the conclusions further.[1]

Here's how it will work

- Each assignment will be divided into a "basic" portion, which you should solve first, and an "advanced" portion, where you can build on your basic analysis
- You'll turn in your first attempt by the first deadline, and get feedback from me:
  - **Not submitted (50%)**: I know that typically missing work counts as zero, but it doesn't make sense to me for the difference between a missing assignment and just turning in anything to be bigger than the difference between just turning in anything and the best possible work
  - **Not Yet (70%)**: The analysis doesn't work, or doesn't fully work
  - **Correct—Basic (80%)**: The analysis of the basic data works, and is presented well enough that I can tell it works (e.g., you've illustrated suitable examples), but doesn't meet all the writing specifications ← *you can **aim for here** on your first submission!*
    - **Correct—Basic & Well-written (90%)**: Correct analysis of the basic data, plus it meets all the writing specifications
  - **Correct—Advanced (90%):** The analysis works for the basic data *and* the advanced data (and is presented well enough that I can tell it works)
    - **Correct—Advanced & Well-written (100%)**: Correct analysis of all the data, plus it meets all the writing specifications
- You can revise your work and resubmit your second attempt by the second deadline, and get feedback again (except for the last assignment—not enough time for second attempt, just first and then final)
- After that, no more resubmissions for written feedback, but come to my drop-in hours to discuss
- End of the quarter: submit a portfolio with the final attempt for every assigment. The grade on these final versions is what will count.

Other policies

- You can discuss with other students, but you have to **write up your own answer**
- If the first or second attempt looks like it was produced substantially by a **chatbot/LLM/AI system**, I won't provide feedback on that attempt. You can submit something new for the next attempt. If the final attempt looks like it was produced by a chatbot, it will count the same as "not submitted" (see below)—this really shouldn't happen, since it's already the third draft!
- If you miss a homework **deadline**, you'll miss that chance to get feedback, but can still use the next deadline. Examples:
  - You miss the 1st deadline. Submit by 2nd deadline and get 1 round of feedback before final portfolio.
  - You make the 1st deadline, but miss the 2nd. You won't get a second round of written feedback, but you can revise and come to my drop-in hours before the final portfolio
  - You miss both deadlines. You won't get any written feedback, but you can still work on it and come to my drop-in hours before the final portfolio
  - You miss the final portfolio deadline? No, that's hard deadline! I have to have everyone's work by the end of finals week. Assignment will keep its previous grade (including "not submitted")

Assignment portfolio writing specifications

At the beginning of the course, it might not yet be clear what all of these mean (they use terms we haven't learned yet). See the sample write-ups for examples of how these specifications play out.

Add: derivations in correct (class) format

1. Make sure your analysis can **stand alone**—a reader wouldn't need to see the assignment instructions
   - Begin with a statement like, "This paper deals with voicing alternations in Russian noun stems"
   - Copy and paste example words (not numbers) to illustrate every point you make
   - Avoid writing things like, "In the next block of data we see…": the reader doesn't have the data or know anything about blocks!
2. Avoid over-taxing the reader's **working memory**
   - Give every rule a name (not a number or abbreviation), and refer to it by name
   - Don't have a page break within a derivation
3. State each rule in both **notation** and **prose**. This helps me know what you meant if the notation is wrong.
4. Present your analysis **piece by piece**
   - *Do*: State one generalization, give some data that illustrate it, give the analysis (underlying forms, rules, etc.) of that generalization, and illustrate it with a derivation. Repeat for the next generalization
   - *Don't*: Give all the underlying forms, then all the rules, then one giant derivation at the end
5. **Justify** each element of your analysis—doing this will help you find and fix any errors in your analysis!!
   - If there's more than one reasonable place to put the **morpheme boundaries**, how did you choose?
   - If there are alternations in affixes, how did you choose which allomorph should be the **underlying form of each affix** (i.e., the form added by the morphological rule)?
   - If there are alternations in roots, how did you choose which allomorph should be the **underlying form of each root**?
     - For roots that alternate, show an example of that root that surfaces without changing its underlying form (if that exists in the data) and an example that surfaces with each different allomorph
   - Why do you **need each rule**? Make sure you include an example of a word that undergoes the rule
   - Why does each **rule include the restrictions it does** (features of target, elements of environment, opt-in features, morphosyntactic boundaries, bounding domain…)?
     - Include not only an example of a word that meets the requirements and undergoes the rule, but also an example of a word that fails to meet the requirements and so doesn't undergo the rule
   - Why do the rules need to be **ordered** as they are? (If the assignment includes rule ordering)
6. Avoid **redundancy in your analysis**
   - If you propose a rule, it needs to apply to at least one word
   - If there are restrictions in a rule, they should be necessary
7. Be **general in your analysis**
   - Don't add something to your analysis to deal with just one word. Assume that if there's a generalization I want you to find, I've given you ample evidence for it.
8. Avoid **redundancy in your presentation**
   - Each word that you choose to include in a derivation should be needed to show something
9. Data to **disambiguate**
   - Identify ambiguities in your analysis and invent data that would be needed to resolve them. Spell this out all the way (don't just say, "We need more data from nouns"), and show what conclusion you'd reach under different scenarios
10. Meet all **additional specifications in the assignment instructions**

For the assignment portfolio, I was inspired by David Clark's hybrid grading system for a proof-based math course (gradingforgrowth.com/p/mixing-and-matching-sbg-and-specifications). Phonology write-ups are similar to mathematical proofs in that an answer is either correct or incorrect; there can be more than one correct answer; not all incorrect answers are equally bad; not all correct answers are equally good; and in addition to having a correct answer, you need to present it well (that's the writing part).

Rules and policies

What happens **if you miss a quiz**? Don't worry about it! You can try those same skills again in the future.

We'll use the course's **bruinlearn.ucla.edu** website for three main things

- Some documents will be stored there (syllabus, sample homework write-ups)
- Gradebook
- Turning in and getting feedback on assignments
- **Piazza** for asking and answering questions in a way that the whole class can benefit from

Sorry, **no electronic devices** in class (unless you have a CAE accommodation for one). On the one hand, we're all adults and you should be able to make your own choices about whether to pay attention in class. But: #1, what's happening on one person's screen can be very distracting to their neighbor; #2, when there are too many disengaged people in the room it drags down the atmosphere for everyone; #3, "choice" becomes a slippery concept when tech companies are working so hard to addict us to our devices.

Keep your **phone, tablet, and laptop** inside your bag; they will be waiting for you at the break. If there's a day where you *really* need to be instantly reachable by someone, keep the ringer turned on, and if you get a call you can step out in the hall to take it.

If you have a situation where this won't work, talk to me and we'll figure it out.

Suspected cases of **copying**, **plagiarism or other cheating** will be sent directly to the Dean of Students; I believe it is fairer for them to talk to the student and weigh the evidence than for me to.

Secrets of success

💗 *Fall in love with your major* 💗

From a classic blog post (calnewport.com/the-roberts-method-a-professors-advice-for-falling-in-love-with-your-major/) with tips on making your classes be a source of joy and satisfaction:

- Look for connections between your classes—can you get multiple perspectives on the same material this way?
- Add a couple of linguistics **blogs** or **podcasts** to your feed: Lingthusiasm is a good one, also Language Log, Linguistics Careercast… Once in a while, attend a **talk** (see linguistics.ucla.edu/events/)
    - These can help you maintain your excitement about the subject and remind your brain that linguistics is something you actually enjoy and seek out by choice
- Can you start (and finish) some assignments early, so that the pleasure of the work isn't always overshadowed by the pressure of making the deadline?

Come to class

Phonology is one of those areas where understanding the concepts isn't enough—you really have to practice to get fluent.

There's nothing like missing a class to make a person feel **lost, confused**, and out of it. Not only do you miss the material from the day you were gone, but you get less out of the next class too, sometimes leading to a downward spiral.

Coming to class will **make your life easier**: assignments will be easier, and you won't stay up late to cram for tests

Read the textbook—strategically

Reading the textbook (once—noting your **questions and comments**) will give you a chance to see more examples than in class, and to work through them at your own pace.

Research suggests that **repeated reading is not a good study strategy**—material begins to look familiar, producing a false sense of proficiency

I highly recommend getting a **hard copy**. The research generally shows that electronic textbooks *can* be as good as paper textbooks for comprehension, but using them is a lot slower.

Used copies are cheap online, and cheap-ish in Ackerman textbook store. While you wait for your paper copy, you can access it free online through the library, but interface is unwieldy

Control your devices, so they don't control you

No devices in class, but what about when you're doing your work outside of class?

All the research shows that (i) we humans think we're good at multi-tasking, and (ii) we humans are **terrible at multi-tasking**. (The reason we *think* we're doing it well is that the multi-tasking itself is so demanding that we're unable to realize what a bad job we're doing on each task!)

Some tips for avoiding distraction while doing classwork:

Read your textbook with just a pencil—have your phone and laptop put away.

When writing your problem sets, you need to use a computer, but turn off notifications as much as you can (and don't have your email or social media open). If you use a browser-based word processor like Google Docs, close your other tabs and make your browser full-screen. If you use a "real" word processor like MS Word or LibreOffice, you can put your computer in airplane mode.

Talk to me and each other

…if you don't understand something, you have an idea, you disagree with something you've read, you're intrigued by something you've read, etc.

If you have a question outside of class, post it to **Piazza**

Come to my **student drop-in hours**.