



# Dialectical Analysis in teaching linguistics @ UPNG

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Olga Temple & Sakarepe Kamene

Linguistics SHSS UPNG

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# Outline

1. Fundamental principles of our method
2. Semantic & syntactic “ripples”
3. Course content & structure
4. Students’ feedback & progress
5. Lessons learned



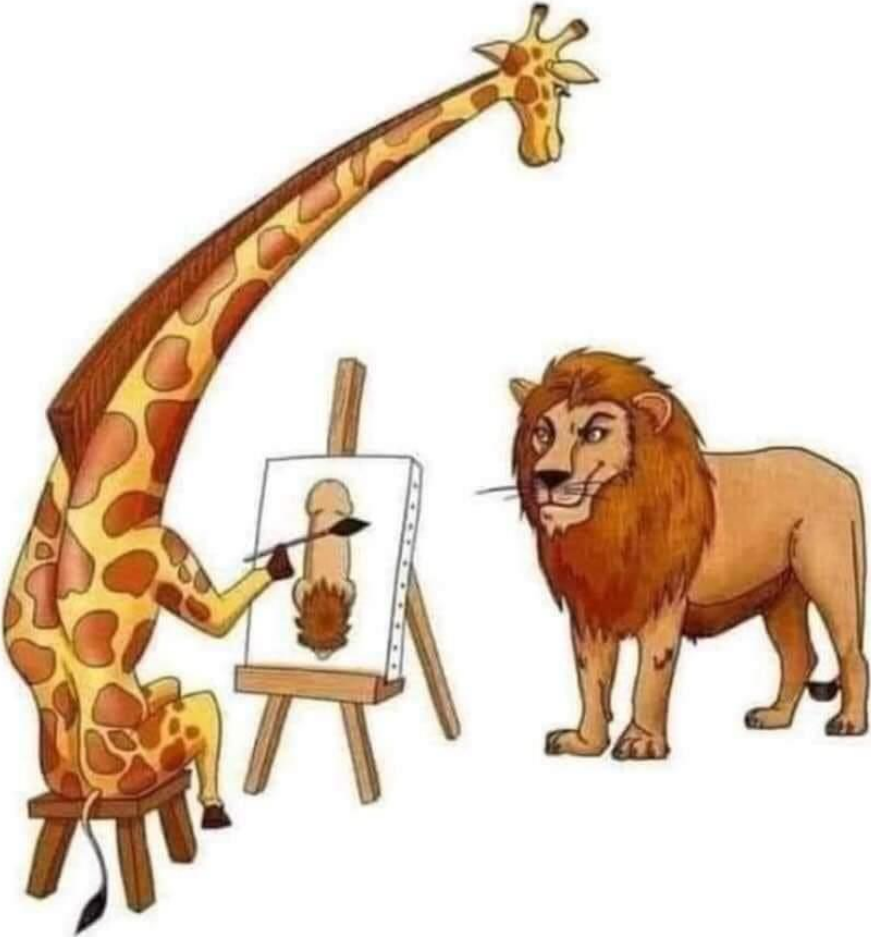
# Introducing HUMAN LANGUAGE

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- How is it different from 'biological' languages (both human & animal)?
- Why are we born without it?
- What are symbols?
- What is MEANING?
- What do we do, when we think?
- Relativity & inherent ambiguity of meaning



# Importance of perspective when viewing a “complex whole”:



**Perspective is everything..**



# Which lens is best?

WA or Zoom? Maybe BOTH?

**Two ways of reasoning:** dialectical (synthesis) & metaphysical (analysis)

**Dialectics** = philosophy of **CHANGE** (which is *the only constant in life* – WA?)

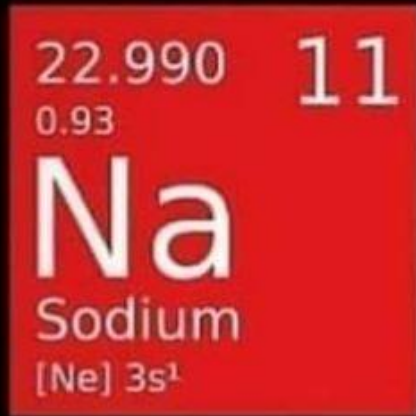
**But learning, like breathing, is a *process***

We must use both **WA & Zoom** lenses – i.e., ***Dialectical Analysis***

Video footage, not snapshots, however accurate!



# CHEMISTRY BE LIKE:



+



Explosive  
metal

Deadly  
gas

=

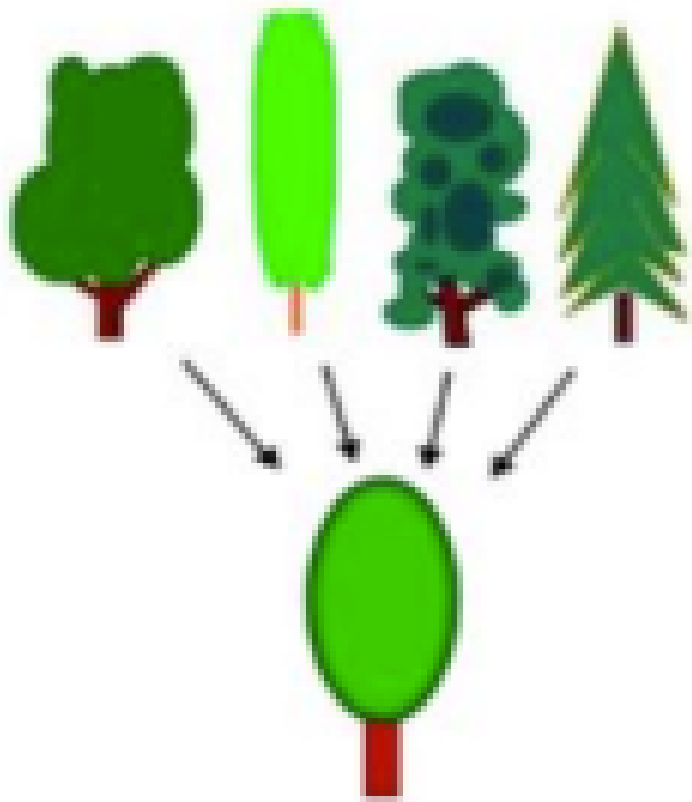
**NaCl**  
Table salt

Corner stone of dialectical analysis:  
ID the smallest *functional* unit of  
language



# Key principles & concepts of dialectical linguistic analysis

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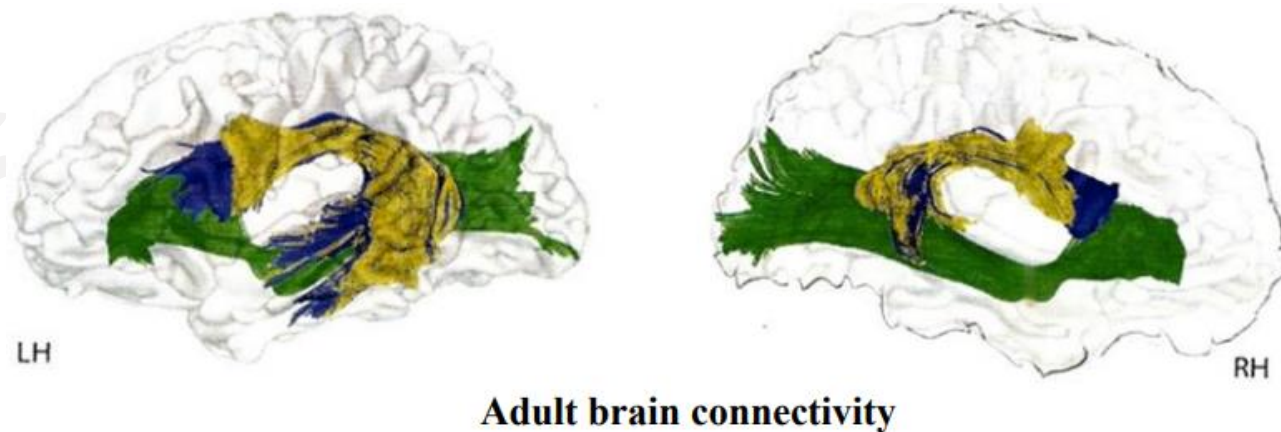
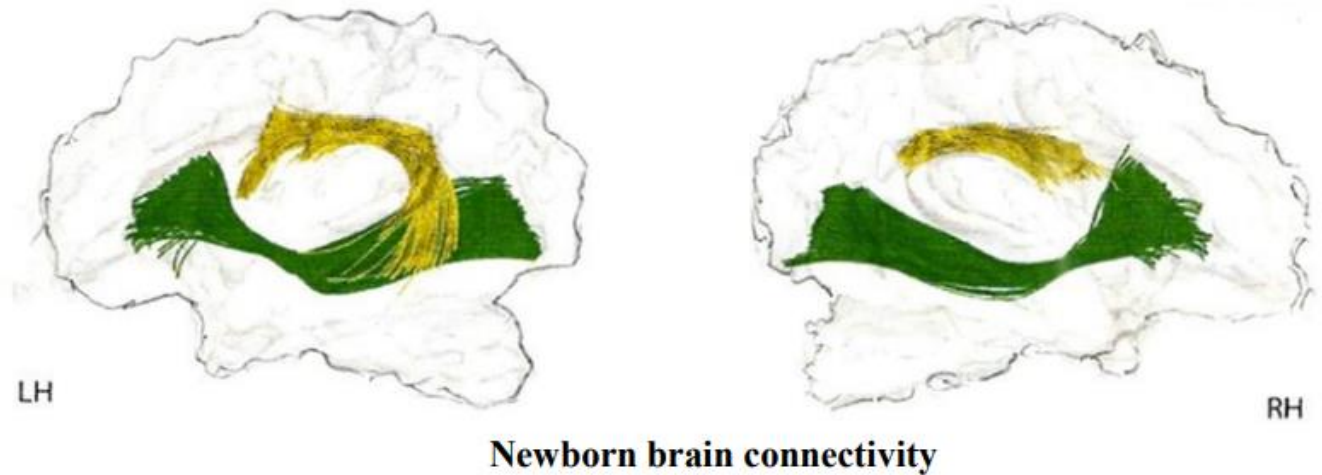
- Word-meaning is the smallest *functional* unit of  $\lambda$ , because it has all its properties:
  - Psychological
  - Physical
  - Social
  - Historical
- Every word is a **GENERALIZATION** = an **ACT** of **THOUGHT** by the collective social Mind
- Associations by resemblance, contiguity & cause/effect = **RATIONAL LANGUAGE MECHANISM**





# Through the lens of DA: Rational Language Mechanism

- Biological foundations of  $\lambda$  → ability to **generalize** (= create word-meanings)
- Mechanism of Human Thought = Mechanism of Language
- Every sentence = generalization of individual minds



# Semantic & Syntactic “ripples”



# Dialectical analysis explains:

- The Origins of Grammar
- Diversity of linguistic forms
- Language change
- “Fluidity” of meaning
- Sentence structure

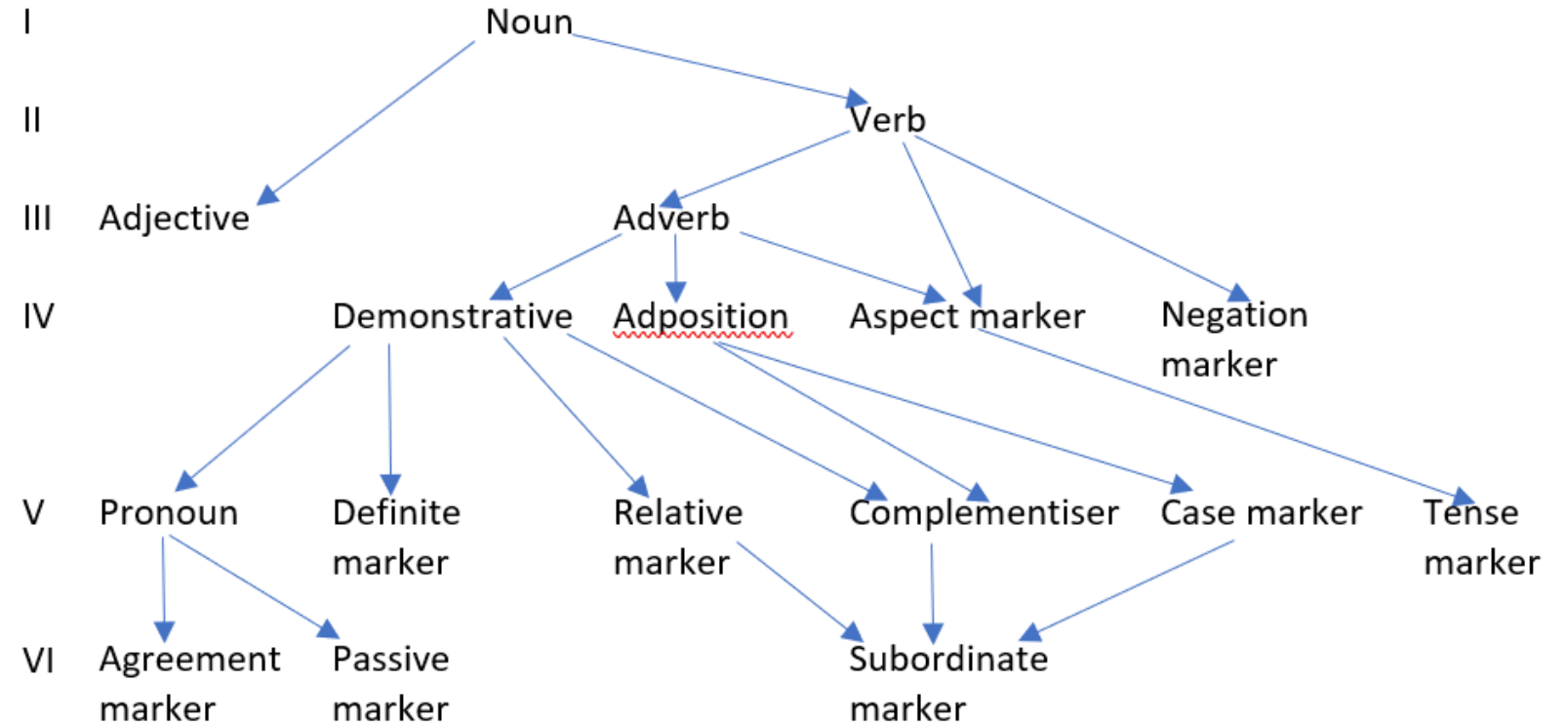


Figure 1. Stages of grammatical evolution (from Heine & Kuteva 2007)

*‘Wisdom is knowledge of the causes’*

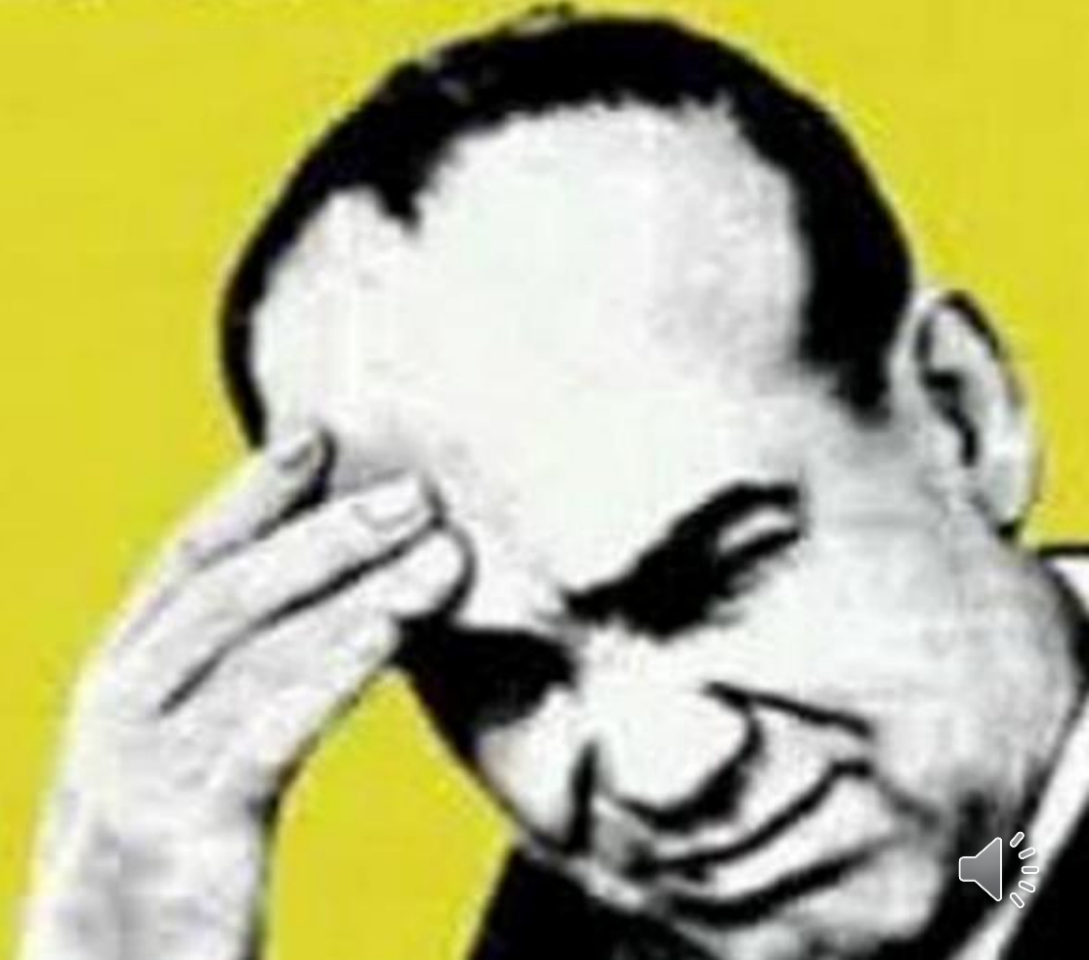
~ Aristotle



**Everytime I see a math word problem it looks like this:  
If I have 10 ice cubes and you have 11 apples.  
How many pancakes will fit on the roof?**

**Answer:  
Purple because aliens  
don't wear hats.**

The same sinews of generalization hold all  
larger structures of meaning together!



# Course content & structure

## **Descriptive linguistics**

1. Phonetics
2. Phonology
3. Morphology
4. Allomorphy
5. Syntax
6. Semantics
7. Pragmatics

## **Dialectical linguistics**

1. On Cognition, Knowledge, & Understanding
  - Selecting our 'tool' (dialectical analysis)
2. Language – a Complex Whole
3. Analysis into Units
4. Semantics & pragmatics
5. Syntax: G-nalysis
6. Morhology & Allomorphy
7. Phonetics & Phonology



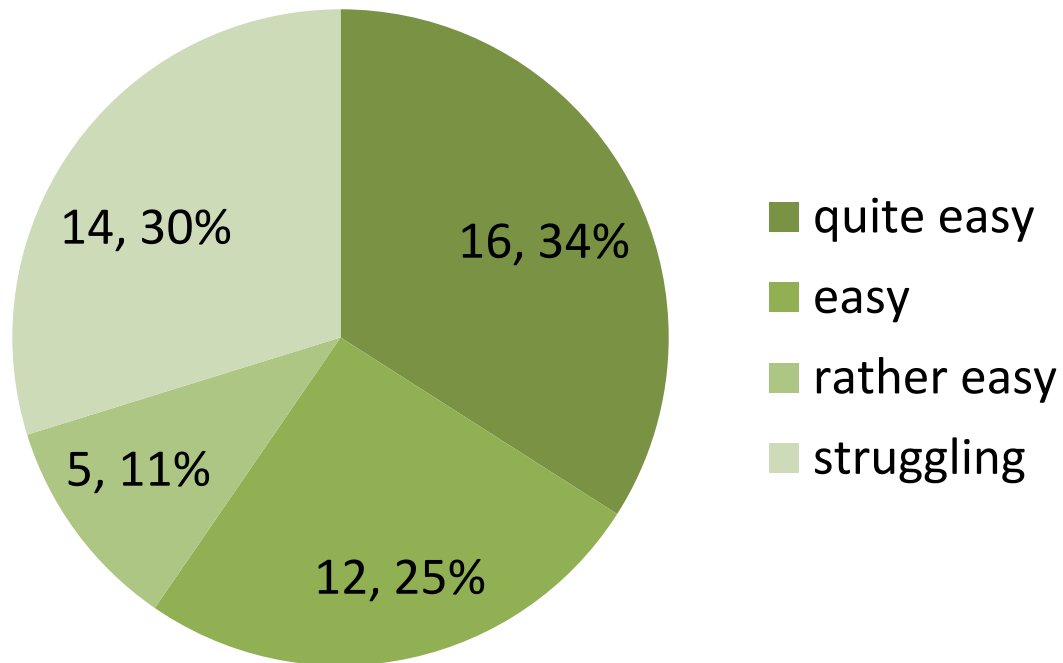
# Progress & analysis of our students' feedback

- Much greater interest in the Introduction to Linguistics course
- Course enrollment increased 5-fold, compared to pre-2007
- Departmental support

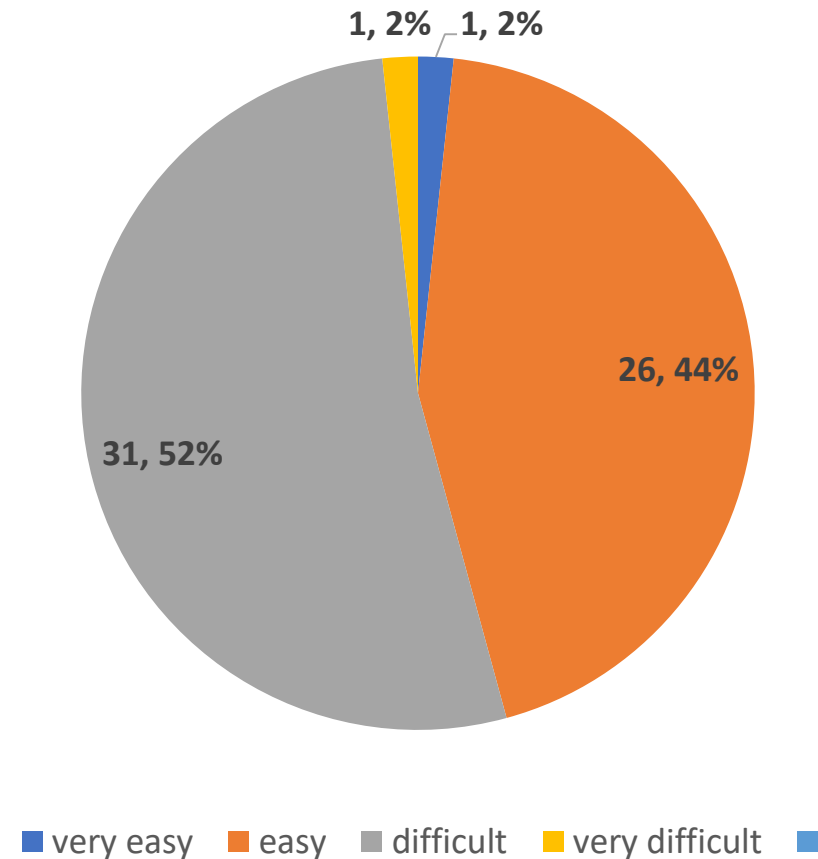


# Is this course easy or difficult to understand?

2018

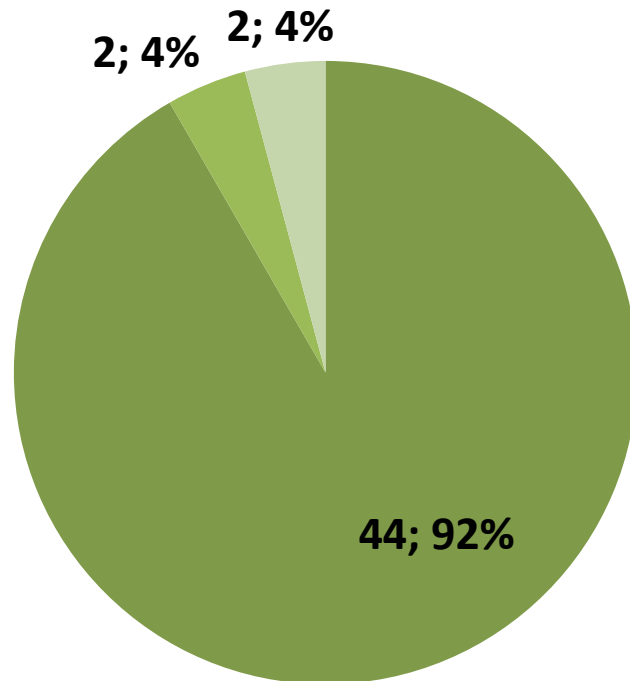


2021



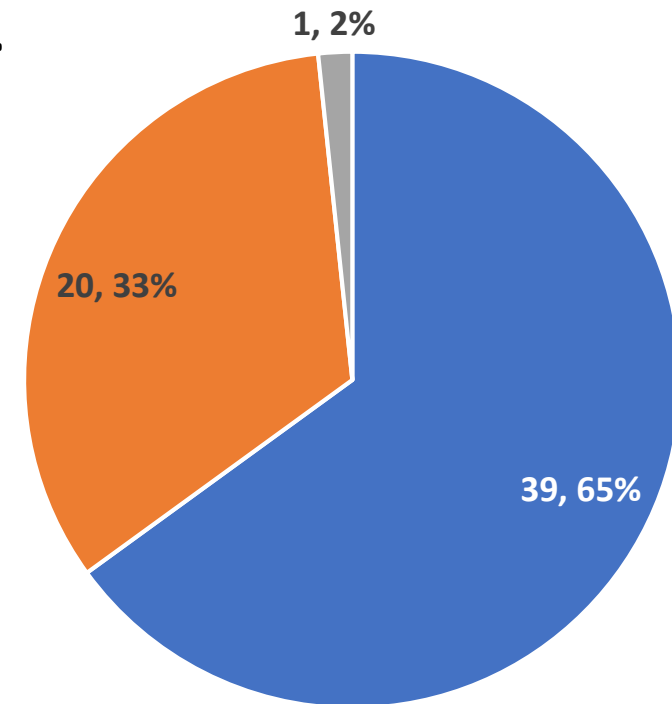
# Do you find this course interesting or boring?

2018



- very interesting
- quite interesting
- rather interesting

2021



- Very interesting
- Interesting
- Boring





- I find this course interesting because I get to know the difference between human and animal language, the forms of languages used and how we abstract and connect ideas and learning language as a whole.

2. Easy or difficult to understand? Why?

- It's easy to understand because it's interesting to me and I have that eagerness to learn and know more about this course.

3. Any comments/suggestions that would help make it better for you?

- I would suggest, you giving us activities at the end of every lecture.



## Student Feedback;

Kurt Saulep

2018

- I like this course because in this course I am learning more about language and my understanding of languages is being developed more.
- I do find this course really interesting because I am learning more about language and almost everything I learn is something new and that is the main reason why I find it interesting.
- This course is neither easy nor difficult because I find that it will be easier to understand if you do your summaries and if you don't it will be hard to understand because you will be lost.
- At the moment everything is just fine so I don't have any suggestion on how to make it better for myself because all in all it is all going good.



**2. Finally, please share with me your thoughts about what you like and/or what you don't like about this course.**

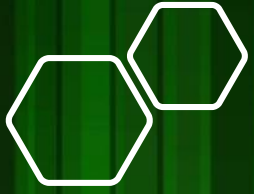
I like this course. It has helped me a lot in my other courses. I learned the basic properties of language including: syntax, sentence structure, nexus pattern, definition of thought and word. These are some of the concepts which I learned from my other courses but have not fully understood their concepts.

**3. Do you find it interesting or boring? Why?**

I find the course interesting because I am learning new ideas, facts and information about the importance of language, its structure and properties, and the usage. I have learned what the meaning of a word is and how our minds create thoughts, abstract ideas and create words. I now see why animal languages differ from human languages and also what creates thoughts in our minds.

**4. Easy or difficult to understand? Why?**

I thought this course was going to be easy but it is challenging. I am one of the people who take language for granted and ignore its fundamental concepts. This course is like an eye opening for me, that is to see in my mind's eye what language really is about. There are concepts which I am yet to learn and understand like grammaticalization and how it is different from other types of semantic change.



# FEEDBACK 2021: in the AGE OF COVID



**Q 2: Do you find this course interesting? Please tick your answer:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very interesting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boring</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interesting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very boring</li></ul>

**WHY?** Please give reasons for your answer.

I find this course to be very interesting. I didn't expect Linguistics to be so interesting, as I thought it was just about languages and translation of one language to another. I quickly found out about linguistic since the first sutra (or unit) that it was about the scientific study of language, providing every nitty-gritty details of how language works, its structures, evolution of languages, how one language is different from another even though acquisition of language and structure (or rather, nature of speaking it) is universal. I would like to know more about linguistics, as the introduction is about to be done with. This is a powerful course!

Jonathan Mado, 2021



**Q 1: Do you find the course materials easy or difficult to understand? Please tick your answer:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very easy</li></ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Difficult
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Easy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very difficult</li></ul>

**WHY?** Please give reasons for your answer.

It is Difficult because you will have to squeeze your brain cells and also it is more analytic course

**Q 2: Do you find this course interesting? Please tick your answer:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very interesting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boring</li></ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interesting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very boring</li></ul>

**WHY?** Please give reasons for your answer.

It is interesting because it gives us clear understanding of how language work and develop in time.



**Q 1: Do you find the course materials easy or difficult to understand? Please tick your answer:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very easy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficult</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Easy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very difficult</li></ul>

Nancy Terarup, 2021

**WHY?** Please give reasons for your answer.

I find the course material easy because everything is given but it takes only person to read and understand the units.

**Q 2: Do you find this course interesting? Please tick your answer:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very interesting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boring</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interesting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very boring</li></ul>

**WHY?** Please give reasons for your answer.

I find this course interesting because we get to learn about the basics of linguistic which I for one thought there is no other deep explanation or study of language like this course. So far I have learned a lot from this course and I am eager to learn more about this course as we go through the remaining units and in the years to come.



Q 211

Answer: Very Interesting

Reason: I used to think of language just as plain old language. I've never thought about it in parts or wonder how it came to be, the study of it or even the possibility of learning another language. For instance the use of Grammar to analyze sentences to finding out about DO, PA, PN, it just made me want to learn more.





### Q1: EASY but (difficult)

To begin  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the course material was understandable except the G-analysis bit. Thus, I didn't do well on the practical part of the assignment, otherwise the units were easy and understandable and as well constructing the cornell notes help me understand the unit in dept.

### Q2: VERY INTERESTING

Mathias Manu, 2021

I have learnt a lot of new things. As an English major student, I would like to say that ITL seemed technical while comparing with other courses such as Introduction to English Language, Modern English Grammar, English Grammar and Usage and so on.

Technical in a sense that how communication triggered from within and conveyed in-person, how words are understood and so forth were described and explained in detail within all units. Therefore, I suggest ITL was very interesting apart from all other English courses.

**Q3: Basically**, my view as a student, I would like to suggest that, you as a Lecturer is needed in-person to explain the units for better understanding. From experience you have summarized everything fully on the notes when we met on the very first day. I was very satisfied and wish we could maintain it like that all the way through. However, covid-19 has not allowed us to meet face to face again but generally the course needs time to focus in order to digest relevant information. Therefore, if possible do paraphrase the notes which are lengthy on topics like G-analysis.



# Lessons learned

Dialectical Analysis has made the study of Semantics, Pragmatics & Syntax much more interesting for our students.

However, low English proficiency makes it difficult for them to cope with the course content, and COVID 19 has exacerbated the already difficult situation.

Yet, students' INTEREST is high – and we consider this a great achievement!



THANK YOU  
for your attention

Olga Temple & Sakarepe Kamene

Linguistics, SHSS

UPNG



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