

24.942 Topics in the Grammar of a Less Familiar Language, Spring 2003

This course is designed to allow participants to engage in the exploration of the grammatical structure of a language that is unknown to them (and typically to the instructors as well). In some ways it simulates traditional field methods research. In terms of format, we work in both group and individual meetings with the consultant. Each student identifies some grammatical construction (e.g. wh questions, agreement, palatalization, interrogative intonation) to focus their research: they elicit and share data and write a report on the material gathered that is to be turned in at the end of the term. Ideally, we can put together a volume of grammatical sketches.

The first three to four weeks of the term, our group meetings will explore the basic phonology, morphology and surface syntax for a first pass overview of the language, looking for interesting areas to be explored in more detail later. During this period individual sessions can review material from the general session as well as explore new areas. At roughly the fifth meeting, individual students (typically two to three per session) guide the group elicitation to explore their research topic.

Language: Zazaki: According to one source Kurdish comprises two mutually unintelligible varieties. The Northern variety (sometimes called Kurmanji) is spoken in Turkey, Armenia, and Syria; the southern variety in Iraq (Sorani) and Iran (Mukri). 15-25 million speakers.

Newman, Paul and Martha Ratliff. 2001. *Linguistic Fieldwork*. Cambridge UP [reflections on the practice of field work by a variety of well-known linguists; papers by Ken Hale and Larry Hyman are copied].

McCarus, Ernest. 1997. Kurdish phonology. A. Kaye, ed. *Phonologies of Asia and Africa*, vol. 2, 691-706.

Haig, Geoffrey. 1998. On the interaction of morphological and syntactic ergativity: lessons from Kurdish. *Lingua* 105, 149-73.

Bubenik, Vit. 1989. An interpretation of split ergativity in Indo-Iranian languages. *Diachronica* 6, 181-212.