

# LNGT0101

## Introduction to Linguistics



Lecture #1 – Part II  
Sept 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014

## So, what's linguistics about?

- Linguistics is defined as *the scientific study of human language*.
- Linguists draw generalizations from a set of linguistic data to explain recurring patterns (e.g., in pronunciation, word structure, or sentence structure)
- They also collect and classify linguistic data, typically in statistical terms. But the aim is to explain the patterns, and not just to observe them.
- They can also design experiments to study linguistic behavior.

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- OK. So, let's try and work on some linguistic puzzles.

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## Forming plural in Samoan

### Singular Verb

nofo 'he sits'  
moe 'he sleeps'  
alofa 'he loves'  
savali 'he walks'  
malieu 'he dies'

### Plural verb

nonofo 'they sit'  
momoe 'they sleep'  
alolofa 'they love'  
savavali 'they walk'  
maliliu 'they die'

- Now, predict:  
atamaʔi 'he is intelligent'

???? 'they are intelligent'

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## Forming definite nouns in Lyele

In Lyele (Niger-Congo: Burkina Faso), vowels can bear one of three tones, e.g., [a] is mid tone; [á] is high tone; and [à] is low tone.

Indefinite noun	English translation	Definite noun	English translation
kúmí	'bird'	kúmíí	'the bird'
yá lá	'millet'	yá láá	'the millet'
kùlí	'dog'	kùlíí	'the dog'

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indefinite noun	English translation	definite noun	English translation
nà	'foot'	nàá	'the foot'
yijí	'church'	yijíí	'the church'
ya	'market'	yaá	'the market'

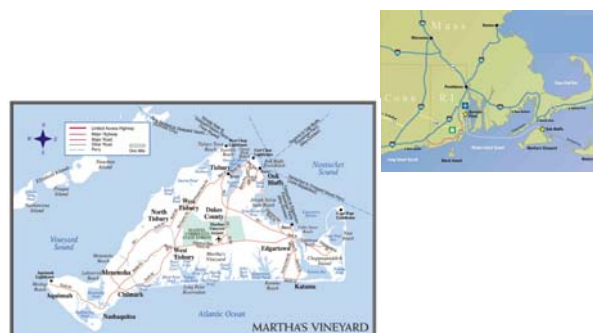
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## What English do you speak?

- [What do you call the thing from which you might drink water in a school?](#)
- [What is your generic term for a sweetened carbonated beverage?](#)
- [How do you pronounce the 'c' in \*grocery\*?](#)
- [Fill in the blank with the past verb form of 'drag':  
I ----- her lifeless body from the pool.](#)
- [Can you say "I used to could do that" to mean "I used to be able to do that"?](#)

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## Variation in vowels on Martha's Vineyard



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## Variation in vowels on Martha's Vineyard

- Some speakers on the island had a distinctive pronunciation of the two vowels, /əɪ/ and /əʊ/ (phonetically called **diphthongs**), in words such as "like, while, might" and "house, out, trout."
- This linguistic feature was characteristic of people living on the island (as opposed to summer tourists), hence it was a regional feature.
- The puzzle was that, within the island population, some residents had it in their speech, while others didn't.

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## Variation in vowels on Martha's Vineyard

- People who lived Up-Island (strictly rural) had the feature more than those who lived Down-Island.
- The feature also increased with age, peaking between 31 and 45 years.
- Students going to college with the intention of returning to the island had the pronunciation more than those who didn't plan to go back.
- Ethnic minority groups such as Portuguese and Native Americans also had the pronunciation more than other groups.

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## Next class agenda

- Think about the Martha's Vineyard's data. Can you make sense of them? Caroline gave us a hint, but give it some more thought.
- More about language and linguistics. Read Chapter 1, pp. 1-27.
- Do the **questionnaire** (link is in the final cell for today's class on the syllabus table) and send it to me by e-mail, ideally before Wednesday's class.

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