

Structure of a Non-Indo-European Language (LING748): Workflow

Most of our work this semester will follow a regular pattern of ‘elicitation – transcription – dictionary editing’. This document lays out how, in detail, our work-week will proceed.

1. Broad Overview of Workflow

1.1 Class Sessions

Each class session is a collective interview with our language consultant, which I record. The content of the interview is set by an ‘agenda’ that we work out at the end of the preceding class.

- 11:15 – 11:20 Review class agenda set by preceding class
- 11:20 – 11:50 Interview language consultant [expanded below]
- 11:50 – 11:55 BREAK
- 11:55 – 12:25 Interview language consultant
- 12:25 – 12:30 Set agenda for next time

1.1.1 Interview of Language Consultant

While we interview the language consultant, the following will also be taking place:

- I keep track of data on the blackboard
- Students in class keep track of data in their notebooks
(Buy a notebook specifically for this class)

It’s very important for everyone to keep track of the data in their notebooks. If anything is unclear at all on the recordings, your notes can be a vital reference!

1.2 Post-Class Period

Immediately following the end of the class, the following will take place:

- I will divide the recording of the class session into approximately equal portions
- I will post each of those portions on the class wiki
The URL:
http://web.linguist.umass.edu/~cable/2009/ling748/wiki/index.php/Recordings_and_Transcriptions_of_Class_Sessions
- I will send out an e-mail to everyone letting them know the recordings (in WAV format) are available. This e-mail will also notify students of what recording they have been assigned to transcribe.

1.3 Transcription

- Students will download their assigned WAV file from the wiki
- They will then transcribe the WAV file, using the *XML template* available on the class wiki (described below)
- Following their transcription, they update the class dictionary, by adding any new vocabulary and editing any older entries that need it (described below)
- Transcribers then e-mail their transcription to me, before the next class.
- I post the transcriptions on the class wiki, alongside the original WAV files.

2. Transcription, in Detail

In a class of this sort, it's best to follow a set convention regarding the transcription of data.

For us, these conventions will be set and enforced by having all transcription done using a particular XML template.

A Brief Aside about XML

What is XML?

Long story short: XML is a way of representing data.

More precisely, it's a system that let's you *design your own personal way* to represent data. (We'll see a concrete instance of it shortly)

Why are we using XML?

XML does two things for us:

- (i) It sets up (or, more properly, allows *me* to set up) some fairly **rigid guidelines for the representation of linguistic data** in our transcriptions.
- (ii) It's **open source**, which means *nobody owns it*. This means that, by representing our class data in this fashion (as opposed to, say, using WORD files), our data has a good shot of 'lasting the test of time'.

The Three Major Steps to the Transcription Process:

- Download the WAV file
- Open the WAV file (in Praat, or Audacity, or whatever)
- Fill out the XML template as you listen

2.1 Downloading the WAV File

The first thing you need to do is download the WAV file you've been assigned from the course wiki.

- Go to the class website (<http://people.umass.edu/scable/LING748-FA09>)
- Click on "Language Page"
- Enter your username and password (password sent to you by e-mail)
- Log in to the class wiki (same username and password)
- Click on "Recordings and Transcriptions of Class Sessions"
- Click on the date of the class session
- Right-click (PC) or control-click (Mac) on the portion you are assigned to transcribe
- Download the file to your computer (desktop, if you like)

2.2 Open the WAV File

You can open and listen to the WAV file in whatever program you like (e.g. iTunes). However, for the purposes of transcribing, it's very helpful to view the sound file in either *Praat* or *Audacity*.

2.3 Filling Out the XML Template

As mentioned above, we will be sticking to certain set conventions regarding the content and form of our transcriptions of class interview sessions. These conventions are encoded in the 'XML template' that we will be using throughout the class to write up our transcriptions.

First, you will need to download the XML template:

- Go to the class website (<http://people.umass.edu/scable/LING748-FA09>)
- Click on "Language Page"
- Enter username and password, and then log into the course wiki
- Click on "Class Resources"
- Under "Resources for Classwork", click on "XML Template for Transcription..."

Once you have the XML template, open it using either Notepad (PC) or TextEdit (Mac).

The template itself contains the instructions for how it is to be filled out.

2.3.1 Transcribing in IPA

As noted on the template itself, one of the fields that you can fill in is a representation of the utterance in IPA. This field, however, is entirely optional. While it is useful to transcribe in IPA, it is also important for each of us to learn the (phonemic) orthography for Dholuo. Therefore, all transcriptions must include at least one line in Dholuo orthography; whether you wish to also include a transcription in IPA is up to you.

If you would like to transcribe in IPA, the following information may be helpful to you:

Download a Unicode IPA Font:

- On the course wiki, click under “Class Resources”
- Under “Resources for Transcription in IPA”, click on either “Unicode IPA Font (Doulos)” or “Unicode IPA Font (Charis)” [I recommend the latter.]
- Instructions for downloading and installation appear there.

Download an IPA Keyboard Layout:

- Under “Resources for Transcription in IPA”, click on “IPA Keyboard Layout”
- Instructions for downloading and installation appear there.

3. Dictionary Editing

After you have transcribed the WAV file using the XML template, and have sent the transcription to me, it’s time to do your part in editing the class dictionary.

- Go to the class website (<http://people.umass.edu/scable/LING748-FA09>)
- Click on “Expandable Dictionary”
- Enter your username and password
- Add entries for any new vocabulary encountered *in your part* of the session (Instructions for adding entries appear on the dictionary page itself)
- If information gained *during your part* of the session indicates that older, existing dictionary entries need to be edited/updated, do this as well. (Instructions for editing entries appear on the dictionary page itself)