

Historical Linguistics in High School: The Columbus Experience

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Today's Presentation

We present here two outreach programs initiated by the Department of Linguistics at The Ohio State University that involve high school students and include historical linguistics as a key element in the subject matter.

- I. Summer Linguistic Institute for Youth Scholars (SLIYS)
- II. Linguistics in High School initiative (LxHS) — Background
- III. LxHS in the Metro Early College High School
- IV. Prospects for the future

**Summer Linguistic
Institute for Youth
Scholars
(SLIYS)**



Summer Linguistic Institute for Youth Scholars (SLIYS)

Summer Linguistic Institute for Youth Scholars (SLIYS) is a two-week summer program for high school and pre-college students, organized by the Department of Linguistics at The Ohio State University. The students typically attracted to this type of program have studied numerous languages, often on their own, and have often already studied IPA. The students cover core analytic topics the first week – phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax. The second week offers more advanced with specialized topics, such as pragmatics, deixis, historical morphology, language acquisition, and computational linguistics.



Summer Linguistic Institute for Youth Scholars (SLIYS)

In 2021, the program for the second week was modified to consist of a series of workshops, each taught 2-3 times during the week. The workshops were organized like a linguistics conference, allowing students to choose which topics and specialties they'd like to learn about. This provided an opportunity to incorporate historical linguistics into the program.

Summer Linguistic Institute for Youth Scholars (SLIYS)

All students have an introduction to phonetics on the first day of week 1. Later in week 1, students take a workshop on the basics of language change, where students learn about Grimm's Law and the Neogrammarians, as well as the mechanisms and types of language change. These in essence are the prerequisites for week 2.

Summer Linguistic Institute for Youth Scholars (SLIYS)

During week 2, there are three historical linguistics workshops – historical phonology, language contact, and language reconstruction: the Comparative Method. Because the students have acquired core linguistic concepts and the basics of historical linguistics, specifically mechanisms and types of language change, it is quite easy to go in depth in the Week 2 workshops. The students learn about language relatedness and the Comparative Method.

Summer Linguistic Institute for Youth Scholars (SLIYS)

The students learn to reconstruct proto-languages, utilizing the various heuristics they've been taught. It is extremely fruitful having the students learn the processes of language reconstruction because they can see the *final product*, which can then be compared to the larger family tree already constructed. Even students who are not interested in historical linguistics end up having a greater appreciation for language classification, language relatedness, and language change. Students interested in other subfields nonetheless appreciated family trees, use of corpora, and other diachronic data that can be used in the other subfields of linguistics.

Cultural Reconstruction

Hiki Mai



Linguistics in High School initiative (LxHS) — Background

Committee on AP [= Advanced Placement] Linguistics

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A special committee of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA), established in 2016 under leadership of Richard Larson (Stony Brook University) and decommissioned in 2022.

Committee's charge:

- To work with the College Board (CB) and high-school teachers to create a national AP Linguistics curriculum and exam.
- That proved to be a more daunting task than originally thought, so that ultimately the Committee's function was absorbed into the LSA's standing Committee, Linguistics in the School Curriculum

Committee on Linguistics in the School Curriculum

A Standing Committee of the Linguistic Society of America — created 1992; absorbed functions of Committee on AP [= Advanced Placement] Linguistics in 2022.

LiSC's Mission:

The Committee explores and pursues ways in which the linguistics community can advance K-12 curriculum and instruction about language and linguistics.

But ...

Before Committee on AP Linguistics was absorbed into LiSC, chair Richard Larson spoke at Ohio State University, October 2018, discussing the AP Linguistics initiative.

An undergraduate in the audience from Central Ohio, Victora Paxton, was inspired by the talk and made contact with Brian Joseph to see what could be done in the Columbus area.

Thus was born LxHS (Columbus)!

Perseverance Pays Off ...

After several fits and starts, and various (ultimately unproductive) meetings with principals and curriculum directors at several local schools, finally we found a receptive ear at the Metro Early College High School in late summer 2019, and thus the Linguistics in High School initiative (LxHS), Columbus chapter began for real.

Metro Early College High School (MECHS)

What is The Metro School

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- **Selective enrollment**
 - applicants from across Ohio
 - Admission by lottery
- **STEM**
- **Metro origin story:**
 - Wine social
 - What would the ideal high-school experience be?
- **The Metro experience:**
 - **Mastery curriculum:**
 - Passing = A (i.e. Mastery)
 - Must master every assignment or remediate assignments until they reach mastery
- **The gateway:**
 - With sufficient mastery credits and only mastery credits students proceed to gateway
 - **Students present:**
 - Achievements,
 - a board votes on the student's College readiness
 - Board: teachers, family, and community and student advocates
- **The Early College Experience:**
 - Columbus State Community College or
 - Ohio State University
 - college classes at Metro (for college credit)

Linguistics at MECHS

How we got started

- The Spanish teacher quits effectively ending the FL program
 - A humanities problem meets a STEM solution
 - Foreign language program by Rosetta Stone
 - Innovation: a STEM school should have linguistics (complementing FL)
 - The Metro school meets Brian Joseph & Victora Paxton:
 - Hires Linguistics Graduate student Carly Dickerson
 - She develops and teaches Intro to Linguistics for the high-school level (SP2020)
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Intermission: the pilot program is disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Budgetary (and other) uncertainties make offering the Linguistics course in 2020-2021 impossible.

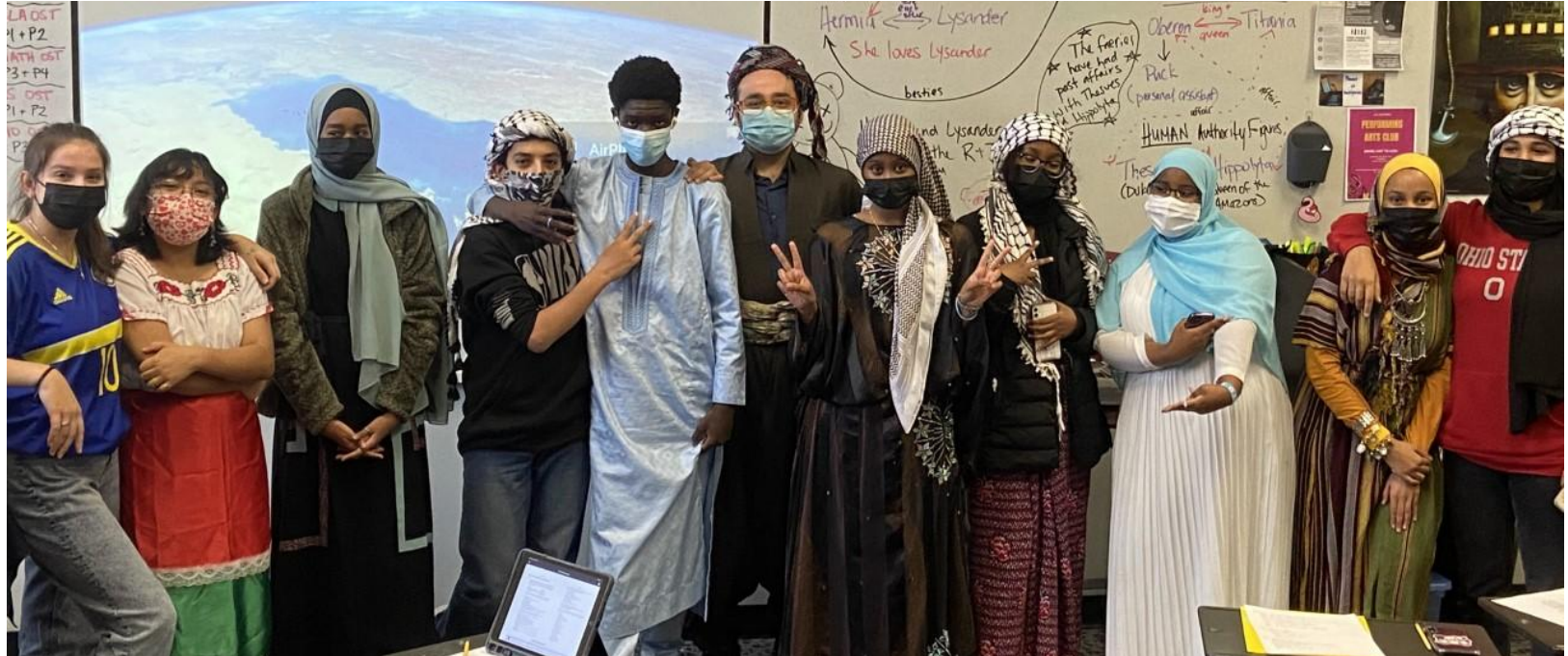
Linguistics at MECHS

During the pandemic

- In the absence of a course on linguistics in MECHS curriculum in academic year 2020-2021, a foothold for linguistics in the school was achieved via a Linguistics Club, run largely by OSU Linguistics Dept undergraduate Linguistics club, the UnderLings
- Club activities included presentations on historical linguistics



Linguistics classes at Metro are put on hold until the fall of 2021;
I take over the position.



My assessment of the high-school experience

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- No one knows what linguistics is
- Linguistics is not a substitute for language instruction
- High school students are entirely unaccustomed to new content
- The Early College Paradox:
 - Electives are scarce
 - Advanced students gateway
 - SLIYS for the interested
- The Credit Paradox:
 - Linguistics counts for FL credit
 - interested in language \cap taking linguistics = ϕ (disjoint sets)
- My niche:
 - Provide first exposure
 - Reach those who did not know linguistics existed

High school students are entirely unaccustomed to new content

STEM	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies	Electives
9 th grade	English 9 Honors English 9	Algebra 1 Geometry Honors Geometry	Physical Science Biology Honors Biology	World Studies World Influences Honors World History	PE Boys /PE Girls STEM: Introduction to Engineering STEM: Applied Engineering
10 th grade	English 10 Honors English 10	Honors Algebra 2 w/Trig Geometry Algebra 2 Advanced Algebra 2	Biology Honors Biology Chemistry Physics Honors Chemistry Honors Physics	US History American Studies AP US History	Health Education Computer Science STEM: Introduction to Engineering STEM: Applied Engineering
11 th grade	English 11 Honors Eng. 11 American Literature	Geometry Advanced Algebra 2 Functions, Stats, & Trig Honors Algebra 2 w/Trig Pre-Calculus Honors Analysis	Chemistry Physics Environmental Science AP Physics 1 AP Physics 2 AP Biology AP Chemistry	US Government AP Euro History African American History I (elective ½ credit) African American History II (elective ½ credit) Topical Issues (½ credit) The Other America (½ credit) Human Relations	Computer Science Anatomy & Physiology STEM: Introduction to Engineering STEM: Applied Engineering Transitions & Careers

High school students are entirely unaccustomed to new content

12 th grade	English 12 British Lit. AP English Literature Modern Literature	Pre-Calculus Calculus AP Calculus AB AP Calculus BC AP Stats	Chemistry Physics Environmental Science AP Physics 1 AP Physics 2 AP Biology AP Chemistry	AP US Government US Government African American History I (elective ½ credit) African American History II (elective ½ credit) Topical Issues (½ credit) The Other America (½ credit) Human Relations (elective ½ credit)	Computer Science Anatomy & Physiology STEM: Introduction to Engineering STEM: Applied Engineering Career & College Readiness
	Two (2) credits of Foreign Language recommended but not required.	One (1) elective credit of Fine Arts is required by ODE for graduation.			

The future of linguistics at MECHS

- Faculty proposal for linguistics:

- 2 credits of linguistics:
 - LING I
 - LING II
- 2credits FL:
 - Rosetta Stone I (Spanish, French, German)
 - Rosetta Stone II

- My proposal for linguistics:

- Track 1:
 - 3c linguistics:
 - Intro to Ling,
 - Language Evolution,
 - Phonetics, etc.
- Track 2:
 - 2c linguistics:
 - Intro to Ling,
 - Language Evolution,
 - Phonetics, etc.
 - 2c FL:
 - Live instruction

Teaching Language Evolution

Obstacles to teaching historical (at the high school)

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- **Textbook choices:**
 - Course based on Campbell (1989)
 - Language too dense for MECHS
- **Students are unaccustomed to new information**
 - Students realize too late that they need foundations (Differs from SLIYS)
 - Building on foundational material doesn't work
 - Reverse?
- **Early College paradox**

Points in the historical column

- "Why" is a question that students are unaccustomed to having answered
- Every question has an answer (a historical explanation)
- There are some questions to which no one knows the answer

Student (overwhelmingly positive) reactions

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- Representation in gateway and roundtable presentations
- Teacher advocate
- Ask a linguist

“Thank you for never giving up on me. I know I may not have grasped the linguistics or Japanese as well as other students, but I have learned so many other life lessons from you. When I get older I want to be just like you because you are my role model.”

—Anonymous Student

Conclusions/Prospects

Conclusions/Prospects

Ending on a proselytizing note:

- the Columbus experience can be replicated in locale after locale with regard to Linguistics in general (just do it!)
- given the appeal of historical linguistics, as shown by the successes in SLIYS and MECHS with historical material, once linguistics can get a foothold in the curriculum, historical linguistics can follow!