



## PLIN Modules – Module Information Sheet (2023/24)

### 1. General Information

- **Module Code:** PLIN0036
- **Title:** Linguistics of Sign Languages
- **Credits:** 15
- **Module Tutor:** Patrick Rosenberg    **Contact:** [p.rosenberg@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:p.rosenberg@ucl.ac.uk)
- **Other Tutor(s):** Kate Rowley ([kate.rowley@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:kate.rowley@ucl.ac.uk)), Heidi Proctor ([heidi.proctor.14@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:heidi.proctor.14@ucl.ac.uk)), Veronica Escobar ([veronica.escobar.15@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:veronica.escobar.15@ucl.ac.uk))
- **Module Available at the following levels:**
  - **Level 4 UG:** No
  - **Level 5 UG:** Yes
  - **Level 6 UG:** Yes
  - **Level 7 UG:** Yes
  - **Level 7 PG:** Yes

- **Module Description:**

This course introduces students to the linguistic study of signed languages, including sign language phonology, morphology, syntax and sociolinguistic variation, and why it is important for linguists to study signed languages. The bulk of the module will focus within the core areas of linguistics: phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, semantics/pragmatics, and discourse/interaction. Other areas covered will include sociolinguistic variation and language contact. The module will end by considering current issues in sign language linguistics and the implications of sign languages for linguistic diversity and universals.

- **Prerequisites:** None
- **Timetable:** <https://timetable.ucl.ac.uk/tt/moduleTimet.do?firstReq=Y&moduleId=PLIN0036>
- **Summary:**

Lectures will include the following topics...

- 1 Introduction to sign language and to the language experience of deaf people (KR/PR)
- 2 Phonetics & phonology (PR)
- 3 Morphology (KR)
- 4 Lexicon (PR)
- 5 Syntax (PR)
- 6 Semantics & pragmatics (PR)
- 7 Discourse & interaction (PR)
- 8 Language contact & bilingualism (KR)
- 9 Sociolinguistics & language change (KR)
- 10 Issues in sign language linguistics (PR)

- **Information for students on other programmes and Affiliate/intercollegiate students:**

If you want to take this module, you should select it on Portico as usual. Any general queries about taking the module can be addressed to [pals.lingteachingoffice@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:pals.lingteachingoffice@ucl.ac.uk).

## 2. Teaching

- **Teaching methods and tutorial/lab arrangements:**

The module will be delivered with weekly synchronous two-hour lectures, most of which will include some discussion/interactive activities. This will be supplemented by weekly one-hour tutorial sessions. Lectures for this module are recorded via the UCL Lecturecast system, and a link to recordings will be made available via the Moodle page for this module. Please note that recordings can fail for a number of reasons.

- **Communication:**

For general questions about the course (e.g. relating to course content, reading, exercises, assessment, etc.), students are encouraged to use the Moodle forums in the first instance.

In all other matters (if private or otherwise inappropriate for Moodle forum), students should communicate via email.

We will normally reply to any query within two working days.

- **Workload:**

- Weekly lecture sessions and tutorials/activities: 70 hours;
- Private reading: 30 hours;
- Written portfolio/assignments: 50 hours;

- **Core Texts:**

See Moodle (weekly tabs) for readings required and recommended for each week. In addition all readings should be available via the Reading List for this module (see Moodle for link). Check with your tutor if any are not available.

Textbooks

- Johnston, T. & Schembri, A. (2007). *Australian Sign Language (Auslan): An introduction to sign language linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Supplementary reading list

- Brennan, M. (1992). An introduction to the visual world of BSL. In D. Brien (Ed.), *Dictionary of British Sign Language/English* (pp. 1-133). London: Faber & Faber.
- Deuchar, M. (1983). Is British Sign Language an SVO language? In J. Kyle & B. Woll (Eds.), *Language in sign: An international perspective on sign language* (pp. 69-76). London: Croom Helm.
- Deuchar, M. (1984). *British Sign Language*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hill, J., Lillo-Martin, D., & Wood, S. K. (2019). *Sign languages: Structures and contexts*. New York: Routledge.
- Meier, R. P. (2002). Why different, why the same? Explaining effects and non-effects of modality upon linguistic structure in sign and speech. In R. P. Meier, K. Cormier & D. Quinto-Pozos (Eds.), *Modality and Structure in Signed and Spoken Languages* (pp. 1-25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Neidle, C., Kegl, J., MacLaughlin, D., Bahan, B., & Lee, R. (2000). *The syntax of American Sign Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Orfanidou, E., Woll, B., & Morgan, G. (Eds.). (2015). *The Blackwell guide to research methods in sign language studies*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sandler, W. (2006). Sign language: Overview. *Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics* (pp. 328-338). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Sandler, W., & Lillo-Martin, D. (2006). *Sign language and linguistic universals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Sutton-Spence, R. & Woll, B. (1999). *The linguistics of British Sign Language: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- **Libraries and other resources:**

- UCL Library: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/>
- Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts:  
<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/llba/advancedip> (Requires UCL login)

- Very useful resource! More powerful and targeted than Google, especially the Advance Search function.
- British Sign Language Corpus (<http://www.bsllcorpusproject.org/data/>). Includes open access BSL personal narrative and lexical elicitation ('what's your sign?') data from 249 deaf signers around the UK. English translations are not yet available.
- BSL SignBank (<http://bslsignbank.ucl.ac.uk>). A dictionary of BSL based on signs from the BSL Corpus.
- ELAN software for sign language transcription and annotation:
- <http://www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan/>
- <http://www.und.nodak.edu/dept/linguistics/textbooks/UsingELAN.pdf>

- **Additional Information:**

*Late work and extenuating circumstances*

Any requests for extensions to deadlines, or for extenuating circumstances to be taken into consideration by examiners, should be made by completing the relevant form. Instructions are available on the Moodle page for this module, under the Assessment tab. No extensions or special consideration can be given outside of this process, and there is a grading penalty for late submission of coursework. Again, information about this policy can be found on the course Moodle page, under the 'Assessment' tab.

- **Recording:** Lectures for this module are recorded via the UCL Lecturecast system, and a link to recordings will be made available via the Moodle page for this module. Please note that recordings can fail for a number of reasons.

### 3. Assessment

- Level: 6/7 UG/PG

Mode of Assessment	Weight	Format
Coursework	100%	3000-word essay

Table 1. Assessment Formats and Weightings

### 4. Types of Feedback

Types of feedback students on this module can expect to receive.

#### 4.1 Generic Tutor Feedback

Type of Feedback	Provided
<b>Oral feedback</b> is given to the whole class (e.g. this may be about coursework, an in-class or online task).	No
<b>Electronic feedback</b> to the whole group (e.g. see oral feedback above).	Yes
<b>Printed feedback</b> to the whole group (e.g. answers to an exercise done in class, feedback relating to general performance on coursework or a task etc).	No
<b>Coverage of topics in class</b> which have been raised by members of the class (e.g. in areas where students ask for clarification/elaboration, these topics are addressed in class).	Yes
<b>Electronic responses</b> to the whole group via the VLE or via email (eg sending replies to individual queries to the whole group).	Yes

Table 2. Generic Tutor Feedback

#### 4.2 Automated Feedback

Type of Feedback	Provided
<b>Tests / quizzes</b> within Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). These are tests which do not count towards the module mark, but serve to inform students of how well they are understanding materials taught.	No
<b>Personal Response Systems</b> used within class (e.g. to test that students understand a concept, to survey which topics students would like elaborated).	No

Table 3. Automated Feedback

### 4.3 Specific Targeted Tutor Feedback

Type of Feedback	Provided
<b>Oral responses within class</b> (e.g. demonstrators talking to students in lab, stats and computing classes).	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Oral responses outside class</b> (e.g. students are invited to telephone or meet with module staff with individual queries regarding topics taught).	<b>No</b>
<b>Electronic responses to queries</b> from individual students are provided (as above)	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Summative comments on coursework</b> (e.g. handwritten feedback at the end of a written assessment which counts towards the module mark).	<b>Yes</b>
<b>On-script comments</b> in the body of individual summative coursework	<b>No</b>
<b>Indication of achievement</b> against set marking criteria (e.g. for an individual essay or a lab report).	<b>No</b>
<b>Feedback using a standard feedback form</b> (e.g. essay feedback form or lab marking forms)	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Oral feedback on coursework</b> talking to individual students about their coursework on the phone or in person, this could be summative points or specific comments on parts of the essay / lab report / project.	<b>No</b>
<b>Electronic feedback on coursework.</b> This could be via email or within VLE (e.g. using Gradebook on Moodle).	<b>Yes</b>

Table 4. Specific Targeted Tutor Feedback

### 4.4 Feedback From People Other Than Module Staff

Type of Feedback	Provided
<b>Peer feedback:</b> fellow students commenting on/marking each other's work, or working together on a task (e.g. group work providing students with feedback on their ideas/understanding).	<b>No</b>
<b>Self-feedback</b> (e.g. students evaluating their own coursework, worksheet answers, etc.)	<b>No</b>
<b>Feedback from seminar tutors:</b> Students may receive feedback on their understanding of topics/answers to queries/feedback on coursework from their tutor (e.g. poster, Research Project presentations etc)	<b>No</b>

Table 5. Feedback from People other than Module Staff

## 4.5 Feedback related to examinations

Type of Feedback	Provided
A mock examination is given to help students prepare for the final exam.	No
Marks for the previous year provided online, with a breakdown of marks for individual questions	No
Samples of real student work, such as coursework, exam essays, and projects from previous students on the module.	No
Other exam-related feedback (please give details or <b>delete table row</b> )	No

Table 6. Feedback related to examinations

## 5. Specific Transferable Skills

Transferable skills students on this module can expect to develop, categorised into skill areas.

### 5.1 Academic

Type of transferable skill	Provided
<b>Learning Actively</b> – Able to approach learning as an active agent, taking responsibility for the process and outcomes.	Yes
<b>Analysing Data</b> – Able to filter and organise information to develop an argument and work toward a conclusion, applying numerical analysis where appropriate.	No
<b>Thinking Critically</b> – Able to consider claims made against the evidence available and to develop one’s own view systematically	Yes
<b>Using Sources</b> – Able to locate and use appropriate books, journals, websites and other sources to gather relevant data	Yes
<b>Solving Problems</b> – Able to use systematic approaches to overcome difficulties in producing a desired outcome	No
<b>Managing Projects</b> – Able to plan a coordinated set of tasks and enact over time to produce a substantial result	No

Table 7. Academic transferable skills

### 5.2 Self-Management

Type of transferable skill	Provided
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<b>Reflecting on Learning</b> – Able to review dispassionately one’s approaches to learning and the outcomes and progressively improve the process	<b>No</b>
<b>Managing Time</b> – Able to prioritise tasks and commitments to achieve optimum results in a designated timeframe	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Being Creative/Innovative</b> – Able to generate and apply original approaches to tasks and problems and produce improved outcomes	<b>No</b>
<b>Assessing Oneself</b> – Able to identify one’s own strengths, weaknesses, progress made and action needed to improve effectiveness	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Being Independent</b> – Able to work at own initiative with minimal supervision, taking responsibility for action and outcomes	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Managing Resources</b> – Able to allocate and conserve funds and other resources on a day to day basis and to support projects	<b>Yes</b>

Table 8. Self-management transferable skills

### 5.3 Communication

Type of transferable skill	Provided
<b>Writing</b> – Able to communicate in textual forms (essay, reports, journal entries, web pages etc.) in an appropriate style with a clear narrative flow	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Listening</b> – Able to hear and appreciate the content, background and purpose of what someone else is communicating to you	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Using Information Technology</b> – Able to use digital technology for managing information and to mediate communication for learning and other purposes	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Presenting</b> – Able to speak to an audience, using visual aids as appropriate and respond to questions	<b>No</b>
<b>Communication globally</b> – Able to understand and manage factors affecting communication across cultures, including means of monitoring progress	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Planning and making decisions</b> – Able to identify steps needed to work towards global and communicate them, including means of monitoring progress	<b>Yes</b>

Table 9. Communication transferable skills

### 5.4 Working with others

Type of transferable skill	Provided
<b>Working in teams</b> – Able to co-operate with others, to contribute your strengths and learn from theirs with a common purpose	<b>No</b>
<b>Negotiating</b> – Able to respect the needs and interests of others when they differ from your own and to find common ground	<b>No</b>



<b>Leading</b> – Able to galvanise a team into cooperative action, to manage, guide or facilitate a group to maximise success	<b>No</b>
<b>Understanding others</b> – Able to recognise the variety of ways in which people can think and approach tasks, adjusting your own to suit	<b>No</b>
<b>Assessing self and peers</b> – Able to assess your own performance objectively and to give and receive constructive feedback with others	<b>No</b>
<b>Managing change</b> – Able to adapt to changing circumstance and maintain focus on the group's declared goals	<b>No</b>

Table 10. Working with others transferable skills