

## Unit Plan for introducing Columbia School Linguistics to high-school students

Developed by Nadav Sabar, 2020-2021

### Readings and Topics

<u>Text</u>	<u>Main Topics discussed</u>
Plato, <i>Cratylus</i>	The naturalness of names; the function of names; meaning as reference
Noah-Harari, <i>Sapiens</i> : Part 1: The Cognitive Revolution -- the Tree of Knowledge	The linguistic revolution; the function of language and its role in human society;
De Saussure, <i>Course in General Linguistics</i> , Part One – General Principles: I. – Nature of the linguistic sign	Nature of the linguistic sign; the arbitrary nature of the sign; the distinction between a linguistic sign and a symbol
De Saussure, <i>Course in general linguistics</i> , Part Two – Synchronic Linguistics: IV – Linguistic Value	Language as a principle of classification
Diver, <i>The Dual</i>	Opposition of inclusion vs. opposition of exclusion; grammatical system; systems of grammatical number in different languages; translation issues in general and translation of the Dual in Homer in particular; the Dual in Greek as opposed to the Dual in Modern Hebrew
<i>Genesis</i> , Chapters 1-2 + 11-12	The variability in the biblical text in the reference to God
U. Cassuto, <i>The Documentary Hypothesis</i> , Chapters 1-2	The Documentary Hypothesis; Cassuto's meaning hypothesis to explain the unique distribution of the names "Elohim" and "Adonai" in the biblical text

### Detailed plan

#### Lesson 1: Text -- **Plato's *Cratylus***

1. First session. Teacher turns to students and asks, one by one: "Who are you?"

The students (naturally) will answer their names.

2. Teacher poses the question: Are you [your name]? Is your name **who you are**? Would you have been YOU, and be the same person you are, had your name been different? Discussion in class.
3. **Read now from Plato's Cratylus** – from the start of the dialogue to the end of section [388]
4. Formulate in your own words the question which Socrates and Hermogenes are attempting to answer. What is their discussion about?
5. What is the position of Hermogenes?
6. What position does Socrates seem to hold?
7. What is your own reasoned position regarding the question they're discussing?
8. Consider now the phenomenon of **onomatopoeia**. First provide a few examples from your language. Second, explain how or to what extent the phenomenon of **onomatopoeia** might weigh in on the question discussed by Socrates and Hermogenes.

## Lesson 2: Text -- **Noah-Harari, *Sapiens***

1. Like the agricultural revolution or the industrial revolution, scientists also talk about the **linguistic revolution**. Briefly write what to your understanding the linguistic revolution was, and why it is called a revolution.
2. Sharing and discussion of student writing.
3. Read the chapter "The tree of knowledge" within the Section "The Cognitive Revolution" in the book *Sapiens*. Then answer the following questions.
4. What precisely has the linguistic revolution consisted of, according to Noah-Harari? Illustrate Harari's claim with the example of the Peugeot corporation.

5. Why, according to Harari, is this the nature of the revolution, and NOT rather the ability to transmit larger quantities of information?
6. Compare the role of language in human life according to Plato on the one hand (on the basis of Socrates' speech in *Cratylus*), and according to Harari on the other hand. What is language capable of, according to each view?

**Lesson 3:** Text -- De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics, Part One – General Principles: I. – Nature of the linguistic sign*

1. Look at the Diagram on the first page of the chapter [where we see Equus and Arbor]. The view of language presented in this diagram is essentially the view of Plato in the *Cratylus*. Explain again what this view of language is. How do words in language attain meaning according to this view? Discussion in class.
2. Write a response to this view of language in the name of Noah-Harari on the basis of our previous reading. Does he agree or disagree with the view presented in the diagram and in Plato?
3. Continue now reading the chapter from Saussure. Answer the following questions.
4. What according to Saussure is the essential difference between a **linguistic sign** and a **symbol**?
5. Find information online about the **Bee Dance**. Explain in some detail at least one of the dance moves – what exactly do the bees do, and what is the significance of that move? Is there a **natural** or **arbitrary** connection between the move and its significance? Discuss whether the Bee Dance ought to be considered as a linguistic sign or rather a symbol, according to Saussure.
6. Provide an example of a “body language” gesture unique to your own culture or another culture you know of. Describe the movement and its significance. Discuss whether this gesture of body language ought to be considered a linguistic sign or rather a symbol, according to Saussure.
7. Find online examples of sign-language signs. Provide at least one example of a sign-language sign that should be considered a **linguistic sign** according to Saussure and explain why it should be so considered. Then provide at least one example of a sign-

language sign that should be considered a **symbol** according to Saussure and explain why it should be so considered.

8. Find some examples of traffic signs. Provide at least one example of a traffic sign that should be considered a **linguistic sign** according to Saussure and explain why it should be so considered, and then at least one example of a traffic sign that should be considered a **symbol** according to Saussure and explain why it should be so considered. Please paste a picture of the traffic sign along with your answer.
9. Explain what **onomatopoeia** is and provide a few examples from your own language. Explain whether Saussure sees such words as linguistic signs or rather as symbols. What arguments does Saussure provide to support his view?

**Lesson 4:** Text -- **De Saussure, *Course in general linguistics*, Part Two – Synchronic Linguistics: IV – Linguistic Value**

1. Read Chapter 4 of Saussure which presents the idea that language is a **principle of classification**.
2. Explain in your own words the difference between English and French with regard to the concept of *sheep*.

<u>Two English words</u>	<u>A single French word</u> (covering the same domain)
<b>Mutton</b> (for example: the mutton is tasty)	<b>Mouton</b> (for example: 'mouton' is tasty; 'mouton' eats grass)
<b>Sheep</b> (for example: The sheep eats grass)	

3. Think of parallel examples of this phenomenon between two languages you know (e.g., Hebrew and English). Fill in several lines in the Tables below, according to the model shown in the Table above, making sure to provide clear illustrative examples that bring out the distinction.

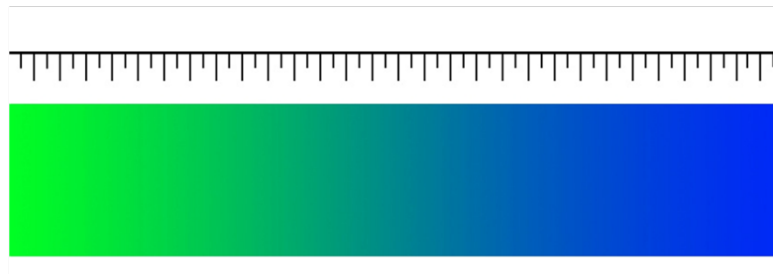
<u>Two English words</u>	<u>A single Hebrew word</u> (covering the same domain)

<u>Two Hebrew words</u>	<u>A single English word</u> (covering the same domain)

4. Saussure asserts that language is a **principle of classification**. Go back to the diagram we looked at last time [with Equus and Arbor]. Explain how Saussure’s original view of language is different from the view presented in that diagram (or in Plato’s Cratylus). Explicate how the examples provided in your Tables above illustrate Saussure’s point. Explain in detail.

**Activity on how different languages designate color**

1. Look at the color spectrum below: Where do you draw the line between **green** and **blue**?

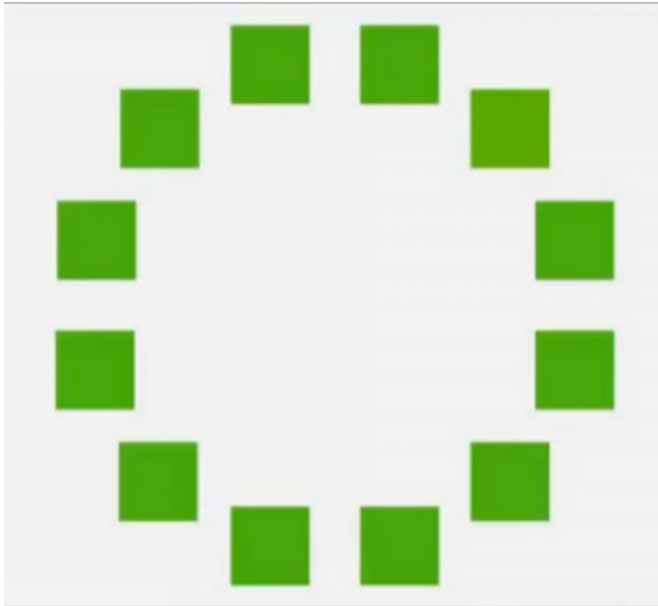


2. **Discussion:** Is it possible to pinpoint where precisely green turns to blue or vice versa?
3. Let’s see how different languages make the distinction. Can you tell which square in the picture below is blue?

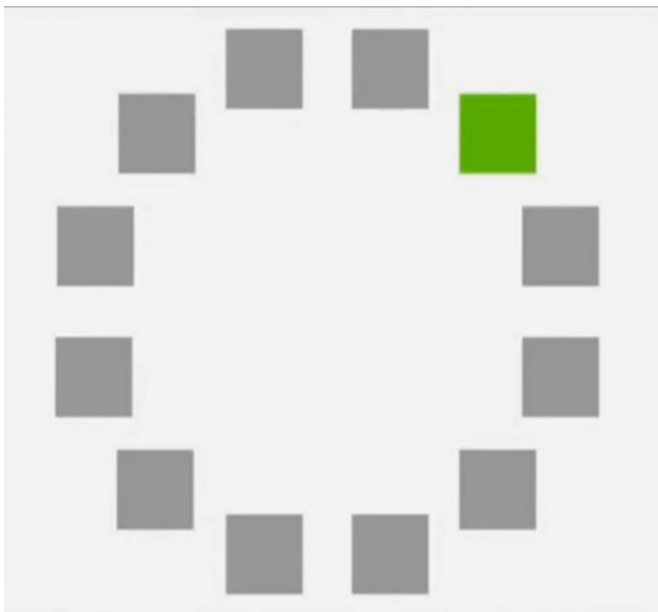


Interestingly, Namibian people typically cannot. Note that their language consists of no word for “blue”.

4. Now look at the following picture and see whether you can tell which square is a different shade of green?



Not so easy... Well, here is the answer:



Namibian people can tell instantly which square is a different shade of green here. Their language designates a distinct word for each shade of green.

5. Similarly, Hebrew designates a word for blue -- "KAHOL", and a word for light blue -- "THELET", while English and many other languages do not make that lexical distinction.

You can read more about how different languages designate color in the short article below:

<https://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-blue-and-how-do-we-see-color-2015-2?op=1>

6. Explain and discuss how all of these facts support Saussure’s claim that language is a **principle of classification**.
  
7. We have supported Saussure’s claim by showing how languages can demarcate the color spectrum in all sorts of different ways. In the next paper we read, we’ll see how different languages can demarcate the number-line in a variety of ways.

Lessons 5+6: Text -- **Diver’s *The Dual***

1. Having read the article at home, explain as best you can:
  - a. what is Diver’s central claim?
  - b. What counter claim does Diver present at the outset of the article, and what is his response to it?
  - c. What methods does Diver use to support his hypothesis?
  
2. Complete the following exercise: [Adapted from course material by Alan Huffman]
  - I. Examine data from the five imagined languages below.

<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>
zero horse	*zero horse	*zero horse	*zero horse	zero horse
one horse	one horse	one horse	one horse	one horse
*two horse	*two horse	*two horse	*two horse	*two horse
*23 horse	*23 horse	*23 horse	*23 horse	*23 horse
*many horse	*many horse	*many horse	*many horse	*many horse
*zero horsen	*zero horsen	*zero horsen	*zero horsen	*zero horsen
*one horsen	*one horsen	*one horsen	*one horsen	*one horsen
*two horsen	*two horsen	two horsen	two horsen	two horsen
*23 horsen	*23 horsen	*23 horsen	*23 horsen	*23 horsen

*many horsen	*many horsen	*many horsen	*many horsen	*many horsen
*zero horses	zero horses	zero horses	zero horses	*zero horses
*one horses	*one horses	*one horses	*one horses	*one horses
two horses	two horses	*two horses	two horses	*two horses
three horses	three horses	three horses	three horses	three horses
many horses	many horses	many horses	many horses	many horses

II. Fill in the following tables according to the information provided above.

<u>Language A</u>	
Signal	Meaning

<u>Language B</u>	
Signal	Meaning

<u>Language C</u>	
Signal	Meaning

<u>Language D</u>	
Signal	Meaning



<u>Language E</u>	
Signal	Meaning

- III. Which of these languages presents an **opposition of exclusion** and which ones present an **opposition of inclusion**?
- IV. Is any of the above languages English?
- V. Which of these languages has a similar structure to that of Homeric Greek?
- VI. What Saussurean insight is brought to light by the data presented here and in Diver's paper?

### Homer translations

3. Now read two translations to Homer's *Iliad*, book 16 lines 777-792 (the death of Patroclus). Explain in your own words why we find the Dual in this passage, in spite of the fact that the word for "shoulders" in Homer almost always occurs rather with the plural. What literary effect does Homer achieve by using the Dual at this point in the narrative?
4. Closely and carefully compare between the two translations. What differences between them can you note, in terms of either grammar or vocabulary? In your view, do these translations somehow make up for the lack of the Greek Dual? How so? Do they achieve the literary effect Homer intended for this passage? Does one of the translations achieve the effect better than the other?
5. Do you think that a translation can capture the literary effect achieved by the use of the Greek Dual in the Homeric text? Explain the challenge in some detail.

### The Dual in Hebrew

- I. Examine the following Hebrew data -- taken from Yishai Tobin's paper "The Dual Number in Hebrew" (appears in *Between Grammar and Lexicon*, JB 2000).

According to this set of data, does Hebrew involve an **opposition of exclusion** or an **opposition of inclusion**?

- a. *sha'atayim* “two hours” (DUAL), versus:
- b. *shtei sha'ot* “two hours” (PLURAL)
- a. *dakatayim/dakotayim* “two minutes” (DUAL), versus:
- b. *shtei dakot* “two minutes” (PLURAL)
- a. *pa'amayim* “twice” (DUAL), versus:
- b. *shtei pe'amim* “two times” (PLURAL)

II. On the basis of the examples below, what preliminary meaning analysis would you be tempted to offer for the use of the dual as opposed to the plural in Hebrew?

Would your analysis for the Hebrew Dual follow similar lines to those proposed in Diver’s paper for the Dual in Homeric Greek?

- (41) *ze mivxan katsar, rak sha'atayim.* (DUAL)  
 this test short, only two-hours (DUAL)  
 “This is a short exam, only *two hours*.” (DUAL)
- (42) *eize katsar! ze lakax li shtei sha'ot la'anot al she'ela*  
 which short it took to-me two + hours to-answer on question  
*axat!* (PLURAL)  
 one (PLURAL)  
 “What short! It took me *two hours* to answer only one question!”  
 (PLURAL)
- (43) *al titragez! ze yikax li rak dakatayim lehitlabesh.*  
 no be-angry it will-take to-me only two-minutes to-dress  
 “Don’t be angry! It will only take me *two minutes* to get dressed.”  
 (DUAL)
- (44) *ze lo yikax shtei dakot! ze yikax lax*  
 it no will-take *two + minutes* it will-take to-you  
*xatsi-sha'ah* (PLURAL)  
 half-hour (PLURAL)  
 “It won’t take you *two minutes*! It will take you half an hour!”

Example (46) describes the severe humiliation suffered by Mr. Bumble during the two months that he was married. After a particularly humiliating scene with his wife of two months, Bumble mumbles to himself:

- (46) *ve-kol ze rak be-meshex shnei xodashim* (PLURAL)  
and-all this only in-period *two + months* (PLURAL)  
“All in two months” (PLURAL)

Example (47) is taken from a conversation between a student suffering from insomnia to her mother describing the two long hours it took her to fall asleep using the plural rather than the more common dual form:

- (47) *lo hitslaxti le-hiradem shtei shaot!* (PLURAL)  
no succeeded-I to-fall asleep *two + hours* (PLURAL)  
“It took me *two hours* to fall asleep!” (PLURAL)

- (48) *ha-seret metsig shnei yamim, sheni ve-xamishi ze*  
the-movie plays *two + days* (PLURAL) Monday and-Thursday it  
*noten lanu yomayim tmimim lilmod*  
gives to-us two-days (DUAL) whole to-study  
“The movie’s playing *two days* (PLURAL), Monday and Thursday,  
that gives us *two whole days* (DUAL) to study.”

III. In the example below, the dual form appears together with the plural on the same Entity – ‘place’. This seems to be a fairly infrequent use of the dual in Hebrew, and is considered to be “ungrammatical”.

Continuing with your preliminary meaning analysis on the basis of the examples above, can you explain why the speaker chose to add the dual form here?

[note: the word ‘together’ in Tobin’s gloss does not appear in the Hebrew text.]

- (52) *shmor li mekomotayim la-seret!* (PLURAL-DUAL)  
save for-me *place-P URA -DUA* to-the-movie (PLURAL-DUAL)  
“Save me *two places together* for the movie! (PLURAL-DUAL)

### Lesson 7+8: Student Independent Research Project

1. The students will now conduct their own research.
2. Choose **one** of the word pairs provided (teacher provides approximately 10 pairs to choose from, e.g. *home-house*, *every-each*, *look-see*, *hear-listen*, etc.)
3. Collect at least **10** examples of each word in the pair.
4. Look carefully at the list of examples of each word and try to formulate an initial hypothesis regarding the significance of each word in the pair. Be sure to explicate both what the two words share in their significance, as well as the distinction between them.
5. Collect at least **10** additional examples. As you collect your examples, consider and reconsider your hypothesis, and tweak it as you see necessary. As best you can try to capture the distinction between the two words' meanings.
6. Explain in as much detail as you can your hypothesis for the precise meaning of each word – indicating both the semantic domain shared by the two words, as well as the distinction between them within that shared domain.
7. Choose three examples of each word that best illustrate the distinction between them. Provide meaning analyses for these examples, taking care to show clearly just how your hypothesis is supported by these examples. [Students were step-by-step instructed how to do this].

**Lesson 9: Text -- *Genesis*, Chapters 1-2, 11 and 12**

1. Read the first two chapters of Genesis, as well as Chapter 11-12.
2. Note the difference in God's name. What three distinct references to God are evident in these passages?
3. The text refers to the same being in these three different ways. What in your opinion could account for this variability?
4. Read online about the Documentary Hypothesis.
5. How does this hypothesis account for the variability in reference to God?

6. What is your opinion regarding this hypothesis? Is it a good explanation? Why or why not?

**Lesson 10: Text -- U. Cassuto's *The Documentary Hypothesis*, Chapters 1-2**

1. In advance of class, read the first two Chapters of Cassuto's book.
2. According to Cassuto, what is the most important piece of evidence in support of the Documentary Hypothesis?
3. Explain in detail why Cassuto refuses to accept the claim that there is no significant distinction between the different ways that the biblical text refers to God.
4. Explain Cassuto's hypothesis regarding the unique meaning of each of God's names.
5. Explain how you think Saussure would have responded to Cassuto's hypothesis.
6. According to Cassuto's hypothesis, why does the name "Elohim" consistently appear in Chapter 1 of Genesis?
7. According to Cassuto's hypothesis, why does the combined name "Adonai Elohim" consistently appear in Chapter 2 of Genesis?
8. According to Cassuto's hypothesis, why does the name "Adonai" appear in Chapter 12 of Genesis?
9. Explain whether in your opinion Cassuto's hypothesis provides a more convincing explanation for the variability than the Documentary Hypothesis.