

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE

Haverford College

Psychology 238

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Marilyn Boltz

Office: Sharpless 407

Email: mboltz@haverford.edu

Phone: 896-1235

Office Hours: Before class and by appointment

Language characterizes one of the most important and pervasive aspects of human behavior. Through both written and vocal means, language allows us to express our thoughts and feelings to others as well as obtaining information from the world around us. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine the sense of isolation or the probability of surviving in a society whose members are unable to communicate with one another.

The intent of this course is to examine various aspects of language behavior from a psychological perspective. After considering some of the evolutionary and biological substrates of language, we'll then look at the underlying processes involved in both perceiving and producing speech, as well as deriving the intended meaning of the speech message itself. As we will discover, some of these comprehension processes rely on prior knowledge of objects and events from the natural environment, while others rely on nonverbal behavior and certain implicit rules of conversational interaction. Lastly, variations in language use will be addressed, not only from the perspective of the child who is attempting to acquire language, but also from individuals who differ in gender, race, and socioeconomic status. The culmination of these various issues will then allow us to consider the relationship between language and thought, and whether one's particular linguistic background shapes the way we think about the world around us.

All readings for this course are posted on Blackboard. Your course grade will be weighted by the following factors:

Exam One	25%
Exam Two	25%
Exam Three	25%
Paper	25%

Exams. The three exams weigh most heavily toward your grade and consist of short essay questions. Each exam is non-cumulative and only covers material since the previous exam. Extensions are only granted under extreme circumstances or bona fide medical emergencies, and must be requested prior to the exam.

Paper. In addition to the exams, you will also be required to write a final paper for the course. This should reflect some topic in language behavior that was not addressed in class. For example, you might want to explore the topic of dyslexia, bilingualism, the use of slang, parallels between music and language, or the language behavior of autistic children (these are just some examples – there are many others). Again, you are free to choose any topic that interests you as long as it involves some aspect of psycholinguistics that was not previously discussed.

The paper should be around 15 pages and rely on the APA style of referencing. Most of the paper should serve as a review of the relevant literature but the last 2-3 pages should provide your own thoughts and evaluation (e.g. ideas for future research). Your paper is due **Tuesday, November 5**.

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Linguistics and Psychology

- What is psycholinguistics and what issues are of interest?
- Historical Origins
 - Behaviorism
 - Influence of Noam Chomsky

READINGS: Carroll, *The Psychology of Language: Fifth Edition*. Chapters 1 and 2

II. Biological Foundations of Language

- Neurological mechanisms of language production and comprehension
- Aphasia and implications for normal language processing
- Hemispheric differences
- Evolution of language
- Language in other animal species - dolphins, bees, and primates

READINGS: Carroll, Chapter 13

- Springer, S. & Deutsch, G. (1998). The human split brain: Surgical separation of the hemispheres. In R. Honeck (Ed.), *Introductory readings for cognitive psychology*. NY: McGraw Hill.
- Pinker, S. (2003). Language as an adaptation to the cognitive niche. In M.H. Christiansen and S. Kirby (Eds.), *Language evolution*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Demers, R. (1988). Linguistics and animal communication. In F. Newmeyer (Ed.), *Linguistics: The Cambridge survey. Vol. III*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rumbaugh, D.M. & Savage-Rumbaugh, S. (1994) Language in comparative perspective. In N.J. MacKintosh (Ed.), *Animal learning and cognition*. (pp. 307-333). NY: Academic Press.

III. Perception of Language

- Articulatory phonetics and the production of speech sounds
- Acoustical phonetics and the physical characteristics of speech
- Categorical perception
- Models of speech perception
- Reading behavior

READINGS: Carroll, Chapter 4

EXAM ONE

IV. The Internal Lexicon

- How are words and their concepts stored?
- Models of semantic memory
 - Hierarchical Models
 - Spreading Activation Model
- Retrieval of words from memory - factors influencing lexical access

READINGS: Carroll, Chapter 5

V. Sentence Comprehension

- Role of syntax in understanding sentences
- Memory for sentences:
 - constructive memory and inferences
 - presuppositions
 - propositional models of sentence memory
- Applications to eyewitness testimony and advertising

READINGS: Carroll, Chapter 6

VI. Discourse Comprehension

- Microstructure of stories: Sentential relations and the Given-New Contract
- Representations of discourse in memory
- Role of inferential processes
- Macrostructure of stories: The role of schemata and story grammars
- Applications to education and classroom learning

READINGS: Carroll, Chapter 7

- Taylor, S. & Crocker, J. (1981). Schematic bases of social information processing. From E.T. Higgins, C.P. Herman, & M.P. Zanna (Eds.), *Social Cognition: The Ontario Symposium, Vol. 1* Erlbaum Press.
- Black, J. Comprehending stories and social situations.

VII. Language Production

- Insights from "slips of the tongue"
- Stages of language planning
- Mechanisms of speech production
- Hesitations and syntactic planning
- Insights from sign language

READINGS: Carroll, Chapter 8

- Motley, M. (1985). Slips of the tongue. *Scientific American*, 253, 116-127.
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EXAM TWO

VIII. Conversational Interaction

- Display of nonverbal behavior:
 - proxemics and kinesics
 - eye gaze
 - information from qualities of the voice
- The temporal structure of conversation - interactional synchrony and speaker accommodation
- Conversation as an implicit contract - conversational maxims
- Turn-taking behavior
- Schizophrenic thought and language - a breakdown of conversational norms

READINGS: Carroll, Chapter 9

- Burgoon, J. (1993). Interpersonal expectations, expectancy violations, and emotional communication. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 12*, 30-48.
- Krauss, R.M. & Chiu, C.Y. (1998). Language and social behavior. From *Handbook of Social Psychology: Volume II*. Edited by D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske & G. Lindzey. (pp. 41-88). McGraw Hill: NY
- Tartarr, V.C. (1986). Language changes from personality disorders. From *Language processes* by V.C. Tartarr. NY: Holt, Rhinehart, & Winston.
- Chaika, E. (1986). Crazy talk. In D. Goleman & D. Heller (Eds.), *The pleasures of psychology*. NY: Mentor Publishing.

IX. Linguistic Diversity

- Variations due to socioeconomic status
- Eubonics and Black English
- Gender differences in language behavior - What do they reflect?
- Relationship between thought and language - Does one's linguistic system influence perception, memory, and thinking?

READINGS: Carroll, Chapter 14

- Krauss, R.M. & Chiu, C.Y. (1998). Language and social behavior. From *Handbook of Social Psychology: Volume II*. Edited by D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske & G. Lindzey. (pp. 41-88). McGraw Hill: NY
 - Henley, N. & Kramarae, C. (1994). Gender, power, and miscommunication. In C. Roman, S. Juhasz & C. Miller (Eds.), *The woman and language debate*. (pp. 383-406). Rutgers University Press.
 - Tannen, D. (1997). Put down that paper and talk to me! Rapport-talk and report-talk. In D. Sattler & V. Shabatay (Eds.), *Psychology in context*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
 - Boroditsky, L. & Schmidt, L. (2000). Sex, syntax, and semantics. *Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*.
 - Lau, I., Lee, S. & Chiu, C. (2004). Language, cognition, and reality: Constructing shared meanings through communication. In M. Schaller & C. Crandall (Eds.), *The psychological foundations of culture*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
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X. Language Development

- Factors influencing language acquisition
- Stages of language development: The preverbal child, acquisition of phonology, the lexicon and grammar
- Emergence of linguistic awareness and meta-linguistic skills
- Development of conversational skills
- Language acquisition in the school - reading behavior

READINGS: Carroll, Chapters 10, 11, 12

XI. Language Behavior in Applied Settings

- Doctor/patient interaction
- Legal system
- Job interviews
- Person perception and social inferences

READINGS:

- Kalin, R. (1982). The social significance of speech in medical, legal, and occupational settings. In E.B. Ryan & H. Giles (Eds.), *Attitudes toward language variation: Social and applied contexts*. pp. 148-163.
- Pennebaker, J., et. al. (2003). Psychological aspects of natural language use: Our words, our selves. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, 547-577.

EXAM THREE
