

Psychology of Language
PSYC 336, Section 001, 3 Credits, Term 2, 2015-2016
T, Th 9:30 – 11:00; AERL 120
Instructor: Dr. Laurel Fais

Office: Audain Art Centre, Room 4037
Phone: 604-418-6642
E-mail: lfais@psych.ubc.ca
Office Hour: Tuesday, 12:30 – 1:45

TA:
Office:
E-mail:
Office hour:

Required readings

There is no text. A pre-assembled set of Custom Course Materials is available for purchase at the UBC Bookstore.

Daily requirements

Each year I write these things in the syllabus, and I have a suspicion that the students who would have done them anyway, do them, and that writing them down doesn't make a student who wouldn't do them anyway, do them. However, I live in hope, so here they are...

Take responsibility for your learning. If this sounds like a cliché to you, please take a moment to consider what it really means.

Be on time to class. This class is a good place for you to practice this basic and essential form of respect for your professor, your TA, and your classmates.

Pay attention. See comment after "Take responsibility for learning."

Participate. Questions, new ideas, examples and anecdotes, all those contributions are good forms of participation. Plus, your involvement is an integral part of the way the class will work, and will work best.

Course requirements

Language sample: You are required to bring in a detailed, written transcription of an actual conversation between at least two people. The conversation should consist of

- at least four turns per person (do NOT use real names),
- of which at least two turns per person have more than two utterances.
-

IMPORTANT: include notes in extensive detail about the context of the conversation: setting, time, etc. Please take care that the subject matter is appropriate for sharing with the entire class.

You will not be allowed to collect a new sample later in the term.

Bring in **two** copies of this sample: one to be handed in at the beginning of class, and the other to be shared in group discussion. The original recording can be made in audio recording, or by written transcription. If at all possible, audio recordings are preferred; they will provide better

information for your work with this language sample later in the term. You do not need to hand in audio recordings, only your written transcription. The sample **must** be handed in on time; it will receive feedback.

Language sample due January 12, -5% if not turned in

Discussion Write-ups: In the second week of class, you will be assigned to a group. On our first discussion day, January 14th, the groups will examine the language samples brought in by each member of the group. They will choose one sample that will be the primary focus of the group in-class discussions for the rest of the term. On discussion days, groups will analyze their language sample from the point of view of the week's topic. They may also draw examples from the language samples of other members of the group, if appropriate. Group members will present the ideas of the group to the rest of the class.

- At least one student will be responsible for writing a one-page (**maximum**) description of the ideas of the group, due before class, one week after the discussion day.
- The summary should include your analysis of the topic as illustrated by examples from the group's language sample(s). The emphasis is on your application of the topic concepts to the language sample(s), **not** on summarizing the topic.
- The grade for this Write-up is given only to the person who wrote it, not to the group as a whole.
- You may choose the topics you write up.
- You are required to hand in three such Write-ups over the course of the term.
- More than one student from each group may do a Write-up in any given week; however, they must work independently.
- You may write up a fourth discussion to replace the lowest grade of your three Write-ups. **No matter what the grade of the fourth Write-up is (even if it is lower than your lowest), it will still be used to replace the lowest of the three previous Write-up grades, and will be counted toward your final grade.**

Write-ups: 3 x 15% = 45% of your grade; due at beginning of class the week after the discussion being written up

Free Writing

Because writing is such a good way to think, you will have five opportunities throughout the term to use writing to wonder about topics in the class, to make connections, and to explore your own reactions to the readings and discussion. Your Free Writing may be on anything relevant to the class topics, either by way of comment, criticism, or query. Particularly interesting contributions will be discussed (anonymously) by the class as a whole. The Free Writing assignments should be **no more than** 200 words. (Just so you can gauge how long that is, the first two paragraphs of the "Psychology Department's Position on Academic Misconduct" below have a total of 213 words.)

The content of these assignments will not be graded (hence "**free**" writing), but it is a requirement of the class that they be handed in. My assessment of the depth of your thinking will have an effect on your grade, although you may not get feedback on every Free Writing assignment. Feedback is readily available from me or the TA during office hours or by appointment should you want to discuss your ideas, and we encourage you to come and do that!

Free Writing due January 12 and 26, February 23, March 8 and 22

Midterm examination. Multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions.
Midterm: 20% of your grade, held in class on February 11

Participation. Evidenced in providing a thorough and prompt Language Sample, thoughtful Free Writing, class contributions, improvement over the course of the term, participation in office hours, etc.

Participation grade: 5% of your grade.

Final exam: 30% of your grade, held during the Term 2 exam period, April 12-27

Psychology Department's Policy on Grade Distributions and Scaling

In order to reduce grade inflation and maintain equity across multiple course sections, all psychology courses are required to comply with departmental norms regarding grade distributions. According to departmental norms, the mean grade in a 300-level class is 70 for a good class, 68 for an average class, and 66 for a weak class, with a standard deviation of 13. Scaling is likely to be used in order to comply with these norms; grades may be scaled up or down as necessary, by the professor or department.

Missed exams: You must inform me in advance if an exam is to be missed (e-mail: lfais@psych.ubc.ca) and produce a medical certificate or *documentation* of family emergency upon returning to class; otherwise, a grade of 0 will be assigned.

Psychology Department's Position on Academic Misconduct

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University, and the Department of Psychology has taken steps to alleviate them. In the first place, the Department has implemented software that can reliably detect cheating on multiple-choice exams by analyzing the patterns of students' responses. In addition, the Department subscribes to *TurnItIn*--a service designed to detect and deter plagiarism. All materials (term papers, lab reports, etc.) that students submit for grading will be scanned and compared to over 5 billion pages of content located on the Internet or in TurnItIn's own proprietary databases. The results of these comparisons are compiled into customized "Originality Reports" containing several, sensitive measures of plagiarism; instructors receive copies of these reports for every student in their class.

In all cases of suspected academic misconduct, the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher penalties including (but not limited to) a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student's transcript.

All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. Do use any of the indexes and databases listed under Indexes and Databases, Subject Resources, OneSearch or Metasearch on the Library's website at

<http://www.library.ubc.ca>. (Not sure which index to use? Click HELP on the library homepage at www.library.ubc.ca or try Subject Resources.)

If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on pertinent University policies and procedures, please see Chapter 5 in the UBC Calendar (<http://students.ubc.ca/calendar>).

Class schedule and assigned readings

January 5: Introduction to class

January 7: The structure and substance of language

Excerpt from D. Bolinger. (1975). *Aspects of Language*. Chapter 2, p. 13-33. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., Hyams, N., & Hummel, K. M. (2006, Third Canadian Edition). *An Introduction to Language*, Chapter 1, p. 3-19. Canada: Thomson/Nelson

January 12, 14: One phenomenon in language acquisition

Werker, J.F., & Tees, R.C. (1984). Cross-language speech perception: Evidence for perceptual reorganization during the first year of life. *Infant Behavior and Development*, *7*, 49-63.

Maye, J., Werker, J.F., & Gerken, L. (2002). Infant sensitivity to distributional information can affect phonetic discrimination. *Cognition*, *82*, B101–B111.

January 12: Language sample due; first Free Writing due

January 19, 21: Poverty of the stimulus argument

Laurence, S. & Margolis, E. (2001). The poverty of the stimulus argument. *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* *52*, 217-276; reading: 217-239.

Pullum, G.K. & Scholz, B.C. (2002). Empirical assessment of stimulus poverty arguments. *Linguistic Review* *19*, 9-50; reading: 9-23.

January 26, 28: Is language special?

Vouloumanos, A. & Werker, J.F. (2007). Listening to language at birth: evidence for a bias for speech in neonates. *Developmental Science* *10*(2), 159-171.

Vouloumanos, A., Hauser, M. D., Werker, J. F., & Martin, A. (2010). The tuning of human neonates' preference for speech, *Child Development*, *81*(2), 517–527.

Abstract required reading, rest optional: Shultz, S. & Vouloumanos, A. (2010). Three-month-olds prefer speech to other naturally occurring signals. *Language Learning and Development*, *6*, 241–257.

January 26: second Free Writing due

February 2, 4: Referent processing in adults

Hudson-D'Zmura, S. & Tanenhaus, M. K. (1998). Assigning antecedents to ambiguous pronouns: The role of the center of attention as the default assignment. In *Centering Theory in Discourse*, (Eds. M. A. Walker, A. K. Joshi, & E. F. Prince). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

February 9, 11: Discussion, Review and Midterm

February 11: Midterm

February 23, 25: What language differences say about cognition

Evans, N. & Levinson, S.C. (2009). The myth of language universals: Linguistic diversity and its importance for cognitive science. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, **32**, 429-492, and commentaries.

February 23: third Free Writing due

March 1, 3: What bilingualism can tell us about cognition

Sabourin, L. & Stowe, L. A. (2008). Neurobiology of language learning. In *The Handbook of Educational Linguistics*, (Eds. B. Spolsky & F. Hult). Boston, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Christoffels, I. K., Firk, C., & Schiller, N. O. (2007). Bilingual language control: An event-related brain potential study. *Brain Research*, **1147**, 192-208.

March 8, 10: Bilingualism

Ventureyra, V. A. G., Pallier, C., & Yoo, H.-Y. (2004). The loss of first language phonetic perception in adopted Koreans. *Journal of Neurolinguistics*, **17**, 79-91.

Pallier, C., Dehaene, S., Poline, J.-B., LeBihan, D., Argenti, A.-M., Dupoux, E., & Mehler, J. (2003). Brain imaging of language plasticity in adopted adults: Can a second language replace the first? *Cerebral Cortex*, **13**, 155-161.

Pierce, L. J., Klein, D., Jen-Kai, C., Delcenserie, A., & Genesee, F. 2014. Mapping the unconscious maintenance of a lost first language. *PNAS*, **111**(48), 17314 – 17319.

March 8: fourth Free Writing due

March 15, 17: Language in interaction

Martin, A., Onishi, K. H., & Vouloumanos, A. (2012). Understanding the abstract role of speech in communication at 12 months. *Cognition* **123**, 50–60.

Garrod, S. & Pickering M. J. (2004). Why is conversation so easy? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, **8**(1), 8-11.

March 22, 24: Language and spatial cognition

Hermer-Vazquez, L. & Spelke, E. S. (1999). Sources of flexibility in human cognition: Dual-task studies of space and language. *Cognitive Psychology*, **39**, 3-36.

March 22: fifth Free Writing due

March 29, 31: Language and world view

Whorf, B. L. (1956). “The relation of habitual thought to language,” and “Science and linguistics,” both from *Language Thought and Reality, Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, John B. Carroll, ed. MIT Press: Cambridge.

April 5, 7: Language and world view

Boroditsky, L. (2001). Does language shape thought? Mandarin and English speakers’ conceptions of time. *Cognitive Psychology*, **43**, 1-22.

Discussion write-up for this topic due by 11:00 April 14, in my mailbox in the Psychology Department.

Final exam: TBD