

Psychology of Language

PSYC 2310-401

Spring 2025

Description

This course aims to give students an understanding of, and appreciation for, some of the questions that drive psycholinguistics research in its quest to explain, among other things, how language is used to communicate and how it is learned.

The topics covered will be as follows:

- (1) how to characterize the knowledge that people have acquired once they have become fluent speakers of a language;
- (2) the mental processes involved when people express their thoughts into words and sentences;
- (3) the mental processes involved when people comprehend language;
- (4) how children learn words, their meaning, and how to combine them to form sentences that reflect the language they are exposed to; the acquisition of more than one language, simultaneously or successively;
- (5) the mental processes involved when reading print.

The class meets Mondays and Wednesdays, from 12:00 noon to 1:30 pm in Goddard Labs, room 101 (GLABS 101).

Learning Objectives and Pedagogical Approach

The goal of the class is to bring students to actively understand and evaluate some of the questions and topics of inquiry in the field of psycholinguistics. The textbook and a few additional readings will provide basic, foundational descriptions and discussions on each topic. The class meetings will build upon this information.

The class is organized around the so-called SAIL (Structured Active In-class Learning) pedagogical approach, which gives learners an active role, in contrast to the more passive behavior associated with attending and learning from lectures. Students will come to class having read the assigned chapter and/or reading. During class time and in groups of two or three, students will complete hands-on activities pertaining to the readings' contents. Such activities will consist of questions and exercises posed in worksheets, available on Canvas. The goal of the worksheets is to lead students to work out the logic of the empirical approach used to address specific theoretical questions pertaining to the topic at hand, the results of such approach, and its implications. Although students work together in answering the questions, each student submits their own work. To incentivize students' engagement with the material and in-class work, students' understanding of each topic or subtopic will be assessed in graded in-class quizzes that will pertain to the problems or exercises worked on in previous class meetings.

The organization of the course and its pedagogical approach make attendance to class critical. Thus, **attendance to class is mandatory. Students must bring their own laptop to class**

or inform the instructor of their incapacity to bring a laptop at least 24 hours before the class meets.

Instructor

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- in person: Mondays, 1:30 to 2:30pm, Stephen A. Levin building, room 350
- on Zoom: by appointment

Reading Assignments

Menn, L., Dronkers, N. F. (2017). *Psycholinguistics: Introduction and Applications* (2nd Edition). San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing

The book is freely available in an electronic format through Penn's library. Additionally, pdf versions of the chapters can be found under the course's Canvas site.

Chapters are assigned on specific class meetings (see schedule).

Additional Readings (available as pdf on Canvas):

- Labov, J. (2010). Teaching pronunciation. Using phonology in the ESL and foreign language classroom. In S. J. Behrens & J. A. Parker (Eds.), *Language in the real world: an introduction to linguistics* (pp.43-64). New York, Routledge.
- Dell, G.S. (1995). Speaking and misspeaking. In L. Gleitman & M. Liberman (Eds.), *Invitation to Cognitive Science, Part I, Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Seidenberg, M. (2017). *Language at the speed of sight* (chapter 8, pp 149-185). New York: Basic Books.

Examination

Worksheets completed during class times: 20% of the final grade

Although students work together in answering the questions on each worksheet, each student will submit answers individually on Canvas. Each worksheet submitted at the end of each class time will be worth 1% of the final grade, up to a maximum of 20%.

Quizzes completed during class meetings: 30% of the final grade

To incentivize students' engagement with the material and in-class work, students' understanding of each topic or subtopic will be assessed in graded and timed in-class quizzes that will pertain to the problems or exercises worked on in previous class meetings. There will be 15 such quizzes in the course of the semester and each quiz will be worth a maximum of 2% of the final grade.

The quizzes will be closed book. To minimize cheating, the quizzes will require a special browser called 'LockDown'. **Students must bring their own laptop to class or inform the instructor of their incapacity to bring a laptop at least 24 hours before the class meets. Before the first quiz of the semester, the 'LockDown Browser' must have been installed and its compatibility with the computer's settings, tested by taking the sample quiz. (Instructions on installing the browser are at the end of the syllabus and on the course' Canvas site.)**

Midterm exams: 30% of the final grade (15% each)

Midterm exams will consist of essay questions on the content of the course covered up to that point in the semester, in the textbook and during class. The questions will assess students' understanding of the class's contents by requesting them to go beyond the particular examples covered in class.

The midterm exams will be administered on Canvas and will require the use of a computer with Respondus Lockdown Browser installed and tested.

Final exam: 20% of the final grade

The final exam will consist of multiple-choice, true-false, and essay questions pertaining to the content of the entire course. As for the midterms, the final exam will be administered on Canvas and will require the use of a computer, with Respondus Lockdown Browser installed and tested.

IMPORTANT: If you miss a class, please use the Course Absence Report (CAR) system to inform the instructor. Because of the importance given to the learning taking place in class, absences should be kept to a minimum.

If you know in advance that you will be missing an exam, you must email the instructor at least seven (7) days in advance to discuss a way to work around it. If exceptional circumstances arise and cause you to miss an exam (i.e., students experiencing significant personal or academic issues), please contact your academic advisor or your school's student office. If your circumstances are judged acceptable by such academic advising authority, they will contact the instructor to discuss how best to accommodate the situation.

Date	Topic	Readings
Wed. Jan 15	Introduction; Basics Linguistics	
Mon. Jan 20	<i>No class (MLK day)</i>	
Wed. Jan 22	Basic Linguistics: Sounds and phonology	pp 1-40, Labov (2010)
Mon. Jan 27	Basic Linguistics: Meaning, Morphology, & Syntax	pp 41-69
Wed. Jan 29	Basic Linguistics: Meaning, Morphology, & Syntax	
Mon. Feb 3	How brains work	pp 71-110
Wed. Feb 5	How brains work	
Mon. Feb 10	Speech Errors: From Ideas to Words	pp 111-142
Wed. Feb 12	Speech Errors: From Ideas to Words	Dell (1995)
Mon. Feb 17	Speech Errors: Words and Sounds	pp 143-161

Wed. Feb 19	<i>Midterm Exam</i>	
Mon. Feb 24	Speech Errors: Words and Sounds	
Wed. Feb 26	Normal Production & Comprehension	pp 163-213
Mon. March 3	Normal Production & Comprehension	
Wed. March 5	Normal Production & Comprehension	
Mon. March 10	<i>Spring break</i>	
Wed. March 12	<i>Spring break</i>	
Mon. March 17	Aphasic Speech and Comprehension	pp 215-262
Wed. March 19	Aphasic Speech and Comprehension	
Mon. March 24	First Language Acquisition	pp 263-314
Wed. March 26	First Language Acquisition	
Mon. March 31	1 st & 2 nd Language Acquisition	pp 357-387
Wed. April 2	<i>Midterm Exam</i>	
Mon. April 7	1 st & 2 nd Language Acquisition	
Wed. April 9	1 st & 2 nd Language Acquisition	
Mon. April 14	1 st & 2 nd Language Acquisition	
Wed. April 16	Reading and Learning to Read	pp 315-355
Mon. April 21	Reading and Learning to Read	Seidenberg (2017)
Wed. April 23	Reading and Learning to Read	
Mon. April 28	Reading and Learning to Read	
Wed. April 30	TBD	
TBD	<i>Final Exam, Location TBD</i>	

Instructions for Using the LockDown Browser

The Respondus LockDown Browser is a special web browser that lets students take tests in Canvas using their own computers, but restricts access to other programs or websites while the test is in progress. Some of the tests in this course require that you use the LockDown Browser; your instructor will tell you when it is required.

Here's what you need to do:

A few days before your first test

1. Check the System Requirements for the LockDown Browser.

See <https://support.respondus.com/hc/en-us/articles/4409607170459-What-are-the-computer-requirements-for-installations-of-Respondus-LockDown-Browser>. If your computer doesn't meet the minimum specifications please speak to your instructor. You may be able to borrow a laptop from one of the sources listed here: <https://computing.sas.upenn.edu/student-computing-recommendations>, or you can take the exam on paper. All instructors who use Respondus are asked to provide paper copies.

2. Download and install the LockDown Browser on the computer you will use when taking tests in class.

Free download is available from <http://www.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=424638276>. Mac and Windows versions are available; sorry our Respondus installation has no Linux, iPad or Android support at this time. Please check with your instructor if you don't have a Mac or Windows laptop.

3. Complete a sample quiz using the LockDown Browser.

- Using the same computer that you will bring to class for your actual test, launch the LockDown Browser (instead of Chrome or Firefox).
- You may be prompted to close some programs that are open in the background on your computer (e.g., Instant Messenger programs). Click on *Kill these applications* in order to continue.
- Login with your PennKey to enter Canvas; select the relevant course site.
- Click on the *Quizzes* button in the Canvas course menu (on the left side of this page).
- Click on *Sample Quiz for Respondus LockDown Browser* and take the quiz. It will only take a few minutes.
- You will NOT be able to take the actual test for this course until you have completed the sample quiz.
- If you are unable to complete these steps, please contact instructional-support@sas.upenn.edu. Be sure to indicate which class is requiring the Lockdown Browser

4. When coming to class on the day of the test:

- Be sure to bring the same computer that you used for the sample quiz
- Come with a fully charged battery. You may not have access to electric outlets in the classroom
- Start your laptop, and verify that you have good internet access by visiting any website you'd like

- d. When it's time to take the test, launch the LockDown Browser (instead of Chrome or Firefox) and follow the same procedure that you used for the sample quiz
- e. When instructed by your teacher or proctor, start the test
- f. Do not submit the test until you are sure that you are finished. **Once submitted, you will not be able to re-open the test.**

Wellness / Academic Support & Accommodations

The HELP Line

The University offers the HELP Line, a 24-hour-a-day phone number for members of the Penn community who are seeking time-sensitive help in navigating Penn's resources for health and wellness. Any member of the Penn community can utilize this service by calling **215-898-HELP**. Calls will be answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by Division of Public Safety professionals trained in mental health referrals by staff from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Students who are dealing with the complex emotional challenges of university life can use the HELP Line to receive information and referrals to the many health and wellness resources at Penn, including CAPS, Student Health Service, Student Intervention Services, Public Safety, and others. They may also call on behalf of a friend or acquaintance. More information can be found at <https://wellness.upenn.edu/student-health-and-counseling>

Academic Support

The *Weingarten Center* offers a variety of resources to support all Penn students in reaching their academic goals. All services are free and confidential. To contact the Weingarten Center, call 215-573-9235. The office is located in Stouffer Commons, 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300.

Learning consultations and learning strategies workshops support students in developing more efficient and effective study skills and learning strategies. Learning specialists work with undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to address time and project management, academic reading and writing, note-taking, problem-solving, exam preparation, test-taking, self-regulation, and flexibility.

Undergraduates can also take advantage of free on-campus tutoring for many Penn courses in both drop-in and weekly contract formats. Tutoring may be individual or in small groups. Tutors will assist with applying course information, understanding key concepts, and developing course-specific strategies. Tutoring support is available throughout the term but is best accessed early in the semester. First-time users must meet with a staff member; returning users may submit their requests online.

Disability Services

The University of Pennsylvania is committed to the accessibility of its programs and services. Students with a disability or medical condition can request reasonable accommodations through the Weingarten Center website. Disability Services determines accommodations on an individualized basis through an interactive process, including a meeting with the student and a review of their disability documentation. Students who have approved accommodations are encouraged to notify their faculty members and share their accommodation letters at the start of each semester. Students can contact Disability Services by calling 215-573-9235.