

**Psychology 3240: The Psychology of Language**  
Autumn 2015

**Class meetings:** MWF 13:00-13:50, UH C756  
**Office:** C876, University Hall  
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**Professor:** Fangfang Li  
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**Graduate teaching assistant:** Lanna Petterson (Email: [l.petterson@uleth.ca](mailto:l.petterson@uleth.ca))

**Course description:** This course provides an introduction to psycholinguistics and to some of the important issues in the study of language processing and language acquisition. Topics will include: How does the human mind process sounds, words, and sentences? How do children learn language? What is the biological and evolutionary basis for language?

**Course objectives:** This course will acquaint you with the primary theoretical and experimental issues involved in the study of natural language and the brain, and will provide you the opportunity to learn how to evaluate and discuss these issues in a critical and coherent manner. It will also increase your awareness of the importance of human language and add to your understanding of human beings as language speakers.

**Textbook:**

David W. Carroll (2008) *Psychology of Language. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

**Coursework and grading:**

In-class activities	10 %
Participation	5 %
Language project	25 %
Exam 1	30 %
Exam 2	30 %
Total	100 %

**Grading scale:**

A+	100 – 90	B+	77 – 79.9	C+	67 – 69.9	D+	55 – 59.9	F	0 – 49.9
A	85 – 89.9	B	73 – 76.9	C	63 – 66.9	D	50 – 54.9		
A-	80 – 84.9	B-	70 – 72.9	C-	60 – 62.9				

**Course Requirements:**

**Readings:** Readings include both the textbook and other relevant journal articles. Since the major format of this class is in-class discussion of these readings, it is crucial for you to complete readings ahead of time. You should also bring the textbook and other supplementary readings to class every day as handy references.

**In-class Activities:** There will be a number of in-class activities throughout the semester, which count 10% towards your final grade. In-class activities can only be completed in class. The whole class will be divided into groups of 5 to 7 students. For each in-class activity, each group only hands in one answer sheet for grading. Only those students who attend classes and contribute to the completion of the answer

sheet get credits. Missing activity can only be made up with advance notice accompanied by appropriate/ official documentation.

*The language project:* It is hard to reflect on your own language use because the whole language processing procedure is so integrated, automatic, and seemingly transparent. In order to bring home many concepts that we learn in class, you are required to complete a language project by interviewing a native speaker of a language other than English. You will be assigned to work in a group of 3 or 4 (the grouping will be decided by the instructor after the last add/drop day). The interviews can be quite informal and should focus exclusively on the language aspect, including levels in sounds, words, sentences, and practical use of the language. No personal information should be collected, although a consent form is still required. Pay attention to the peculiarities of the language of interest and use those special features as the basis of proposing psycholinguistic experiments for your project. The final writing should not exceed ten pages, and should include a section on the language structure (10%) and a section on the proposed experiments (10%), as well as references. You and your team members will also be asked to present your project at the end of the semester for about 15 minutes (5%).

Each group only needs to turn in one final write-up. In order to allow for a fair evaluation, at the end of the semester, every group member will rate the relative contributions of each, including him/herself, which should add up to 100%. These ratings will then be averaged across all group members by the instructor and the presentation and writing grades will be adjusted accordingly.

*Exams:* There will be two exams for this course. The exam questions will test things discussed in class, including reading materials, lectures, and in-class activities. No make-up exams will be given without a valid medical note or other official documentation.

*Quizzes:* You may be given informal quizzes from time to time during the entire semester. These quizzes are designed to test your understanding of the critical course materials covered in lectures or readings. Quizzes will NOT be graded and therefore are NOT counted towards your final grade.

**Course website:** All course materials will be posted to Moodle. You can log on to Moodle course using your U of L computer account.

**Students with Special Needs:** If you have any special needs that require accommodation, it is your responsibility to contact Counseling Services to acquire an official letter concerning your situation. Accommodations will only be given upon receiving the official notification from that office.

### Tentative weekly schedule

Month	Date	Day	Topic	Reading
Sep	9	W	Introduction	Chap 1
	11	F		
	14	M	Evolution of human language	Chap 13 (pp.379-392)
	16	W	Linguistic principles	Chap 2
	18	F	Psychological mechanisms	Chap 3
	21	M		Atkinson (2011); Boutela (2004)
	23	W	Perception of spoken language	Chap 4 (pp.78-90)
	25	F		
	28	M		McMurray (2002); Tanenhaus (1995)
	30	W	Perception of written language	Chap 4 (91-100)
Oct	2	F		
	5	M		Siok (2004)
	7	W	Word processing	Chap 5
	9	F		
	12	M	<i>Holiday no class</i>	
	14	W	Sentence processing	Chap 6
	16	F		Matlock (2003)
	19	M		
	21	W	<b>Exam 1</b>	
	23	F	Language Production	Chap 8
	26	M		
	28	W		Houde (1998)
	30	F	Language acquisition	Chap 10 & 11
Nov	2	M		
	4	W		Imai (2008)
	6	F	Processes of language acquisition	Chap 12
	9	M		Saffran (1996); MacNeilage (2000)
	11	W	<i>Holiday no class</i>	
	13	F	Biological Foundations	Chap 13 (pp.354-379)
	16	M		
	18	W		Senghas (2004)
	20	F		
	23	M	Language, culture, and cognition	Chap 14
	25	W		Helmuth (2001); Gordon (2004)
	27	F		
	30	M	<b>Exam 2</b>	
Dec	2	W		
	4	F		
	7	M		
	9	W		
	11	F	<b>Final wrap-up</b>	
	14	M		Language project due

## Reading list:

- Atkinson, Q. D. (2011). Phonemic diversity supports a serial founder effect model of language expansion from Africa. *Science*, 332, 346-349.
- Boutla, M., Supalla, T., Newport, E. L., & Bavelier, D. (2004). Short-term memory span: insights from sign language. *Nature (Neuroscience)*, 7(9), 997-1002.
- Gordon, P. (2004). Numerical cognition without words: evidence from Amazonia. *Science*, 306, 496-499.
- Helmuth, L. (2001). Same brains, different languages. *Science*, 291, 2064-2065.
- Houde, J. F., & Jordan, M. I. (1998). Sensorimotor adaptation in speech production. *Science*, 279, 1213-1215.
- Imai, M., Kita, S., Nagumo, M., & Okada, H. (2008). Sound symbolism facilitates early verb learning. *Cognition*, 109, 54-65.
- MacNeilage, P. F., & Davis, B. L. (2000). On the origin of internal structure of word forms. *Science*, 288, 527-530.
- Matlock, T., Ramscar, M., & Boroditsky, L. (2005). On the experimental link between spatial and temporal language. *Cognitive Science*, 29, 655-664.
- McMurray, B., Tanenhaus, M. K., & Aslin, R. N. (2002). Gradient effects of within-category phonetic variation on lexical access. *Cognition*, 86, B33-B42.
- Saffran, J. R., Aslin, R. N., & Newport, E. L. (1996). Statistical learning by 8-month-old infants. *Science*, 274, 1926-1928.
- Senghas, A., Kita, S., & Ozyurek, A. (2004). Children creating core properties of language: Evidence from an emerging sign language in Nicaragua. *Science*, 305, 1779-1781.
- Siok, W. T., Perfetti, C. A., Jin, Z., & Tan, L. H. (2004). Biological abnormality of impaired reading is constrained by culture. *Nature*, 431, 71-76.
- Tanenhaus, M. K., Spivey-Knowlton, M. J., Eberhard, K. M., & Sedivy, J. C. (1995). Integration of visual and linguistic information in spoken language comprehension. *Science*, 268, 1632-1634.