HU2910 Language and Mind Fall 2003

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Classroom: 15-125
Class time: MWF 9:05-9:55
Office hours: MWF 11-12

Course Description

Shared by every mentally competent member of our species is an ability of amazing flexibility and complexity: language. On first consideration, it seems very simple: language develops so naturally that even children can use it well. But as we will see upon closer inspection, this evident simplicity masks extreme complexity. Despite decades of serious work, computers capable of true, wide-ranging conversation are still just science fiction, and it is a matter of considerable debate whether any other species of animal has anything that can really be called language. A deep understanding of how language works is inextricably tied to an understanding of our cognitive processes: language is a window on the mind, telling us a great deal about what it means to be a human and a thinker. During this term, we will closely examine language in its various parts and components, study how the brain is used in language comprehension and production (and what happens when things go wrong), and consider how language and mind interrelate. We will consider how humans acquire language, how these processes compare to animal and computational communication systems, and discover how much we may not even know we know about our language ability.

Course Objectives

- To attempt to understand the complex human language capability, so that we may use it better.
- To study the workings of the brain and mind in the process of learning and using language.
- To acquire a working knowledge of the vocabulary and principles of the science of language, so we may discuss language more precisely.
- To dispel common myths about language, to become better "linguistic consumers".
- To identify the similarities and differences between the communication systems used by humans and animals.

Course Requirements

- Participation
  - Attendance/Active engagement 10%
  - Problem sets (credit/no credit) 5%
  - In class quizzes/writing 5%
- Exam #1 (9/24) 25%
- Exam #2 (10/29) 25%
- CHOOSE 1 (see notes below) 30%
  - Exam #3
    - Part 3A, short answer (12/3) 15%
    - Part 3B, essay (12/10) 15%
- Research Paper
  - Prospectus (due 10/13) 5%
  - Presentation & draft (12/1 or 12/5) 15%
  - Final Paper/Portfolio (due 12/8) 10%

TOTAL 100%

Required Text


Additional articles may be placed on reserve in the Van Pelt Library.

Details of Course Requirements

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance and preparation are required to keep up with the pace of ideas and information exchange in this class. I will frequently explain examples or not covered in the book or put on reserve or e-mail. It is also your responsibility to read the material before class and to come prepared to discuss it, and to arrange for someone to pick up any handouts or lend you notes if you miss class.

You learn linguistics by doing it; thus, active engagement in class participation is very important. If you miss class, you deprive yourself of important practice and information, as well as depriving the class of your viewpoint and ideas. Each class absence counts -1 point. Missing more than five class periods zeroes out 10% of your grade. Be sure to notify me in writing of any legitimately excusable absences—in advance, if possible.
Preparation for class
Come to class with the assignment read! This will enable you to join in the discussion and to ask informed questions. There will be up to 5 pop reading quizzes on Mondays, covering the reading assignments. Much of the material in the book is quite detailed linguistically. My lectures and notes will give guidance on where to focus, but are not the sole basis of what we will cover.

Problem sets
The assignments are designed to help you practice linguistic problem solving or to get you thinking about issues in the study of language. You will hand them in at the start of class on the due date. We will discuss the answers that day (so be sure to keep a copy for yourself). Late problem sets will receive no credit, but it is important for you to practice doing the problems in any case. All assignments will be graded credit/no credit; credit will be given for completed assignments, and those where there is a clear attempt to solve every problem. Missing, copied, or incomplete assignments which suggest lack of effort will receive no credit. Please do these carefully, and raise any difficulties during the class discussion. In class, I will ask different students to present solutions to the questions. Your readiness and ability to answer during this time will be counted as part of your participation grade. If you are not present or are unprepared, this will count against you.

Examinations 1-3
The three examinations cover the material of that section of class; however, the second part of Exam #3 may contain some comprehensive questions covering the whole semester AND student presentations. Students may opt to do a paper instead of Exam #3 (see below). The exams often build on the exercises covered in the problem sets, which employ the kinds of analysis that linguists use to address problems and issues in language. The exams will have some short answer, multiple choice, and/or matching questions as well as essays. Again, it is critical to read the texts. I cannot cover all material in the class, and I will assume that you will be familiar with the general issues and approaches of the texts.

Research Paper & Presentation (instead of Exam #3)
Students may elect to replace the third exam by selecting a topic for research and presentation to the rest of the class. These presentations (5-7 min.) may be done in up to small groups. Students will

a) meet with Prof. Bergvall to discuss possible topics;
b) write a short prospectus (1-2 pp.) outlining the topic and possible sources;
c) conduct research on some topic relevant to the course;
d) use and appropriately document sources;
e) prepare a talk for class presentation, using visual aids (turn in outline/draft and a copy of all overheads on day of talk);
f) submit a 5-8 page paper, with graphics and appropriate citations; this will be in a portfolio that includes all previous drafts, prospectus, etc.

It is critical to keep copies of all stages of work to submit in your final portfolio, from research notes to final form; if you work in a group, you need to keep a separate copy for your own portfolio. I will give more details on this process and the project later in the semester.

Academic Integrity
Linguists often do their best work in consultation with others; in fact, we must listen to how people talk in order to gather our data. But data are not solutions: to take the work of others and pass it off as your own is academic theft and will be punishable by failing the assignment/course or dismissal from school. You may consult with others in the early stages of work on take-home assignments, and review your papers with others, but you must work out problem sets and the paper and write them up yourself. We will discuss the proper practice of research and citation during the term.

All exams must be done on your own. The assignments’ questions are similar to those that will appear on the exams, so you will hurt yourself if you simply copy others’ answers.

ADA NOTE
MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (x7-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (x7-3310).

Schedule of Course Assignments
The following schedule is subject to change to meet class needs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chap. 1: What is Language? (pp. 1-32)</td>
<td>8/25 Introductions, Goals</td>
<td>8/27 Description, prescription</td>
<td>8/29 Animal language (1), Design features</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Chap. 1, cont.)</td>
<td>9/1 Introduction, Labor Day</td>
<td>9/3 Arbitrariness, Symbols &amp; Icons</td>
<td>9/5 Discuss first Problem Set</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Chap. 2: Brain &amp; Language (pp. 33-65)</td>
<td>9/8 Modularity, brain structures</td>
<td>9/10 Critical Period, lg. origins</td>
<td>9/12 Video: Secret of a Wild Child</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Chap. 3 Morphology (pp. 69-115 &amp; 510-16)</td>
<td>9/15 Minimal units of meaning, words</td>
<td>9/17 Identifying morphemes</td>
<td>9/19 New morphemes, changing lg.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(start reading Syntax)</td>
<td>9/22 REVIEW</td>
<td>9/24 EXAM #1</td>
<td>9/26 &quot;About Projects&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chap. 4: Syntax (pp. 117-172)</td>
<td>10/1 Word categories, linearity</td>
<td>10/6 Sentence meaning</td>
<td>10/3 Video: Colorless Green Ideas</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Chap. 5: Semantics (pp. 173-230)</td>
<td>10/6 Word meaning</td>
<td>10/6 Sentence meaning</td>
<td>10/10</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Chap. 6: Phonetics (pp. 231-271)</td>
<td>10/13 Consonants, Prospectus due</td>
<td>10/15 Vowels</td>
<td>10/17 Transcription</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Chap. 7: Phonology (pp. 273-337)</td>
<td>10/20 Morpho-phonology (allomorphs)</td>
<td>10/22 Natural classes</td>
<td>10/24 Phonological rules.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(start reading Accretion)</td>
<td>10/27 REVIEW</td>
<td>10/29 EXAM #2</td>
<td>10/31 Video: Playing the Lang. Game</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chap. 8: Language Acquisition (pp. 341-396)</td>
<td>11/3 How children learn language</td>
<td>11/5 Predestinate grooves?</td>
<td>11/7 Second lg. acquisition</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Chap. 9: Language Processing (pp. 397-441)</td>
<td>11/10 Human processing of lang.</td>
<td>11/12 Computer processing</td>
<td>11/14 Al: how far?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Animals again (Review Chap. 1 &amp; 3)</td>
<td>11/17 Birds, bees, dolphins, Cl. Hans</td>
<td>11/19 Primates</td>
<td>11/21 Video: Can Chimps Talk?</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
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<td>12/8 EVALS/Review, Portfolios due</td>
<td>12/12 SUMMARY, So what?</td>
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