

Psycholinguistics Ling 310: Spring 2008

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Class time: TTh 9:30-10:50
Class location: Parkes Hall 213

What's this course all about?

We effortlessly recognize printed and spoken words, understand novel and complex sentences, and produce fluent speech thousands of times each day. Psycholinguistics aims to understand how we do it—what are the mental processes that support these behaviors? This class will introduce you to this field. I have 2 goals for students that take this class:

Goal 1: Recognize the structure of psycholinguistic theories of language processing. How do psycholinguists try to explain our ability to produce and comprehend language?

Goal 2: Learn how to critically evaluate psycholinguistic theories. How can we analyze and think about behavioral data to resolve theoretical questions?

What am I going to do in this class?

We'll work towards these goals by:

1. Reading and lectures providing overviews of the literature. This will help you understand the answer to questions like: How have psycholinguists examined the structure of language processing? What types of theories have they constructed to explain linguistic behavior?
2. Performing critical analysis of research papers from journals (in discussion and in written work). Critical analysis will help you answer questions like: What makes a good psycholinguistic theory?
3. Doing a pilot experiment. This will give you hands-on experience in the practice of psycholinguistic research.

Prerequisites: One of Linguistics 250, 260, 270 or the equivalent, or permission from me.

Webpage: There will be a course webpage on Blackboard. Lots of the material will be here. You should be able to access it by going to courses.northwestern.edu. Let me know if you have trouble accessing it.

Overview of the class

For the first six weeks, we'll be analyzing some of the many complex processes involved in the perception and production of language—e.g., how do we recognize individual printed and spoken words? How do we retrieve sounds to express meanings we wish to communicate? On Tuesdays, I'll provide an introduction to the topic for the week. On Thursdays, I'll turn the discussion over to you. A small group of students will lead everyone in discussion of an original research article. (I'll be around to help!)

For the final two weeks, we'll run an experiment addressing one of these issues. We'll design stimuli, get some volunteers to do the experiment, and analyze the data.

Instead of a final exam, you'll write a paper analyzing a research article of your choosing.

Assessments: What You Need to Do

<u>Assessment Type</u>	<u>% of Final Grade</u>
Participation in class meetings	30%
Analysis of Papers	
4 Short ($\sqrt{\quad}$ / $\sqrt{-}$)	20%
2 Long (Graded)	20%
Leading Thursday Discussion	10%
Final paper	
Short initial assessment	5%
Paper	15%

1. Participation in class meetings. A large part of this course is built around discussion—working together to critically analyze research papers. We need your contribution to help us learn. This will be assessed in two ways:
 - a. Attendance and ability to participate in discussion.
 - b. On Thursdays, we'll be discussing research papers from psycholinguistics journals. To help get discussion going, you need to bring a written list of at least 2 questions on the article. In addition, if you didn't understand parts of the article, you need to add written clarification questions.
2. Analysis of papers. In addition to bringing questions to class, you need to also perform a preliminary analysis of the paper. This will take two forms. A short analysis will answer the following two questions in 1-2 pages (single-spaced):
 - a. What are the hypotheses that this paper contrasts?

Research papers will generally explore two alternative explanations of some linguistic behavior; you need to briefly describe these explanations.
 - b. What are the contrasting predictions that these hypotheses make for the experimental task used in the paper?

To determine which hypothesis is correct, researchers have people perform some linguistic task. For a good paper, one hypothesis predicts that people should behave one way (e.g., faster in one condition), while the other hypothesis predicts another pattern of behavior (e.g., no difference between conditions). For a paper with more than one experiment, you only need to do this for this first experiment.

The short assessments will be graded $\sqrt{\quad}$ of $\sqrt{-}$, and will not receive substantial written comments. The long assessments (generally 3-5 pages) will be graded and returned with written comments. For this, you have two additional tasks. First, you must answer question (b) for all the experiments in the paper. Second, you must one additional set of questions:

- c. Which hypothesis was supported by the results? React to these results. For example: Do you find the author's results convincing? Can you identify any potential counterarguments to their conclusions? If you support their conclusions, can you suggest additional questions that future research should examine? Can you suggest a follow-up experiment?

NOTE: Your counterarguments/follow-up experiments cannot simply consist of "run more participants" or "use more items."

The class will be divided into three groups; each Thursday, one group will prepare a long assessment, while the others will prepare a short assessment.

To help you get a hang of the requirements of the assignment, you will have an opportunity to re-write your first long assessment.

3. Leading Thursday discussion. On Tuesday, I take center stage to present the basics of some topic. Thursday classes will be led by students—you will determine the direction of discussion. A small group (~5) of those writing long assessments will be assigned to lead discussion. At the beginning of class, they'll gather the questions that everyone else has brought to class. For the first 1/2 hour, they'll go over clarification questions in small groups (I'll help out on that). Then, they'll select from discussion questions, and we'll talk about the article.
4. Final paper. Your final paper will basically be a long version of an assessment (5-10 pages). By the end of the fourth week, you'll select a paper, drawing on a list of papers I'll give you or from a set of journals. By the end of the sixth week, you'll need to turn in a short assessment of the selected paper. Your final paper will be an extended version of a long assessment the selected paper. It will critically assess the paper, drawing on at least 2 other additional research articles to evaluate the claims made by the authors.

Course Policies

1. You have to do your work on time. Due dates are firm; attendance in class is not optional. If this is a problem, see #2. The highest possible letter grade for work handed in during the first 24 hours after class will be a C. I will give comments and suggestions on work turned in later than this, but you will receive no credit for the assignment.
2. If you have a problem, give me sufficient time to help you! If you've tried to do an assignment, but can't seem to complete it, come to me well before it's due. If you are unable to come to a class, try to let me know beforehand, or as soon as possible after class. Your reasons for class absences need to be verifiable.
3. You should work together, but the finished product must be your own. Working together is a big part of our in-class work; I hope this will extend outside of the classroom. However, for most assignments, your written work must be your own.

Provisional Course Outline

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>
0	Introduction to Psycholinguistics: Theories and evidence	4/1	Altmann chapter 1
		4/3	Altmann chapter 5
1	Access of the orthographic lexicon: Activation and search	4/8	Forster (1990)
		4/10	Andrews (1989)
2	Access of the phonological lexicon: Effects of interactive activation	4/15	McClelland et al. (2006)
		4/17	Elman & McClelland (1988)
3	Interactions between phonology and orthography in perception	4/15	Frost + Ziegler (2007)
		4/17	VanOrden et al. (1988)
4	Lexical access in speech production: Insights from neuropsychology	4/29	Levelt (1999)
		5/1	Badecker et al.(1995)
			Final paper selection due
5	Retrieving the forms of words in production	5/6	Meyer (1997)
		5/8	Shattuck-Hufnagel (1992)
6	Producing words in context: Sentence production	5/13	Ferreira & Slevc (2007)
		5/15	Bock & Griffin (2000)
7	Experiment on Interaction in Production	5/20	Dell (1995)
		5/22	-- Final paper: Short assessment due
8		5/27	--
	Conclusion: Overview of Course	5/29	--
		6/9	Final paper due 5pm