

Language and Cognition

Introduction to Psycholinguistics

Wednesdays, 14:00–15:30, Kepler 17 (K2) Room 01.17

Instructor: Lisa Hofmann
Email: lisa.hofmann@ling.uni-stuttgart.de
Office: K2 Room 4.052
Office hours: Tuesdays, 14:00–15:00 (Sign up on ILIAS)
(WiSe 25/26) Come by if you have questions (/concerns) about the class, your studies, or the university!
Email me if the times don't work for you, or if you would like to talk online.

Course Description and learning objectives:

This course is an introduction to psycholinguistics, which includes the study of language acquisition, perception, and comprehension. You will learn about mechanisms of the human mind that shape language and communication, and about how researchers investigate them. The main questions we address are: How do children learn language sounds, words, and structures? How can humans associate meaningful ideas, thoughts, and representations with acoustic sound waves traveling through air? How do we combine information from various different sources into one unified representation of language meaning? Are what are methods used to investigate these questions? The course aims to provide students with a solid understanding of well-established findings and open questions in the field, and of the research methodologies used in psycholinguistic research.

Prerequisites

Introduction to linguistics, plus two courses in phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax, or semantics.

Readings

Most of our class readings are from Julie Sedivy's textbook *Language in mind: An introduction to psycholinguistics*. There will be some other readings as well, as indicated on the course schedule below. All readings will be uploaded to ILIAS. You are expected to have read and engaged with the assigned reading by the time we meet. Class time is not used to introduce the content of the reading, but to engage with central aspects and to address questions you might have. For some weeks, I also list background readings (for a refresher on the assumed prerequisites), or supplemental readings (optional, and to provide more details for your personal studies).

Assessment (6 ECTS):

- Your grade for the course is determined by an in-person final exam which will take place on **March 4th 2026**. The final is cumulative – which means that everything that we cover in class (not necessarily everything in the assigned readings!) may be on the final – and open book/notes – which means that you can bring your book and notes to the exam (even if you keep them on an electronic device).
- If you need an USL/UVL for this course (please check your Modulhandbuch!), you will write a letter to a (non-linguist) friend in which you describe the research question, and main points from one of the following supplemental readings:
 - [Von Frisch \(1973\)](#)
 - [Werker \(1989\)](#)
 - [Gleitman and Fisher \(2005\)](#)

The letter should be written at a level appropriate for a non-linguist. Your letter may have at most 400 words. It is due to me (via email) as a single pdf-file by **February 23rd, 2025**.

- The following grade schema will be used:

100-95,5 points: 1,0	87-83,5 points: 2,0	75-71,5 points: 3,0	63-60 points: 4,0
95-91,5 points: 1,3	83-79,5 points: 2,3	71-67,5 points: 3,3	59-0 points: 5,0
91-87,5 points: 1,7	79-75,5 points: 2,7	67-63,5 points: 3,7	

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic + Readings
1	15.10.2025	Welcome // Language as biology Supplemental reading: Yang (2006) : Ch. 1
2	22.10.2025	Are humans special? Required reading: Dawson and Phelan (2016) : Ch. 1.4, 14.0–14.2 Supplemental readings: Von Frisch (1973) ; Berwick et al. (2011)

Language acquisition

3 & 4	29.10.2025– 5.11.2025	Learning sounds Required reading: Sedivy (2019) , Ch. 4.1–4.2, Method 4.2 Background reading: Ch. 4.3 (Basic phonetics/phonology) Supplemental reading: Werker (1989)
5	12.11.2025	No class
6	19.11.2025	The cognitive revolution Required reading: Yang (2006) , Ch. 2
7	26.11.2025	Learning words Required reading: Sedivy (2019) , Ch. 5.1–5.2 Background reading: Ch. 5.6 up to p. 196 (Basic morphology) Supplemental reading: Gleitman and Fisher (2005)

Perception and processing

8	3.12.2025	Speech perception Required reading: Sedivy (2019) , Ch. 7.1–7.2
9 & 10	10.12.2025– 17.12.2025	Word recognition + associative memory Required reading: Sedivy (2019) , Ch. 8.1–8.3
	24.12.2025 31.12.2025	Winter break
11 & 12	7.1.2025– 14.1.2025	Sentence processing Required reading: Sedivy (2019) Ch. 9.1–9.2 Background reading: Ch. 6.1 (Basic syntax)

Meaning and inference

13	21.1.2025	Discourse + pronoun resolution Required reading: Sedivy (2019) Ch. 11.1–11.3
14	28.1.2025	Understanding implicit + non-literal meanings Required reading: Sedivy (2019) Ch. 12.2
15	4.2.2025	Wrap-up & exam prep

ECTS calculation

(30h per 1 ECTS) 6 x 30h = 180h total

- Course attendance: 14 x 2 SWS (2h) = 28h
- Prepare readings before class meetings: 12 x 5h = 60h
- Review of slides, notes, and readings after class meetings 14 x 2h = 28h
- Exam preparation: 62h
- Exam time: 2h

Academic misconduct and use of generative AI

Unless collaboration is explicitly requested for a particular task, all the work you do in this course should be your own. Academic dishonesty will not be condoned under any circumstances. Any case of cheating or plagiarism will be handled according to academic policy. [Check the guidelines of the University of Stuttgart here.](#)

Generative AI may be used as an assistive tool to help you edit your writing for clarity and conciseness, organize your notes, or perform similar tasks that involve restructuring content and ideas that you have developed yourself. This will only be useful to you carefully review all outputs and can confidently take full authorship of the final content. The use of generative AI to generate ideas or any text that is not carefully edited by you is strictly prohibited and, in any case, will not yield results that would be useful for this class. This policy requires that students include an AI statement with their submissions (which AI tools are used and why).

It is mandatory to keep a record of the AI prompts used in the assignment, in case the exam board asks for it. (You can also use the memory function in the AI tool to save the prompts and upload history.)

Accommodations

The University of Stuttgart strives to make all learning experiences accessible for all students. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability or chronic illness, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can privately discuss options. For accommodations concerning exams, please contact the [chair of the Prüfungsausschuss](#). More information about accommodations and contact information for advisory services [can be found here](#). If you need support making these arrangements, or if you would like to discuss other things you may need to participate in this class, please get in touch.

References

- Robert C. Berwick, Kazuo Okanoya, Gabriel JL Beckers, and Johan J. Bolhuis. Songs to syntax: the linguistics of birdsong. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 15(3):113–121, 2011.
- Hope Dawson and Michael Phelan, editors. *Language files: Materials for an introduction to language and linguistics*. The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 2016.
- Lila Gleitman and Cynthia Fisher. Universal aspects of word learning. *The Cambridge Companion to Chomsky*, pages 123–142, 2005. Publisher: Cambridge University Press Cambridge.
- Julie Sedivy. *Language in mind: An introduction to psycholinguistics*. Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Karl Von Frisch. Decoding the Language of the Bee. *NOBEL LECTURES*, page 76, 1973.
- Janet F. Werker. Becoming a native listener. *American Scientist*, 77(1):54–59, 1989.
- Charles Yang. *The infinite gift: How children learn and unlearn the languages of the world*. Simon and Schuster, 2006.