

Psychology 131: Language and Thought  
Fall Quarter 2015

## Course Syllabus

### 1. Course summary

This course is about how people do things with language—including gestures, positioning, and other forms of communication. We will cover five main topics. The first is how people use language in doing things together, as in everyday conversation. The second topic is how speakers formulate and produce individual utterances (words *and* gestures), and how listeners process these utterances as they try to understand them. Our third topic is the relation between the forms of language and what they represent. The fourth topic is communicative acts more broadly, meaning, and universals and variations in language. The final brief topic is how children acquire language. The premise throughout is that people use language to coordinate on mutually established goals, a process that is both cognitive and social.

### 2. Personnel

*Instructor:*

Herbert H. Clark ([clark@stanford.edu](mailto:clark@stanford.edu)), Jordan 302. Office hours Wed 2:15-3:15. (Home page: [stanford.edu/~clark/](http://stanford.edu/~clark/))

*Teaching assistants:*

Eleanor Chestnut ([ekc@stanford.edu](mailto:ekc@stanford.edu)), Jordan 292. Office hours Fri 12:30-1:30. (Lab page: [markmanlab.stanford.edu](http://markmanlab.stanford.edu))

Erica Yoon ([ejyoon@stanford.edu](mailto:ejyoon@stanford.edu)). Jordan 290. Office hours Mon 2:20-3:20. (Lab page: [langcog.stanford.edu/](http://langcog.stanford.edu/))

*Meetings:*

MWF 1:30-2:20. Building 200, room 034

### 3. Readings

Sedivy, Julie, *Language in Mind: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics*. Sinauer Associates, 2014. (Available at Stanford Bookstore and Green Library reserves)  
Clark, Herbert H., *Using Language*. Cambridge University Press, 1996. (Available at Stanford Bookstore and as an ebook at Stanford University Libraries.)  
Lecture notes, occasional papers, on CourseWork

### 4. Course requirements

1. Four 2-page mini-papers
2. Take-home midterm exam (ca. 10 pages)
3. Term paper (on modest, but original research)
4. Take-home final exam (ca. 10 pages)

**Time schedule (approximate)**

<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Clark</b>	<b>Sedivy</b>	<b>Important dates</b>
<b>Introduction</b>				
Sep 21, 23, 25	1. What is language use?	Ch 1	Ch 1	
	2. Conversation and coordination	Ch 2, 4		
<b>Language as action</b>				
Sep 28, 30, Oct 2	3. Acts of communication	Ch 5, 10		
	4. Joint projects with language	Ch 7, 11	Ch 11	
Oct 5, 7, 9	5. Managing conversation	Ch 8		Mini-paper 1 due Oct 5
<b>Listening</b>				
	6. Understanding utterances		Ch 8	
Oct 12, 14, 16	7. Processing utterances in time			Mini-paper 2 due Oct 12
<b>Speaking</b>				
	8. Designing utterances	Ch 3		
Oct 19, 21, 23	9. Formulating utterances	Ch 9	Ch 9	Mini-paper 3 due Oct 19 Midterm out Oct 19
	10. Executing utterances in time			
<b>Language and situations</b>				
Oct 26, 28, 30	11. Remembering what people say		Ch 10	Midterm due Oct 26
	12. Situational representations			
Nov 2, 4, 6	13. How narratives work	Ch 12		Mini-paper 4 due Nov 2
<b>Language and forms of thought</b>				
	14. What <i>are</i> communicative acts?	Ch 6		
Nov 9, 11, 13	15. What <i>are</i> word meanings?		Ch 7	Term paper topic due Nov 14
	16. Meaning beyond words			
Nov 16, 18, 20	17. How languages are alike		Ch 2	
	18. How languages differ		Ch 12	
<b>Nov 23-27</b>	<b>Thanksgiving break</b>			
<b>Child language</b>				
Nov 30, 2, 4	19. Children's first words		Ch 5	Term paper due Nov 30
	20. Further acquisition		Ch 6	Final exam out Dec 4 Final exam due Dec 11

The chapters in columns 3 and 4 are for Clark's *Using language* and Sedivy's *Language in mind*.