LINGUIST 67S: Language in Perception and Cognition Summer 2018

Instructor	Prerna Nadathur (pnadathur@stanford.edu)
Office Hours	Tu 1:30-2:30pm, and by appointment Margaret Jacks Hall 040D (460-040D)
Class Schedule	Tu,Th 10:30-11:50
Class Location	Wallenberg Hall 323 (160-323)
Website	`https://canvas.stanford.edu/courses/85541` All course materials will be posted to the course webpage. Assignments can be submitted via Canvas or in class.

Description

One of the driving questions in linguistics involves the relationship between language and cognition: what do the properties of language tell us about the nature of thinking and reasoning? Whorf's theory of **linguistic relativity**, made famous in popular science, suggests that the structures and patterns of the language(s) we speak constrain the way we think. This course introduces methods and ideas in modern linguistics through the lens of the relativism debate. We first discuss the original hypothesis and then examine arguments and data for strong and weak versions of relativism. We look at languages that differ structurally and conceptually from English, including languages that divide the colour spectrum differently, languages that lack numerals beyond the low single digits, and languages that use geographical coordinate systems (north, south, etc) instead of speaker-oriented ones (left, right). We consider how to use these differences to investigate a potential connection between language and cognitive capacities, focusing on understanding and critiquing research and experimental work in these areas.

Course aims

This course aims to introduce students to current research in linguistics and cognition, and to familiarize them with scientific methods, including experiment design, hypothesis development, and (qualitative) data analysis. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

Content goals

1. Describe the theory of linguistic relativity in layman's terms, and explain the difference between strong and weak relativity
2. Identify some key topics and areas of research into relativity, and pro/con positions

Analytical goals

1. Read an experimental paper and
   (a) restate the main hypothesis
   (b) describe the experiment
   (c) summarize results and conclusions
2. Begin to critique experimental work by:
   (a) identifying potential issues with experimental design
   (b) suggesting extensions or refinements

Assessment and Policies

Units	3 units	
Workload	Coursework consists of weekly readings and responses, class participation, one (optional) presentation of a paper, and a final project.	
Attendance	Attendance is required; absences should be discussed with the instructor beforehand, when possible.	
Late work	Students have one 'free' late assignment, excluding the final project and class presentations. No other late work will be accepted; exceptional circumstances should be discussed with the instructor in advance.	
Honor Code	Stanford University's Honor Code. You should feel free to discuss class work and assignments with other students, but all submissions should represent your own work. Ideas developed in collaboration with other students should be clearly indicated.	
Accommodations	Students who my need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation letter dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (ph: 650.723.1066).	
Rubric	Participation (10%)	Attendance and class discussion
	Weekly responses (30%)	4 short (∼1p) responses to weekly readings
	Longer responses (20%)	2 long (2-3pp) responses OR 1 longer response and 1 class presentation
	Project proposal (10%)	Short (∼1p) proposal for final project
	Bibliography (5%)	List of three references for final project, with 2-3 sentences indicating relevance
	Presentation (10%)	Short in-class presentation of project (10-15 min, including questions)
	Final write-up (15%)	Experiment proposal, including lit review, hypothesis, experiment design, and potential issues

Schedule

Week	*Dates*	*Topic*	*Due*
1	6/26	What is linguistic relativity?	
	6/28	The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in popular culture	Response 1
2	7/03	Inuit snow and Hopi time: Whorf on relativity	
	7/05	Strong and weak versions of relativity	Response 2
3	7/10	Language and colour perception	
	7/12		Response 3
4	7/17	Language and spatial cognition	
	7/19		Response 4
5	7/24	Language and number	Project proposal
	7/26		Response 5
6	7/31	Language and cross-modular reasoning	Bibliography
	8/02		Response 6
7	8/07	Language and theory of mind	
	8/09		Response 7
8	8/14	Modern perspectives on Neo-Whorfianism (review)	
	8/16	In-class presentations	
	Monday 8/20		Final project

Readings

All readings that are not available on the web (links included) will be posted on the Canvas site, in the *Required reading* folder. Supplementary materials can be found in the *Further reading* folder. Supplementary readings marked with an asterisk are recommended (typically for background).

Week 1: *What is linguistic relativity?*

- **Required:** Wolff & Holmes 2010, Deutscher 2010a
- *Supplementary:* Baghramian & Carter 2015*, Boroditsky 2003, Lucy 1997a, Lay 2013 (Sapir-Whorf in science fiction)

Week 2: *Perspectives on linguistic relativity*

- **Required (07/03):** Whorf 1940, Whorf 1939/1956, Orent 2013
- *Supplementary (07/03):* Pinker 1994 (Ch.3)*, Pullum 1989
- **Required (07/05):** Gleitman & Papafragou 2005, Levinson 2003, McWhorter talk (video)
- *Supplementary (07/05):* Boroditsky TED talk, Boroditsky 2011*, Casasanto 2016, McWhorter 2016

Week 3: *Language and colour perception*

- **Required:** Regier & Kay 2009, Winawer et al 2007, Gilbert et al 2005
- *Supplementary:* Berlin & Kay 1969, Lucy 1997b, Davidoff et al 1999, Levinson 2000, Deutscher 2010b (Chs 2-4, 9)*

Week 4: *Language and spatial cognition*

- **Required:** Deutscher 2010b (Ch. 7), Li et al 2011
- *Supplementary:* Pederson 1995, Levinson 1996, Levinson 1997, Li & Gleitman 2002*, Levinson et al 2002*, Munnich & Landau 2003

Week 5: *Language and number*

- **Required:** von Bredow 2006, Pica et al 2004, Frank et al 2008, Butterworth et al 2008
- *Supplementary:* Gordon 2004, Calapinto 2007, Flaherty & Senghas 2011

Week 6: *Language and cross-modular reasoning*

- **Required:** Spelke 2003, Hermer-Vazquez et al 1999
- *Supplementary:* Hermer & Spelke 1994, Hermer & Spelke 1996

Week 7: *Language and theory of mind*

- **Required:** de Villiers & de Villiers 2003, Newton & de Villiers 2007, Pyers & Senghas 2009
- *Supplementary:* de Villiers & Pyers 2002, Lohmann & Tomasello 2003, Milligan et al 2007

Week 8: *Review*

- TBD

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