

This syllabus has been updated based on the first-class discussion (Oct 5, 2024). Please carefully go over the content, and if you find any errors or unclear statements, please inform the instructor. More reading materials will be added in the following weeks.

Selected Topic in Language and Communication:
Language and Thought
PSY414/PSY514 – Fall 2023

Instructors: Junko Kanero (jkanero@sabanciuniv.edu)
Office: FASS 2126
Office hours: by appointment

Overview

Welcome to PSY 414/514 Selected Topic in Language and Communication! Each semester, we choose one specific topic related to language and communication, and this semester's focus is *language and thought*. This course aims to be one of your first, if not the very first, experiences in learning how to understand literature in depth, write scientific articles, give oral presentations, and design own experimental research studies. To achieve these aims, we will study the relation between the language we speak, like English and Turkish, and thoughts in our head.

The world's languages share considerable similarities, and speakers of any language is able to discuss a variety of topics ranging from tonight's dinner to quantum physics. Despite universal commonalities, however, languages are not "neutral coding systems of an objective reality" (Slobin, 1996, p. 91). Each language uniquely segments a spatially and temporally continuous flow of thoughts and events into discrete units in order to label them. *Do these differences found across languages lead their speakers to think in different ways? Or is human thought largely independent of language?*

Put more frankly, *do you and your friend from another part of the world think differently just because you two speak different languages? Do babies think in different ways before and after they learn first language? Are you a different person from 5 years ago because you are taking university courses in English?*

In this course, we review theoretical and empirical literature to discuss these questions in depth. Please also note that this course is double coded as PSY 414 and PSY 514, which means we will have a mix of undergraduate and graduate students. See the Requirements for Graduate Students section below for the additional requirements for graduate students.

Objectives

This course assists students in improving their abilities to:

- understand theoretical, methodological, and practical issues concerning the scientific study of language and thought.
- compare and synthesize different perspectives in the research field and express their opinions based on evidence in presentation and discussion.
- critically analyze and evaluate research articles.
- produce original research ideas and write formal proposals.

Readings

There is no textbook in this course. 2-3 articles or book chapters will be assigned each week. Students are expected to read the assigned articles before each class, submit comments on each of them, and participate in-class discussions.

Grading

Your course grade will be made up of the following components:

Class Participation	20%
Discussion Questions	10%
Reaction Papers	20%
Discussion Leading	20%
Final Paper	25%
Final Paper Presentation	5%
Research Points	Extra credit (up to 3%)

At the end of the semester, the letter grades will be assigned by using the following table:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
90.00+	85.00+	80.00+	75.00+	70.00+	65.00+	60.00+	55.00+	50.00+	45.00+	below 45

1. Class Participation

You are expected to attend class and comment on assigned readings in class. You will be evaluated on how actively you contribute to the class discussion. Active participation includes but is limited to (1) asking a question, (2) disagreeing with the instructor or another student, (3) identifying unspoken assumptions, reoccurring themes, or omitted themes in the discussion, (4) making a comment to clarify your understanding of another person's opinion. You may have up to 2 unexcused absences and have them not affect your final grade. Sharing your Discussion Questions (see below) in class is also considered as Class Participation.

Class Participation will be graded as:

- 0 = no participation or absent
- 1 = minor contributions
- 2 = major contributions

2. Discussion Questions

You are expected to read the material of each week before class to ensure a lively discussion in class. All students are required to submit at least one question/comment for each of the two assigned readings (i.e., when three readings are assigned, you may choose two out of the three) on SUCourse. These questions and comments will be used to facilitate class discussion by discussion leaders. Therefore, the content must be directly related to the readings, and also should be something that can lead to interesting discussion. I encourage questions about methods.

To receive full credit, you must provide a brief background or context for your question and demonstrate you have read and understand the reading. Students are expected to go beyond factual questions (e.g., "What does the word X mean?") and submit questions that would facilitate discussion. Your questions can address theoretical ideas, methodology, and or implications of the research. One submission with the lowest grade will *not* be counted toward your final grade.

Your questions will be graded as:

- 0 = no submission
- 1 = factual question or question/comment without context
- 2 = thoughtful question/comment that can facilitate in-class discussions

3. Discussion Leading

Every student is required to lead a discussion during the semester. Depending on the class size, you will present alone or in a small group. Similarly, depending on class size, all students will serve as discussion leaders 1-3 times. The schedule for discussion leaders will be discussed in class and may be determined based on student interest, random assignment, or a combination of both.

We will decide on the schedule in the second class. Therefore, students who are considering taking the course are asked to be presented in the class. The schedule will be distributed a few days after the first class meeting.

Discussion leaders will be responsible for summarizing at least two of the assigned papers for that week (excluding the optional articles) for class discussion and lead the discussion based on the questions and comments each student will submit for that week. Discussion leaders are also required to review and organize the questions/reactions provided by their peers, and use these as facilitators for discussion during class, in addition to their own thoughts/comments.

Discussion leaders may schedule an appointment with the instructor to preview the issues for discussion ahead of time. Discussion leaders should prepare by reading assigned articles and possibly other background readings to facilitate good discussion with other students.

4. Reaction Papers

There will be three reaction papers at designated times. One of them will be assigned in the first week to understand your views on this topic. The other two will be short reaction papers (maximum of 4 double-spaced pages), concerning your reactions and thoughts about the provided article or lecture. In these two papers, you are required to find and incorporate an additional journal article(s) to illustrate your perspective. The material will be provided at least one week before the assignment due date. In total, these assignments will count for 20% of your grade (the first paper is worth 5 points, and the other two are worth 7.5 pts each). Each paper is due at the beginning of the class on the assigned date. Late papers will not be accepted.

5. Final Paper

The final assignment is a research proposal for a new empirical study concerning one of the course topics or another topic related to the language and thought debate.

Your proposal must be written in APA style. For formatting details, refer to the APA Manual (7th edition). The body of the proposal should be 7-10 pages (double-spaced) in length, excluding the title page, abstract, or references.

The topics covered in the syllabus may provide a starting point for these papers, but you are encouraged to find sources beyond the course readings. The paper will be roughly in the format of a journal article, but with no data. The paper will have (1) an introduction, (2) methods, (3) planned analyses, (4) a discussion of expected results and their implications.

Graduate students are expected to collect pilot data and conduct preliminary analyses for the study they are proposing. The data collection and analysis are optional for undergraduate students.

Further detailed information about this assignment will be provided as this date approaches.

6. Final Paper Presentation

You will also present your proposal idea to the class and receive feedback from other students and the instructor. The duration of the presentation will be 5-15 minutes and will be determined based on the class size and other factors. Your proposal idea must be approved by the instructor, and you may be asked to revise your prospectus based on the feedback you receive.

Course Schedule (Tentative)

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics and Assignments</i>
1	Oct 5	Intro to the course and the language and thought debate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • Presentation and discussion scheduling • What is the language and thought debate?
2	Oct 12	Theories of the language and thought debate Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaction Paper 1 due at the beginning of class Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whorf, B. L. (1940/1956). Science and linguistics. In J. B. Carroll (Ed.), <i>Language, thought, and reality: Selected writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf</i> (pp. 207-219). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. • Pinker, S. (1994). The language instinct: How the mind creates language (excerpt: pp. 55-67). New York, NY: William Morrow. Optional readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sapir, E. (1929). The status of linguistics as a science. <i>Language</i>, 5, 207-214. https://doi.org/10.2307/409588 • Heider, E. R. (1972). Universals in color naming and memory. <i>Journal of Experimental Psychology</i>, 93, 10-20. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0032606 • Kay, P., & Kempton, W. (1984). What is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis? <i>American Anthropologist</i>, 86, 65-79. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1984.86.1.02a00050
3	Oct 19	Modern theories and experiments Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slobin, D. I. (1996). From “thought and language” to “thinking for speaking.” In J. J. Gumperz & S. C. Levinson (Eds.), <i>Rethinking linguistic relativity: Studies in the social and cultural foundations of language</i> (pp. 70-96). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. • Wolff, P., & Holmes, K. J. (2011). Linguistic relativity. <i>Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science</i>, 2(3), 253–265. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.104 Optional readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gleitman, L.R. & Papafragou, A. (2013). Relations between language and thought. In D. Reisberg (Ed.), <i>Handbook of Cognitive Psychology</i>. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. • Levinson, S. C. (2003). Language and mind: Let’s get the issues straight! In D. Gentner & S. Goldin-Meadow (Eds.), <i>Language in mind: Advances in the study of language and thought</i> (pp. 25-37). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
4	Oct 26	Color Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Davidoff, J., Davies, I., & Roberson, D. (1999). Colour categories in a stone-age tribe. <i>Nature</i>, 398, 203-204. https://doi.org/10.1038/18335 • Thierry, G., Athanasopoulos, P., Wiggett, A., Dering, B., & Kuipers, J.-R. (2009). Unconscious effects of language-specific terminology on preattentive color perception. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of</i>

		<p><i>Sciences</i>, 106(11), 4567–4570. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0811155106</p> <p>Optional readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berlin, B., & Kay, P. (1999). <i>Basic color terms: Their universality and evolution</i>. Center for the Study of Language and Information. • Winawer, J., Witthoft, N., Frank, M. C., Wu, L., Wade, A. R., & Boroditsky, L. (2007). Russian blues reveal effects of language on color discrimination. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America</i>, 104(19), 7780. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0701644104 • Ozturk, O., Shayan, S., Liskowski, U., & Majid, A. (2013). Language is not necessary for color categories. <i>Developmental Science</i>, 16(1), 111–115. https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.12008 • Wright, O., Davies, I. R. L., & Franklin, A. (2015). Whorfian effects on colour memory are not reliable. <i>Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology</i>, 4, 745-758. https://doi.org/10.1080/17470218.2014.966123 • Cibelli, E., Xu, Y., Austerweil, J. L., Griffiths, T. L., & Regier, T. (2016). The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis and Probabilistic Inference: Evidence from the Domain of Color. <i>PLOS ONE</i>, 11(7), e0158725. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0158725
5	Nov 2	<p>Number & Objects Readings: • TBA Optional readings: • TBA</p>
6	Nov 9	<p>Spatial cognition Readings: • TBA Optional readings: • TBA</p>
7	Nov 16	<p>Time Readings: • TBA Optional readings: • TBA</p>
8	Nov 23	<p>Odor Readings: • TBA Optional readings: • TBA</p>
9	Nov 30	<p>Emotion & Theory of Mind Assignments: • Reaction Paper 2 due at the beginning of class Readings: • TBA Optional readings: • TBA</p>
10	Dec 7 Dec 8	<p>Guest lecture on bilingual language development by Drs. Amy Pace and Dr. Adriana Luna (University of Washington). <u>We plan to cancel the regular class on December 7 and hold this guest lecture online at 7 pm on Friday, December 8.</u></p> <p>Readings: • TBA</p>

		Optional readings: • TBA
11	Dec 14	Multilingualism Assignments: • Proposal presentation in class Readings: • TBA Optional readings: • TBA
12	Dec 21	Language and the Brain Readings: • TBA Optional readings: • TBA
13	Dec 28	Language Evolution Readings: • TBA Optional readings: • TBA
14	Jan 4	Reconsidering the Language and Thought Debate Assignments: • Reaction Paper 3 due at the beginning of class • Final Paper due (time and date TBA) Readings: • TBA Optional readings: • TBA

Requirements for Graduate Students (Tentative)

Those of you who are taking this course as a graduate course (PSY 514) will have special requirements summarized below.

- Graduate students may serve as the presenter more than undergraduate students, depending on the class size.
- Assignments may include more advanced questions.
- Reaction Papers 2 and 3 should include at least two additional references (These references can come from the *Optional Readings* list when appropriate, but not from the *Required Readings* list).
- For the final paper, graduate students are expected to collect pilot data and conduct preliminary analyses for the study they are proposing.
- For all factors related to the final grade, you will be graded against the standard more rigorous than that for undergraduate students.

Extra Credit - Research Participation (up to 3 bonus points)

Students can optionally serve as participants in research conducted by Sabancı University researchers to earn bonus points. You will be able to sign up for experiments and earn your Research Participation Points through the online Sona system at <http://sabanciuniv.sona-systems.com>. The detail of the system can be found in *Research Points - GuideForStudents Spring 2023.pdf* on SUCourse.

For this course, you will be able to earn up to 6 Research Participation (RP) points (1 point equals ~ 30 minutes of research participation). These 6 RP points will be converted to 3 bonus points and

added to your overall total at the end of the semester. In other words, you receive 0.5 class bonus points for 1 RP point. If you are earning 4-6 RP points (2-3 class bonus points) for this course, at least 1 RP point (0.5 bonus points) must be earned from in-person studies.

Research points can be still earned if online studies are available. There may be fewer or no research participation opportunities, but we *do not* plan to add other extra credit opportunities.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to obey the Sabancı University Code of Academic Integrity. <http://www.sabanciuniv.edu/en/academic-integrity-statement>

Scholastic dishonesty of any sort will not be tolerated. Cheating in any form is a serious offense and is considered to be in violation of the College's Academic Integrity Code. Cases of academic dishonesty will be reported and the student will be disciplined accordingly.

Use of AI-based tools: The use of AI-based tools such as *ChatGPT*, *Bard*, *DALL-E*, *Midjourney*, and *DeepMind* is permissible, solely for the purpose of aiding your learning process. It is against the academic integrity to submit works written by another agent – be it another person or a generative AI. This poses two issues: (1) you are submitting work you did not complete as your own and trying to earn credit for it, and (2) you are missing out on the opportunity to enhance your writing skills, one of the key learning objectives of this course. For example, you are allowed to rely on *Grammarly* and similar tools to correct your English grammar errors at the levels of words and phrases (though in this case too, you should carefully review and learn from your mistakes to avoid repeating them), but making *ChatGPT* generate entire sentences is unacceptable. Instead, you may write your essay and ask *ChatGPT* to comment on your writing. To prevent these new forms of academic dishonesty, different measures will be employed. For one, if any submitted work (including Discussion Questions) shows suspicious characteristics such as excessively formal language, deviations from the student's in-class comments, or a sign of machine hallucinations, interviews will be conducted with the student involved, and their grade for the assignment or the whole semester will be adjusted accordingly.