

# LIN 207: Language, Society, and the Individual

Syllabus

Fall 2010

<b>Classroom:</b>	97 Alumni
<b>Instructor:</b>	Jeruen E. Dery Office: 601 Baldy Office Hours: M 13:00-15:00 Email: jedery@buffalo.edu
<b>TA:</b>	Karl Sarvestani Office: 602 Baldy Office Hours: T 9:00-11:00 Email: karlsarv@buffalo.edu
<b>Class Meetings:</b>	MWF 12:00-12:50
<b>Textbook:</b>	<i>Language, Culture, and Communication: The Meaning of Messages</i> . Nancy Bonvillain. 5th edition. Prentice Hall, New Jersey. 2007.

## Overview

Language is the most important “interface” between any one human being’s mind and the minds of other people. A number of subdisciplines of linguistics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology are dedicated to the study of how language is used to convey messages from mind to mind; in particular: neurolinguistics - the study of how language is supported by the brain; psycholinguistics - the study of how utterances are processed in the mind/brain; language acquisition research - the study of how languages are learned; sociolinguistics - the study of social determinants of language variation and change; and linguistic anthropology - the study of the cultural embedding of linguistic practice. This course is designed to provide a first acquaintance with these various fields of study. The main emphasis will be on the social and cultural aspects of language use.

## Reading

Bonvillain 2007 (required); six chapters from other books are on reserve and can be downloaded from the UB Libraries website (see below) - readings *must* be completed prior to the week for which they are assigned!

## Grading

There will be six **homework assignments**, six **in-class exercises** to be completed in group work, and a three-hour open-book, open-notes **final exam**. HW assignments consist of problem sets and will be graded according to the number of points you score on the solution to each problem. In-class exercises consist of similar problem sets, but will not be graded - only your participation will be recorded. The final exam consists again of the same kind of problem sets and will be graded in the same way as the homework assignments. Overall grades compute as follows:

- Best five hw assignments - 50%
- Participation during in-class exercises - 20%
- Final exam - 30%

**Late policy:** I do realize that things happen during the semester: your computer crashes, your alarm clock doesn't work, your grandparent dies, and so on. So I won't be harsh in saying that late homework won't be accepted. I will accept them, as long as the homework haven't been returned to you, but I will also penalize them. For every late day, I will deduct a +/- from your overall homework letter grade. For example, if a homework is due Monday, and you handed it to me on Friday (four days after), if you got an A- for the homework, it will be penalized and lowered to C. Once I return the homework to the class, then I won't accept any late homework.

## Syllabus and Schedule

Readings marked with an asterisk can be downloaded from UBLearn. Note that the pages designed for preparatory reading may be less than the entire chapter!

### Week 1: Aug. 30 - Sep. 3: Introduction: Properties of Language

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain Chap. 1
  - \*Hockett 1958: 569-580
  - \*Jackendoff 1994: 8-20
- Topics:
  - Introduction and Overview
  - Properties of Language
  - Language as a mental phenomenon

### Week 2: Sep. 6 - Sep. 8: The form of the message: Speech sounds

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 7-16
- Topics
  - Phonetics, Phonemic Analysis
  - Phonology, prosodic features

### Week 3: Sep. 13 - Sep. 17: The form of the message: Words, phrases, sentences

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 17-27
- Topics
  - Morphology: the structure of words
  - Syntax: the structure of sentences

**Week 4: Sep. 20 - Sep. 24: Meaning in language**

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 27-29, 68-76
- Topics
  - Semantics
  - Extended and transferred meaning

**Week 5: Sep. 27 - Oct. 1: Language and cognition**

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 43-60
  - \*Levinson pp. 109-123
- Topics
  - The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis
  - Cognitive anthropology: color terms
  - Cognitive anthropology: space

**Week 6: Oct. 4 - Oct. 8: Language and cognition (cont.); language acquisition**

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 246-256
- Topics
  - Crosslinguistic variation
  - The puzzles of language acquisition

**Week 7: Oct. 11 - Oct. 15: Language acquisition (cont.)**

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 267-269
- Topics
  - Development sequences
  - sound development
  - morphological development

**Week 8: Oct. 18 - Oct. 22: Language processing**

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 256-258
  - Radford et al. 1999 pp. 120-133
- Topics
  - Learning word meanings
  - Psycholinguistics and comprehension
  - Sound perception

**Week 9: Oct. 25 - Oct. 29: Language processing (cont.); Language and brain**

- Readings:
  - Ingram 2007 pp. 40-65
  - Banich 2004 pp. 286-309
- Topics
  - Speech production
  - Slips of the tongue
  - Language and the brain

**Week 10: Nov. 1 - Nov. 5: Language and brain (cont.); using language**

- Readings:
  - Banich 2004 pp. 314-320
  - Bonvillain pp. 79-83, 94-96
- Topics
  - Aphasia
  - Lateralization
  - Speech acts and speech events
  - Conversation analysis

**Week 11: Nov. 8 - Nov. 12: Using language (cont.)**

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 83-89, 114-122, 133-136
- Topics
  - Implicatures
  - Politeness: terms of address

**Week 12: Nov. 15 - Nov. 19: Using language (cont.); language in society**

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 136-140, 146-156, 161-169, 177-179
- Topics
  - Politeness: face and redress
  - Social stratification and language use

**Week 13: Nov. 22: Language in society (cont.)**

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 336-343
- Topics
  - Pidgin and Creole languages

**Week 14: Nov. 29 - Dec. 3: Language and gender**

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 186-193, 200-210, 221-238
- Topics
  - The ethnographic approach
  - The sociolinguistic approach
  - The conversation-analytical approach

**Week 15: Dec. 6 - Dec. 10: Multilingualism**

- Readings:
  - Bonvillain pp. 306-313, 323-331, 346-368
- Topics
  - Multilingual nations
  - Bilingual communities
  - Endangered languages

**Final Exam - TBA**

The final exam is open-book, open-notes, and consists entirely of problem sets of a kind that have already occurred in hw assignments and in-class exercises. Essentially, you get questions you've seen before, but with respect to new data sets. So your preparation should focus on reviewing the assignments and exercises and making sure you know (a) how to solve the problems and (b) *why* the way to solve a particular type of problem is the way to solve that type of problem.

## Bibliography

The books marked with a # are on reserve in the Undergrad Library, *in addition* to the designated chapters downloadable online, for voluntary follow-up reading. You can check them out for two hours max, or overnight.

- #Banich, M. T. (2004). *Cognitive Neuroscience and Neuropsychology*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Bonvillain, N. (2007). *Language, Culture, and Communication*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- #Hockett, C. F. (1958). *A Course in Modern Linguistics*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- #Ingram, J. C. L. (2007). *Neurolinguistics: An Introduction to Spoken Language Processing and its Disorders*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- #Jackendoff, R. (1994). *Patterns in the mind*. New York, NY: BasicBooks.
- Levinson, Stephen C. 1996. Frames of reference and Molyneux's question: Crosslinguistic evidence. In: Bloom, Paul, Mary A. Peterson, Lynn Nadel, and Merrill F. Garrett (Eds), *Language and space*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 109-169.
- #Radford, A., Atkinson, M., Britain, D., Clahsen, H., and A. Spencer (1999). *Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.