Experiments in Linguistic Meaning

Summer Semester 2023

Dr. Maria Esipova & Dr. Prof. Maribel Romero

Up-to-date as of April 13, 2023

When & where

When: Tuesday 10:00–11:30
Where: G227a

Instructors

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Course description

This course provides a hands-on introduction to experimental data collection concerning meaning in language. A range of methodological aspects will be covered, from identifying a research question and a falsifiable null hypothesis, to determining how different experimental paradigms (e.g., acceptability judgment, inference tasks, picture selection, etc.) can be used to test different hypotheses. The empirical domain will include different semantic and pragmatic phenomena, such as presupposition, implicature, mass/count distinction and aspect, semantic composition in the nominal and verbal domain, etc. across different populations (L1, L2, early vs. late learners of signed languages, bilinguals, adults with different social skill measures). As part of this course, students will also be introduced to some of the basic tools used in experimental design. The course aims to prepare students to design their own experiments to collect original data, and to place students in a strong position to critically evaluate empirical claims.

Requirements & evaluation

Designing a pilot experiment: (all in English)
class presentation + ca. 10-page write-up = 6 credits;
class presentation + ca. 15-page write-up = 9 credits

Readings & course materials

There is no textbook for this class; readings for each topic are listed below and will be posted on the course website. There are the following folders for readings in ILIAS:

- Methods: mandatory; optional
- State-of-the-art: mandatory; optional

Course schedule (subject to change)

Date	Instructor	Topics	Readings
11.4	ME+MR	Intro to the course; Methods 1: the study of meaning as an empirical science	
18.4	ME	Methods 2: judgement tasks (acceptability, truth value, inference)	Schütze & Sprouse 2014, sections 1–2; optional: Bott et al. 2011
25.4	MR	Presupposition projection; truth value judgements + response times	Zehr et al. 2016
2.5	ME	Methods 3: online measures (reaction times, visual attention); practicalities of experimental design; research ethics	Schütze & Sprouse 2014, section 3; optional: Abbuhl et al. 2014; Kaiser 2014; Eckert 2014
9.5	MR	Presupposition vs. Anti-presupposition; picture choice + response times + eye-tracking	Bade & Schwarz 2019
16.5	ME	Scalar implicatures in signers (early vs. late exposure); truth value judgements	Davidson & Mayberry 2015
23.5	ME	Scalar implicatures in L2 learners + social skill scale; truth value judgements + response times	Khorsheed et al. 2022
30.5	ME+MR	**Consolidation week**	
6.6		**Pfingstferien (no class)**	
13.6	ME	Composition in the verbal domain; neuroimaging	Kim & Pylkkänen 2019
20.6	MR	Mass/count and atelic/telic distinction in bilinguals; acceptability judgements	Yin & O'Brien 2019
27.6	MR	EITHER Syntax-discourse interface in bilinguals; acceptability judgements OR Generics in L1-acquisition; truth value judgements	EITHER Sorace et al. 2009 OR Castroviejo et al. 2021
4.7	ME+MR	Practical session	
11.7	ME+MR	Student presentations	
18.7	ME+MR	Student presentations	

Bibliography

Abbuhl, Rebekah, Susan M Gass & Alison Jayne Mackey. 2014. Experimental research design. In Robert J Podesva & Devyani Sharma (eds.), *Research methods in linguistics*, 116–134. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139013734.008.

Bade, Nadine & Florian Schwarz. 2019. (In-)definites, (anti-)uniqueness, and uniqueness expectations. In Ashok K Goel, Colleen M Seifert & Christian Freksa (eds.), *Proceedings of the 41st Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*, 119–125.

Bott, Oliver, Sam Featherston, Janina Radó & Britta Stolterfoht. 2011. The application of experimental methods in semantics. In Claudia Maienborn, Klaus von Heusinger & Paul Portner (eds.), *Semantics: An international handbook of natural language meaning*, 305–321. Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. doi:10.1515/9783110226614.305.

Castroviejo, Elena, Dimitra Lazaridou-Chatzigoga, Marta Ponciano & Agustín Vicente. 2021. Generics as default? Comparing the acquisition of universals and generics in Spanish. In Andrea Beltrama, Florian Schwarz & Anna Papafragou (eds.), *Proceedings of Experiments in Linguistic Meaning (ELM) 1*, 90–100.

Davidson, Kathryn & Rachel I Mayberry. 2015. Do adults show an effect of delayed first language acquisition when calculating scalar implicatures? *Language acquisition* 22(4). 329–354. doi:10.1080/10489223.2014.962140.

Eckert, Penelope. 2014. Ethics in linguistics research. In Robert J Podesva & Devyani Sharma (eds.), *Research methods in linguistics*, 11–26. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139013734.003.

Kaiser, Elsi. 2014. Experimental paradigms in psycholinguistics. In Robert J Podesva & Devyani Sharma (eds.), *Research methods in linguistics*, 135–168. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139013734.009.

Khorsheed, Ahmed, Sabariah Md. Rashid, Vahid Nimehchisalem, Lee Geok Imm, Jessica Price & Camilo R Ronderos. 2022. What second-language speakers can tell us about pragmatic processing. *PloS ONE* 17(2). e0263724. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0263724.

Kim, Songhee & Liina Pylkkänen. 2019. Composition of event concepts: Evidence for distinct roles for the left and right anterior temporal lobes. *Brain and language* 188. 18–27. doi:10.1016/j.bandl.2018.11.003.

Schütze, Carson T & Jon Sprouse. 2014. Judgment data. In Robert J Podesva & Devyani Sharma (eds.), *Research methods in linguistics*, 27–50. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139013734.004.

Sorace, Antonella, Ludovica Serratrice, Francesca Filiaci & Michela Baldo. 2009. Discourse conditions on subject pronoun realization: Testing the linguistic intuitions of older bilingual children. *Lingua* 119(3). 460–477. doi:10.1016/j.lingua.2008.09.008.

Yin, Bin & Beth Ann O'Brien. 2019. Aspectual interpretation and mass/count knowledge in chinese-english bilinguals. *Linguistic approaches to bilingualism* 9(3). 468–503. doi:10.1075/lab.16032.yin.

Zehr, Jérémy, Cory Bill, Tieu Lyn, Romoli Jacopo & Schwarz Florian. 2016. Presupposition projection from the scope of none: Universal, existential, or both? In Mary Moroney, Carol-Rose Little, Jacob Collard & Dan Burgdorf (eds.), *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) 26*, 754–774. doi:10.3765/salt.v26i0.3837.