UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Applied Psycholinguistics

2627-2-F5109P017

Learning area

Applied experimental psychological sciences

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- cognitive processes involved in language processing and mechanisms underlying language processing, with a special focus on multilingualism;
- theoretical implications of psycholinguistic research on models of language processing and cognition;
- experimental methodologies and paradigms used in the investigation of the cognitive mechanisms involved in language processing;
- current debates in psycholinguistics (for example, debate on the cognitive advantage of bilingualism; debate on inclusive language proposals, etc.);
- practical applications in communication: use of linguange in real communicative situations; evaluation of different targets, scopes and means of communication of the message; evaluation of the communicative consequences of lingustic choices.

Applying knowledge and understanding

- reasoning about the cognitive processes involved in language processing and the effect of multilingual exposure
- evaluating experimental paradigms and tools for the investigation of language use and language comprehension, also in consideration of the population (e.g., monolinguals vs. bilinguals) and the linguistic features of the language under investigation
- reasoning about implicit content triggered by linguistic items and analysis of non-literal interpretations
- interpreting behavioral measures (reading/reaction times measures, implicit measures of processing, such

as eye-tracking measures and event-realted potentials)
- analyzing scientific reports critically
- implementing testable hypothesis of research on language

Making Judgment

- Development of students' critical analysis skills, particularly regarding the interpretation of experimental data used to support research hypotheses.
- Enhancement of students' ability to critically evaluate research hypotheses and models of data interpretation, including those related to recent scientific debates in the field of psycholinguistics —such as inclusive language and the benefits of multilingualism.

These objectives will be supported through active student participation during lectures and through group discussions on controversial topics, encouraging students' engagement and confrontation of diverse perspectives.

Communication Skills

- Development of active listening skills, the ability to argue one's ideas, and to engage in discussion within groups, including interdisciplinary ones.
- Development of the ability to understand and critically analyze different points of view.
- Development of the ability to communicate one’s perspective clearly and consciously, and to support one’s arguments by referring to scientific evidence as well as documented and verified data or information.

These objectives will be supported by encouraging students' active engagement in class discussions.

Learning Skills
Development of greater critical awareness and methodological sensitivity which will strenghten the students' ability to:

- analyze research data in a critical, detailed, and in-depth manner
- critically evaluate the interpretation of scientific data — including consideration of alternative hypotheses or explanations
- construct and defend arguments based on thoroughly analyzed and well-documented sources

Contents

The course aims to link language and cognition, providing an overview of the mechanisms underlying language processing and the cognitive processes involved in it. By analysing up-to date experimental studies in psycholinguistics, we will understand how the brain processes language and which cognitive challenges are related to language processing, with a special focus on multilingualism. The course will offer an overview of current debates about the use and processing of language in monolingual and bilingual individuals, and it will also explore the practical applications of language use in communication.

Detailed program

- On-line processing of spoken languages and cognitive processed involved
- Prediction and anticipation in language and cognition
- Experimental methods and techniques used in psycholinguistics to understand how the brain processes language

- Lexical access and representation in monolingual and multilingual adults
- Cognitive effects and communicative consequences of lexical processing
- Discussion of current topics of research on bilingualism, and cross-linguistic influence effects
- Practical application of language in communicative contexts, such as the use of metaphors and implicit content
- Discussion of recently debated topic, such as inclusive language efficacy and feasibility

Prerequisites

A background in linguistics is **not** required; the background information necessary to follow the course will be provided during the course.

Teaching methods

The course will be held in presence. Teaching will consist of lecture-based lessons, and also interactive classwork that will take place through the discussion of scientific articles, presentations and comments, practical exercises, and discussions on the course topics.

Assessment methods

The exam is **written** and comprises:

- open questions in order to assess the acquisition of theoretical notions and the ability to extend this competence to cases of real communication;
- multiple choice questions in order to assess the acquisition of theoretical basic notions;
- the analysis of one of the graphs discussed in class, in order to assess the ability to interpret and discuss psycholinguistic data
- a series of exercises in which the student is required to extend the knowledge acquired to real examples of use of language

On a voluntary basis, students can give a presentation in class (during the course) consisting of the critical analysis of a scientific paper related to the topics discussed in class (prior approval of the instructor) or a research project following one of the topics/studies discussed.
In this case, the final grade will be modulated as detailed below:

- written examination: 70% of the final grade;
- presentation in class: 30% of the final grade.

The evaluation criteria are the following: accuracy of the answers, ability to argue, synthesize, make connections, and critically analyze phenomena.
The assessment will be based on the following criteria:

- 30 with honors (30 e lode): Excellent exam, both in terms of knowledge and critical/expressive articulation
- 30: Outstanding exam, complete knowledge, well-articulated, and correctly expressed
- 27–29: Good exam, comprehensive and satisfactory knowledge, substantially correct expression.
- 24–26: Fair exam, knowledge is present on key points but is not comprehensive and not always correctly

articulated
- 21–23: Sufficient exam, knowledge is sometimes superficial, with gaps in expression and articulation that are not always appropriate
- 18–20: Barely sufficient exam, knowledge is present but superficial; expression and articulation of the argument show significant gaps
- < 18: Insufficient exam, knowledge is absent or heavily flawed, with a lack of critical analysis of the topics covered.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Textbooks:
Alber Costa (2020). The bilingual brain: And what it tells us about the science of language. Penguin UK.
Julie Sedivy (2019). Language in mind: An introduction to psycholinguistics. Sinauer Associates (**only selected chapters** - parts will be made available on the course page).
Other reading material (including scientific papers) will be specified during the course and detailed on the course page.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES