Linguistics 104
Language and conceptualization

Instructor:

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Overview of Course

- Administrativa

- What we're going to cover in this course

Administrativa

Meetings and Holidays

- M,W,F 9:00 – 9:50, Peterson Hall 103
- Holidays:
  - MLK , Monday Jan 19
  - President's day, Monday Feb 16

Grading

- 3 homeworks: (30% --10% each)
- Midterm (30%)
- Final (40%)

Administrativa

Office Hours

- Thursday 11:00 – 12:00, & by appt.
- 3141 McGill Hall
- sumnicht@ling.ucsd.edu

Class website

- http://ling.ucsd.edu/courses/ lign104/syllabus.html

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Required Readings

- Course Reader
- Sold after class Wednesday?
- Cost = ~$30

What We're going to cover

- Embodiment
- Categorization
- Attention, framing and construal
- Humor
- Imagery
- Metaphor, Metonomy, blending
- Embodied machines

Embodiment

- View of meaning as body and experience dependent
- View of language as a cognitive process, rather than a system or object
- View that language has a vital functional role

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Categorization

- ■ **Vital biological function**
  - Animals sensitive to contrasts that are relevant to their lives: ex. food/non-food
- ■ **Category boundaries are not sharp**
  - Categories are associations of features
    ex. Cat is furry, has sharp claws, a tail, meows, etc.   What if a cat has no tail?
  - Categories have prototypes

Categorization

- **Language maps onto categories**
  - Polysemy one linguistic form - several possible meanings
  - Constructions - (Goldberg) configurations of word categories (noun, verb, etc.) carry meaning
    - Transitive construction N-V-N
      - John touched the picture.
      - John walked the dog.

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Attention, Framing and Construal

- Attention giving is a fundamental cognitive process

- Language draws attention to scenes in particular ways.

- Framing - (Filmore) word meanings rely on experientially based background knowledge.

Attention, Framing and Construal

- *Accuse* vs. *Criticize*
  - Mary accused Sally of quitting
  - Mary criticized Sally for quitting

- *Buy* vs. *Sell*
  - Evoke same background experience, focus on actions of different participants.

Attention, Framing and Construal

- Construal - (Langacker) 'Expressions which evoke essentially the same conceptual content can nonetheless be semantically distinct because they construe that content in alternate ways'

  1. *The tall surly waiter viciously kicked an elderly woman's yelping poodle.*
  2. *The man struck a canine.*

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Humor

- Jokes take advantage of people's normal expectations.
- Frame-shifting (Coulson)

  By the time Mary had had her fourteenth child, she'd finally run out of names to call her husband.

- Scalar humor (Bergen)

  Yo' mama is so old, her social security number is in Roman numerals.

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Imagery

- Mental imagery is the mental invention or recreation of an experience that resembles the experience of actually perceiving an object or event.

Imagery

- Evidence that in solving certain cognitive problems, people engage in imagery, mentally scanning through space.

  ex. Map questions

  In which direction with respect to Peterson Hall are:

  - McGill Hall?
  - Geisel Library?
  - Galbraith Hall?

Imagery

- Scenes are sometimes described using fictive motion

  The road <u>goes</u> from Canada to Mexico

- Evidence that such descriptions invoke mental scanning that increases processing time. (Matlock)

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Metaphor, Metonomy, Blending

- Metaphor is a mapping between a *source* domain and a *target* domain.
    1. *John is an elephant.*
    2. *If he doesn't let off steam, he's going to blow his top.*

- Blending – (Fauconnier) Blends combine properties of source and target to produce new emergent structure.

Metaphor, Metonomy, Blending

- ## Ex. of blends
  1. *Soyrizo, soysage (veggie 'meats')*
  2. *She sneezed the napkin off the table (Goldberg)*

- ## Metonomy - referring to one thing by expressing a related entity:

  1. *The kettle's boiling.*
  2. *Have you read the new Crichton?*

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Embodied Machines

- If understanding and using language requires a body, what hope is there that machines will ever understand us or talk to us?