Linguistics 104
Language and conceptualization

Instructor:

Anne Sumnicht
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Overview of Course

- Administrativa

- What we’re going to cover in this course
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%)
Language and Conceptualization

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
Required Readings

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

What We’re going to cover

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

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.
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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.
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 goes 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.
Ex. of blends
1. *Soyrizo, soysage* (veggie ‘meats’)
2. *She sneezed the napkin off the table* (Goldberg)

Metonymy - 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?