



CBS3402
Spring 2026

Dr. Eric Pelzl
Office: HHB715

Time: Wed 12:30-3:20pm
Classroom: HHBUG04

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Website: <https://puzzl-e.github.io/cbs3402/>

Office hours: In-person or Zoom meetings can be scheduled via email

Course Description

Psycholinguists study the psychological and neurobiological factors that allow humans to acquire, understand and produce language. In this subject you will survey common techniques used in psycholinguistics and the kinds of research questions that are under investigation in this field. A major focus on the subject is on the interpretation, design, and implementation of psycholinguistic experiments; over the course of the semester, you will discuss real psycholinguistic experiments and plan and carry out your own experiments.

Schedule of course topics (subject to change)

1. Introduction to psycholinguistics (14-Jan)
2. Psychological mechanisms (21-Jan)
3. Priming (28-Jan)
4. Building a priming experiment (4-Feb)
5. Speech sounds and word recognition (11-Feb)
---- 18 Feb NO CLASS: LUNAR NEW YEAR----
6. Sentence comprehension (25-Feb) **[Priming Plan deadline]**
7. Eye-tracking (4-Mar)
8. Neurolinguistics (11-Mar)
9. Child language acquisition (18-Mar)
10. Second Language Acquisition (25-Mar)
11. Bilingualism (1-Apr)
12. [Surprise Topic] & Review (8-Apr) **[Priming Report deadline]**
13. Review Test (15-Apr)

Expectations for study

This class meets once a week. In addition to regular attendance of class, the expectation is that you will spend from **3-6 hours per week** outside of class on assignments and projects for the class.

Assessments

Assessments for this class are each worth a certain number of points. In total, you can earn up to 100 points for the class. To calculate your grade, you can just change the points into a percent out of 100. Below are the different types of assessments that will be used in this course.

1. Assignments/Quizzes/Attendance (40%)

This will be a very active class, so your preparation will be very important. Most weeks there will be a set of tasks to complete prior to class **worth 3 points** (30 in total). Guidelines for the tasks will be given week-by-week on Blackboard and the course website: <https://puzzl-e.github.io/cbs3402/>.

The tasks will sometimes include conducting mini-experiments on yourself, or with your friends or classmates, and submitting your data. Usually there will be a short review quiz to check your understanding of the materials you studied, but sometimes it might be a brief writing assignment or group assignment instead.

Except in the case of an emergency, assignments/quizzes submitted after the beginning of the class session will be considered late and will receive a 50% deduction (e.g., a 90% would receive 45%). **But late is better than never!**

Incomplete assignments receive no credit and will quickly diminish your final grade.

Each class (after add/drop period) you can get **1 point for attendance**, for up to 10 points total. These points are awarded automatically if you attend class and check-in by scanning the QR code. You cannot get these points if you miss a class unless you have a formal excuse with evidence to excuse the absence, such as a doctor's letter. In other words, just sending me an email isn't enough. On the other hand, just missing one or two classes will not have a large impact on your grade.

IMPORTANT: These weekly assignments are meant to be relatively easy points! As long as you do the required tasks, you should get close to full points each time.

2. Priming Experiment (40%)

Over the course of the semester, you will design and run a priming study from start to finish. You will choose a question to investigate with priming, create stimuli, program the experiment, recruit participants and collect data, analyze the data, and write up a report of results. The timeline for much of this will be flexible. **You are encouraged to start early and are welcome to submit your project whenever it is complete.** The final deadline for this project is 23:59 on Wednesday the 8th of April. You will be able to work on the project with one other classmate. More details will be provided in class in Week 4, after we have learned about priming.

3. Review test (20%)

There will be one in-class test in Week 13 (15 April) to review the content we have learned in the course. This will be a challenging test meant to give you a chance to demonstrate your mastery of course content. Details of the test will be provided later in the semester. Completion of the quizzes and other assignments should be helpful in preparing you for some of the types of questions that will be on the test.

~~Extra credit~~: There will be no extra credit opportunities added later in the semester.

Classroom conduct

- You are expected to participate in activities and discussions in class. In these activities, please treat everyone with respect.
- The use of laptops, tablets, and other mobile devices is allowed during class, but please limit your use to class-related activities and refrain from creating distractions for other people in the class.
- There will be one or two breaks (of 5-10 minutes) during each session.
- The language of this course is English and class discussions should be conducted in English to avoid excluding classmates who may not speak other languages. Examples from other languages can be used, but should be explained so that everyone can participate and learn together.

Virtual TA

This course has a virtual teaching assistant available on poe.com. You can find it here: <https://poe.com/PsycholinguisticsBot>. You are not required to use this bot. If you do want to use it, you can register for a free poe.com account and interact with the assistant there for free (with limits per month). The virtual TA comes with all the limitations of GenAI. It may give you incorrect or irrelevant answers, it may stop you from learning by giving you easy answers when you would do better to think for yourself. However, it also may be a useful way to get answers and new perspectives on content we discuss in class, and it could be very useful for review. **I want to stress that I, your human teacher, am always happy to get your questions in class, by email, or in-person outside of class.** The virtual assistant is simply another option you can use (or not), and may be especially useful if you need an immediate answer at times when I am not available.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Academic misconduct is any form of presenting work as your own, when some or all of the content does not represent your work and knowledge, but instead is copied or comes from other sources. If plagiarism is discovered in an assignment, you will receive a zero for that portion of your final grade and the incident may be reported to university authorities.

The following examples are **all considered plagiarism**:

- Rearranging another writer's words and sentences, or taking sentences from a number of different sources and joining them together to pass them off as your own work
- Citing from any source (including Wikipedia or other online sources) without proper attribution (if you copy language exactly, proper attribution requires quotation marks, not just listing the source)
- Citing other people's work or ideas without proper attribution in oral presentations
- Submitting your own previous work that has already appeared at a conference, a journal or has been used for another class or exam.

Make sure that you read the PolyU "How to Avoid Plagiarism" booklet:

http://edc.polyu.edu.hk/psp/plagiarism_booklet.pdf

The instructor reserves the right to issue an F grade in a specific assessment, of for the entire subject, if other cases of academic misconduct not specified here arise.

GenAI

The use of GenAI tools is allowed and, in some cases will be encouraged, in preparing assignments in this subject. However, all the work students submit for assessment should be THEIR OWN ORIGINAL work. **Asking GenAI to do the assignment and submitting the work generated by GenAI, in part or in whole, as one's own (even in paraphrased form) constitutes an act of academic dishonesty;** it is no different from asking another person to write the assignment or claiming others' ideas as one's own. The consequences range from getting a zero on the assignment to being reported to the university for academic dishonesty.

While GenAI tools are allowed, there are two big cautions that need to be highlighted. (1) Because it is very easy to get quick answers with GenAI, you may be tempted to do the easy thing, instead of the thing that will help you learn. Putting in effort to think and analyse information helps us learn more effectively, so doing things the easy way comes with a cost, namely, less learning for you. (2) GenAI often—not just sometimes, but very often—creates completely fake but plausible information. This includes making up fake sources for the information that might sound real. Unless you are already an expert on a topic, it can be very difficult to determine what is real and what is fake in GenAI answers. So, unfortunately, I have to say that, although it has many other practical uses, for now, GenAI remains a risky tool to use for learning new information.

If you decide to use of GenAI tools to complete an assignment, you yourself remain responsible for the content of the assignment, and are required to declare the use of GenAI tools and how they have been used. You should reference the GenAI tools in accordance with accepted academic conventions (e.g. APA or MLA styles). Here is some simple text you can use for that declaration:

I/We declare that Generative AI tools have been used to prepare the submitted work. The Generative AI tools used and the manner in which they were used are as follows:
[\(your explanation goes here\)](#)

Grades

Grades are criterion-based and not provided “on a curve”: your grade is based on how you do on the weekly tasks, the experiment, and the project, not on how your work compares to your classmates’ work. The table below shows how the points you earn from the assessments (see above) translate into letter grades. You must earn a D or higher to pass the subject.

Letter Grade	GPA point	Raw Score
A+	4.3	>96.4
A	4.0	>92.7 – 96.4
A-	3.7	>89.1 – 92.7
B+	3.3	>85.4 – 89.1
B	3.0	>81.8 – 85.4
B-	2.7	>78.2 – 81.8
C+	2.3	>74.5 – 78.2
C	2.0	>70.9 – 74.5
C-	1.7	>67.2 – 70.9
D+	1.3	>63.6 – 67.2
D	1.0	≥60 – 63.6
F	0.0	<60

Students with disabilities

I will strive to make the class accessible to everybody, but please contact me if there are any specific accommodations which you need, and which have not yet been made.

Useful resources

PolyU CILL writing tips:

<http://www2.elc.polyu.edu.hk/cill/writing.htm> PolyU “How to Avoid Plagiarism”
booklet: http://edc.polyu.edu.hk/psp/plagiarism_booklet.pdf

A tip for avoiding plagiarism in paper summaries/critiques:

When writing about a paper (e.g., to write a summary or a critique), do it without the paper in front of you. Read the paper, write down some notes about what the important points were or what you thought about the paper, and then put it away for a few hours, so that when you come back you are more likely to write about it in your own words.

PolyU personal counseling services:

<https://www.polyu.edu.hk/sao/cs/counselling/general.html>

For students with disabilities:

<http://www.polyu.edu.hk/dso/resources/student-with-disability>