

Listening and Agency
Spring 2018
5085 TUE, Melson 213, 12:05-2:50 pm

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Listening is “the other side of language”, a side we usually do not think of when theorizing and researching language activity (speaking-listening of and to others). On the grounds of a holistic and dialogic notion of language (Bertau, 2014a, b, c), I propose to look closely at listening as the necessary complement to speaking. This will lead us to question the idea of the passive, simply receptive and receiving listener, developing a more active and dialogical idea of listening. Agency is then a general issue to explore: it is not simply and solely located with the speaking subject but appears to be distributed. This understanding is opposed to the widespread individualistic notion of the subject, which is coupled with his or her “total agency” and “sole authorship”.

We will read and discuss texts from communication and developmental psychology, from language theory and enactivism in order to explore the breadth of listening and the possibilities of its theorizing beyond methodological individualism. We will also explore our own listening – to silence, to pauses in dialogues, to pauses structuring our common activities and our relationships.

ASSIGNMENTS, REQUIREMENTS

All the texts that we will read and talk about in class will be supplied as pdf on Course Den. I expect everybody to be appropriately prepared to each meeting, which means: having read the text in question and be able to discuss it by raising questions, articulating thoughts, and/or developing the notions offered in a text. You are **not** expected to understand everything, rather you invited to discuss what is interesting and intriguing to you, whatever leads your understanding.

Regarding attendance, I expect that you will be attending classes regularly, as well as participating actively. You can miss class **one time** unexcused.

The following specific assignments will be given:

- **All sessions:** active reading in preparation and discussing in class;
- **Facilitating one text with:** a short comprehensive handout, an oral presentation, and by initiating discussion by raising interesting questions or issues. You are very welcomed to do this in a dialogical form, i.e. together with someone else (try dialogical formats of presenting!);
- **Reflection logbook:** you will be given 7 minutes at the end of each class to write down some reflections in your logbook. Please use the same actual or virtual book the whole semester.
- **Final exam on April 24, 2018:** this will consist of a **small conference event:** Each student will give a final short presentation (15 minutes) followed by a short discussion (5 minutes). Attendance to this day is mandatory for everybody.
- **Topic of final presentation/exam:** You are responsible for choosing a topic that is closely related to one of the class topics and the source here discussed. Extended guidelines will be provided.
- **Overall grading is composed of the final presentation, facilitation, and course participation (= reading preparation + attendance)**

Grading Scheme: *(possible 400 points)*

Final Presentation	200
Facilitating	100
Course Participation	100

Grading Scale:

A = [360-400] pts
B = [320-360) pts
C = [280-320) pts
D = [240-280) pts
F = <240 pts

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week 1: January 9 - Introduction

Content overview and common organization; first steps into the question of listening.

Week 2: January 16 - What is listening, after all?

First listening exercise: Sound Walk and Voice Walk on campus with reflections in class.

Meeting IN CLASS!

Please start to take your logbook with you!

Week 3: January 23 - The human ear and reflecting on time and medium transformation

Handel, 1989, pp. 461-475: physiology of the ear (supported by other optional material)

Facilitators:

Week 4: January 30 – Early listening 1 and reflecting on otherness

Sounds, music and voices – listening and watching

DeCasper and Fifer (1980) and Ockleford et al. (1988): Listening neonates

Facilitators:

Week 5: February 6 – Early listening 2 and reflecting on responsivity

Fernald (1985) and Mampe et al. (2009)

Facilitators:

Week 6: February 13- Conceptualizations 1: History of Aurality

Erlmann 2010, pp. 9-27; and Bertau on the impact of the leading sense ear/eye for conceiving language

Facilitators to Erlmann:

Week 7: February 20 - Conceptualizations 2: Language as transmission from A to B

Reddy 1979: The conduit metaphor; Linell 2009; the transmission model of communication

Facilitators:

Week 8: February 27 – Conceptualizations 3: Critique of the “socio-cognitive model”

Beard (2009): Offering a broader understanding

Facilitators:

Week 9: March 6 – Conceptualizations 4: Dialogic Language Idea

Humboldt (1999): speaking-listening-thinking-understanding; Jakubinskij (1923/1979): The temperature of listening

Facilitators:

Week 10: March 13 – Conceptualizations 5: Going to the Inbetween as alternative

Bertau (2014): Language as the inbetween; Lipari (2014): Interlistening

Facilitators:

March 19-23: Spring Break – no classes

Assignment over spring break: listen to conversations of different kinds and take notes. What is the listener doing?

Week 11: March 27 - What is listening to conversations?

Second listening exercise: Conversations in Melson: go around (classes, lobby) and overhear with permission of the persons. Back to class: experiment with silent listener. Reflections and shared experience of the listenings over the break.

April 3: UWG Scholar’s Day – no classes 1pm-4pm

Week 12: April 10 - Listening while dialoguizing

Duncan (1974) and Ward & Tsukuhara (2000)

Facilitators:

Week 13: April 17 – Agency: Who is doing the talking?

De Jaegher and Di Paolo (2007): Participatory sense-making (extracts)

Facilitators:

Week 14: April 24 – Final Presentations

Spring term ends April 30
Exam week May 2-8, Graduation May 10

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