



Course Specification

(Bachelor)

Course Title: Sociolinguistics and Psycholinguistics

Course Code: ENG3357-3

Program: Bachelor of Arts in English

Department: Department of English

College: College of Languages and Translation

Institution: King Khalid University

Version: 2

Last Revision Date: February 11, 2026

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A. General information about the course:

1. Course Identification

1. Credit hours: (3)

2. Course type

- A. ☐ University ☐ College ☒ Department ☐ Track ☐ Others
- B. ☒ Required ☐ Elective

3. Level/year at which this course is offered: (Semester 6 – Year 3)

4. Course General Description:

Sociolinguistics and Psycholinguistics course provides an integrated theoretical and empirical examination of psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics as complementary approaches to the study of language. It investigates the cognitive mechanisms underlying language comprehension, production, acquisition, and breakdown, with reference to contemporary models of bilingual processing. Parallel to this, it analyzes the systematic relationship between linguistic behavior and social structure, including variation according to region, class, gender, identity, and communicative domain. Particular attention is given to bilingualism and code-switching as both cognitive processes and socially meaningful practices. The course further addresses the historical development of the English language as situated within broader socio-cultural and political transformations. It critically examines the interdependence between language and culture, highlighting how cultural norms, ideologies, and power relations both shape and are shaped by linguistic practices. Core topics include speech perception and production, first and second language acquisition, language variation and change, language attitudes, and language use in institutional and media contexts. Methodological components introduce students to the collection and analysis of authentic linguistic data using quantitative and qualitative approaches. Students engage with primary empirical studies and conduct guided analytical tasks. The course fosters critical evaluation of theoretical models and empirical findings. By integrating cognitive, social, cultural, and historical dimensions, the course equips students with a comprehensive understanding of language as a complex human faculty operating across individual and societal levels.

5. Pre-requirements for this course (if any):

ENG2351-3 Introduction to Applied Linguistics & ENG2341-3 Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics

6. Co-requisites for this course (if any):

N/A

7. Course Main Objective(s):

The Sociolinguistics and Psycholinguistics course aims to:

- Provide students with a solid understanding of the key concepts, theories, and research methodologies in both psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics.
- Enable students to recall and critically analyze the historical development of both fields and their major theoretical contributions.

- Investigate multilingualism and code-switching as socially and linguistically meaningful phenomena, interpreting their functions, constraints, and implications for communication.
- Develop students' understanding of the biological and cognitive mechanisms involved in language acquisition, comprehension, and production.
- Analyze the relationship between language and social structures, explaining how linguistic practices are shaped by factors such as identity, social class, gender, age, ethnicity, and community norms.
- Help students recognize how social factors—such as gender, age, class, and group identity—shape language variation and use.
- Strengthen students' ability to apply psycholinguistic principles to enhance language learning and teaching practices.
- Examine patterns of language variation and evaluate how regional, social, and situational factors contribute to linguistic diversity within and across speech communities.
- Develop students' capacity to analyze linguistic behavior in multilingual and multicultural communities.
- Enable students to evaluate processes of language maintenance, shift, and change across various social contexts.
- Equip students to thoughtfully engage with the interplay between language, cognition, and society in real-world contexts.
- Understand Key Psycholinguistic Concepts: Describe fundamental processes in language comprehension, production, and acquisition; explain the structure and function of the mental lexicon.
- Analyze Language Processing: Examine how speech perception, sentence parsing, and reading occur in the brain; compare first language and second language processing patterns.
- Explore Language Development and Multilingualism: Understand stages of child language acquisition and second language learning; discuss cognitive and neurological aspects of bilingualism and multilingualism.
- Apply Psycholinguistic Insights to Language Teaching: Use research on individual learner differences to inform classroom strategies; design vocabulary, reading, and comprehension tasks based on psycholinguistic principles.
- Develop Critical Thinking and Research Literacy: Critically evaluate empirical studies in psycholinguistics and SLA; connect theory, research, and practical applications in language education.

2. Teaching mode (mark all that apply)

No	Mode of Instruction	Contact Hours	Percentage
1	Traditional classroom	45	100%
2	E-learning	-	-
3	Hybrid • Traditional classroom • E-learning	-	-
4	Distance learning	-	-

3. Contact Hours (based on the academic semester)





No	Activity	Contact Hours
1.	Lectures	45
2.	Laboratory/Studio	-
3.	Field	-
4.	Tutorial	-
5.	Others (specify)	-
Total		45

B. Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), Teaching Strategies and Assessment Methods

Code	Course Learning Outcomes	Code of PLOs aligned with the program	Teaching Strategies	Assessment Methods
1.0	Knowledge and understanding			
1.1	Identify key concepts, theories, and research methodologies in sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics.	K1&2	- Short presentations - Guided readings - Class discussions - Concept-mapping	- Group Discussion—Seminar - Midterm exam - Final exam
1.2	Explain the cognitive and biological processes involved in language acquisition, comprehension, and production.	K2	- Short presentations - Multimedia explanations - Case-study reviews - Diagram activities	- Group Discussion—Seminar - Midterm exam - Final exam
1.3	Describe how social variables—such as gender, age, class, and identity— influence language use and variation.	K4	- Group discussions - Short presentations - Analysis of real-life examples	- Group Discussion—Seminar - Midterm exam - Final exam





Code	Course Learning Outcomes	Code of PLOs aligned with the program	Teaching Strategies	Assessment Methods
			- Guided comparisons	
2.0				
2.1	Demonstrate an understanding of the close relationship between language, society, and culture.	S1&S6	- Short presentations - Theory discussions - Case-study analysis - Concept-mapping	- Assignment—Mini Research Project - Group Discussion—Seminar - Quiz
2.2	Examine the mental processes involved in language comprehension and production, as well as how these psycholinguistic principles can be applied to enhance language learning	S1&S6	- Short presentations - Case-study analysis - Data-analysis exercises	- Group Discussion—Seminar - Midterm exam - Final exam
2.3	Critically analyze how language choice and usage vary within multilingual communities, paying attention to the influence of social context, style, and social hierarchies	S1&S6	- Field observations - Short presentations - Transcript analysis - Field - Role-play activities	- Group Discussion—Seminar - Quiz - Assignment—Mini Research Project
3.0				
3.1	Show respect for linguistic diversity and acknowledge the value of different cultural and social language practices.	V1	- Classroom discussions - Reflection activities	- Reflection journals - Participation in discussions





Code	Course Learning Outcomes	Code of PLOs aligned with the program	Teaching Strategies	Assessment Methods
			- Exposure to diverse language samples - Collaborative learning	
3.2	Demonstrate ethical responsibility in collecting, handling, and interpreting linguistic data, ensuring accuracy, confidentiality, and academic integrity in all research tasks.		- Brief ethics tutorials - Case-study analysis - Instructor guidance on data handling - Practice with sample datasets	- Data-handling exercises - Compliance checklists
3.3	Contribute actively and responsibly to group discussions on the impact of social context and hierarchies on language usage	V3	- Group discussions - Peer-collaboration tasks - Structured debate activities - Instructor-facilitated reflection	- Group participation evaluation - Peer assessments - Discussion contributions

C. Course Content

No	List of Topics	Contact Hours
Psycholinguistics		
1.	The Mental Lexicon & Word Recognition How are words stored? How do we recognize them instantly?	4



	Required readings: Traxler (2023) — Chapter 4: Words and Lexical Processing Li et al. (2022) — Chapter 2: Individual Differences in Vocabulary Development (supports understanding lexical variation across learners) In-class focus: Models of lexical access (logogen, cohort, interactive activation) Frequency, neighborhood effects, priming Learner differences in vocabulary size and speed of access	
2	Speech Perception & Speech Production How do humans perceive sound? How do we produce fluent speech? Required readings: Traxler (2023) Chapter 2: Speech Perception Chapter 3: Speech Production Li et al. (2022) — Chapter 9: Cognitive Factors in Language Processing In-class focus: Categorical perception, coarticulation, models of speech perception Levelt's model of speech production Processing load and individual differences in phonological working memory	4
3.	Sentence Processing & Parsing How do we interpret sentences in real time? Required readings: Traxler (2023) — Chapter 5: Sentence Processing Li et al. (2022) — Chapter 12: Working Memory and L2 Sentence Processing In-class focus: Garden-path sentences, parsing strategies (minimal attachment, late closure) Syntax–semantics interaction Differences in L1 vs. L2 parsing efficiency	4



4.	Language Acquisition in Children How does language develop? What cognitive and social factors support acquisition? Required readings: Traxler (2023) — Chapter 9: First Language Acquisition Li et al. (2022) — Chapter 4: Individual Differences in L1 and L2 Language Learning Aptitude In-class focus: Grammar, phonology, and vocabulary development Usage-based, nativist, and statistical learning approaches How aptitude and environment shape acquisition	4
5.	Bilingualism & Multilingual Language Processing What happens in the mind when more than one language is active? Required readings: Traxler (2023) — Chapter 10: Bilingual Language Processing Li et al. (2022) Chapter 18: Bilingualism and Multilingualism as Individual Differences Chapter 20: Cognitive Control and Multilingual Experience In-class focus: Code-switching, cross-language priming Activation/inhibition models (e.g., BIA+, Green's inhibitory control model) Cognitive consequences of multilingualism	4
6.	Applying Psycholinguistics to Language Pedagogy Required Readings: Traxler, M. J. (2023). Introduction to Psycholinguistics: Understanding Language Science (Chapters 4, 5, 9) Li, S., Hiver, P., & Papi, M. (Eds.). (2022). The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Individual Differences (Chapters 2, 12, 18) In-Class Focus: Linking psycholinguistic theory to second language teaching practice Sentence comprehension and reading activities informed by parsing and processing studies Adapting lessons to learners' cognitive profiles, motivation, and individual differences Using feedback and scaffolding strategies informed by psycholinguistic evidence	4
Sociolinguistics		
7.	What do sociolinguists study? Author/year: holmes, j & wilson, n. (2017)	4



	Content: this section introduces the field of sociolinguistics, focusing on the study of language in its social context. It begins by addressing the fundamental question, "what is a sociolinguist?" and then explores key topics such as why we say the same thing in different ways, what the different ways of saying things are, and the social factors, dimensions, and explanations that influence language variation. This provides a comprehensive overview of the primary areas of inquiry within sociolinguistics.	
8.	Multilingual speech communities Author/year: holmes, j & wilson, n. (2017) Content: this section explores how language is chosen and used in multilingual societies, examining the factors that influence language choice. Special attention is given to code-switching and code-mixing phenomena, as well as the concept of diglossia, where two or more varieties of a language are used by the same community under different circumstances. These topics provide insight into the dynamics of language use in multilingual settings. . Thus, multilingualism refers to the use of two or more languages by individuals or communities in everyday communication. It involves not only linguistic competence but also the social, cultural, and functional distribution of languages across different domains. Studying multilingualism reveals how speakers negotiate identity, maintain linguistic diversity, and adapt language practices to varying social contexts.	4
9.	Language variation: focus on users Author/year: holmes, j & wilson, n. (2017) Content: this section studies regional and social dialects, examining how language varies according to geographical and social factors. It includes a detailed analysis of social variation, focusing on how language differs across various social groups, as well as an exploration of the roles of gender and age in shaping language use. This comprehensive look at language variation highlights the intricate ways in which language reflects and influences social identity.	4
10.	Gender and age Author/year: holmes, j & wilson, n. (2017) Content: this section explores the complex relationships between gender, age, and language use. It begins with an examination of gender-exclusive speech differences in highly structured communities, followed by an analysis of gender-preferential speech features based on social dialect research. The content also delves into the interplay between gender and social class, offering explanations for women's linguistic behavior. Additionally, it covers age-graded features of speech, presents age and social dialect data, and discusses age grading in relation to language change. This comprehensive coverage provides a nuanced understanding of how gender and age influence linguistic patterns.	3
11.	Language change Author/year: holmes, j & wilson, n. (2017)	3



	Content: this section examines the processes through which languages change over time, focusing on the factors that drive linguistic change and the methods used to study these changes. It includes an exploration of how we study language change, detailing the methodologies employed by linguists to track and analyze these shifts. Additionally, it discusses the reasons behind language change, offering insights into the social, cultural, and linguistic factors that contribute to the evolution of language. The section also entails Language and culture are treated in this course as interdependent systems that jointly shape meaning, identity, and social practice. Language is examined as a carrier of cultural knowledge and values, while culture is analyzed as a dynamic force that conditions linguistic form, use, and interpretation. Students investigate how this reciprocal relationship operates in discourse, social interaction, and intercultural communication. Particular attention is given to multilingual contexts, where language choice and code-switching function as culturally and socially regulated communicative practices.	
12.	Style, context, and register Author/year: holmes, j & wilson, n. (2017) Content: this section explores how style, context, and social class influence language use, focusing on how speakers adjust their language based on the addressee and situational context. It includes a discussion of accommodation theory, which explains how individuals modify their speech to converge or diverge from others in conversation. The section also covers the relationship between context, style, and class, providing insights into how social hierarchy affects language. Additionally, it examines style in non-western societies, offering a broader cultural perspective, and concludes with an analysis of register, or the variation in language use depending on the situation and audience. In this sense, code-switching is the deliberate alternation between two or more languages or varieties within a single interaction or utterance. It follows identifiable structural and pragmatic patterns that reflect speakers' linguistic resources and communicative goals. Sociolinguistic analysis of code-switching demonstrates how language choice is used to index identity, express social meanings, and manage interpersonal relationships.	3
Total		45

D. Students Assessment Activities

No	Assessment Activities *	Assessment timing (in week no)	Percentage of Total Assessment Score
1.	Group Discussions-Seminars	Weekly	10%
2.	Assignment– Mini Research Project	Week 12	10%
3.	Quiz	Week 13	10%





No	Assessment Activities *	Assessment timing (in week no)	Percentage of Total Assessment Score
4.	Midterm Exam	Week 10	30%
5.	Final Exam	Week 16	40%

E. Learning Resources and Facilities

1. References and Learning Resources

Required Textbooks	-Traxler, M. J. (2023). <i>Introduction to psycholinguistics: Understanding language science</i> (Second Edition). Wiley Blackwell. -Li, S., Hiver, P., & Papi, M. (Eds.). (2022). <i>The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and individual differences</i>. Routledge. -Holmes, J & Wilson, N. (2017). <i>An Introduction to Sociolinguistics</i>. Routledge. -Selected Reading from the suggested textbooks.
Essential References	Psycholinguistics Menn, L., & Dronkers, N. F. (2016). <i>Psycholinguistics: Introduction and applications</i>. Plural Publishing. Walter, D. R. (2023). <i>Psycholinguistic Approaches to Instructed Second Language Acquisition</i>. Multilingual Matters. Mitchell, R., Myles, F., & Marsden, E. (2019). <i>Second language learning theories</i> (Fourth edition). Routledge. Stavans, A., & Hoffmann, C. (2015). <i>Multilingualism</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Dörnyei, Z. (2019). Psychology and language learning: The past, the present and the future. <i>Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning</i>, 1(1), 27-41. Williams, M., Mercer, S., & Ryan, S. (2016). <i>Exploring psychology in language learning and teaching</i>. Oxford University Press. Sociolinguistics



- Holmes, J., & Wilson, N. (2017). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Routledge.
- Meyerhoff, M. (2011). *Introducing Sociolinguistics*. Routledge.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (2006). *Multiple Voices: An Introduction to Bilingualism*. Blackwell.
- Labov, W. (1972a). *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Meyerhoff, M. (2006). *Introducing sociolinguistics*. London: Routledge.

Essential References

- Auer, P. (1998). *Code-Switching in Conversation*.
- García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging*.
- Poplack, S. (1988). "Consistent constraints on code-switching." *Journal of Linguistics*.

Gumperz, J. (1982). *Discourse Strategies*.

Electronic Materials

Interest Group

<https://www.iapll.com/about>

Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics

[Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics](#)

Description: Provides a wide range of resources including research papers, datasets, and tools for psycholinguistic research.

Other Learning Materials

MIT OpenCourseWare (OCW)

[MIT OpenCourseWare - Lab in Psycholinguistics](#)

Description: Offers free course materials for a lab-focused psycholinguistics course, including lecture notes, assignments, and study materials. This resource is designed to provide students with hands-on experience in conducting psycholinguistic experiments and analyzing linguistic data, allowing for a deeper understanding of language processing and cognitive mechanisms.

Extra Readings

Special Topic-1: Language Change and the major historical stages in the development of the English Language

Authors: Bizzoni, Y. (2020). *Linguistic variation and change in 250 years of English*. Frontiers.

Deckker, D., & Sumanasekara, S. (2025). *The origin of the English language: A historical and linguistic review*. EPRA IJRD.

The Cambridge Handbook of English Historical Linguistics. Cambridge University Press.





McIntyre, D. *History of English*. (Routledge English Language Introductions – latest ed.)

(2022) Globalizing variation research article: “Globalising the study of language variation and change...” — for theoretical grounding and sociolinguistic methodology.

Special Topic-2: The relationship between language and culture

Authors: Duranti, A. (2022). *Linguistic anthropology: A reader* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

→ The most current synthesis of Duranti’s cultural-practice view of language.

Everett, D. L. (2023). *Sapir, Whorf, and the debate on linguistic relativity*. Cambridge University Press.

→ A modern, critical re-evaluation of the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis.

Lucy, J. A. (2023). *Language diversity and thought: A reformulation of the linguistic relativity hypothesis*. Cambridge University Press.

→ Contemporary theoretical and empirical reformulation of Whorfian ideas.

Boroditsky, L. (2020). How languages shape the way we think. *Scientific American*, 322(2), 62–67.

→ Widely cited modern cognitive evidence for linguistic relativity.

Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2021). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (8th ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

→ Updated mainstream sociolinguistic discussion of language and culture.

Holmes, J., & Wilson, N. (2022). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (5th ed.). Routledge.

→ Strong focus on language, culture, identity, and interaction.

2. Required Facilities and equipment

Items	Resources
Facilities	• Standard classroom accommodating 25–30 students • Adequate lighting and ventilation • Comfortable seating arrangements suitable for group discussion • Whiteboard and notice board
Technology equipment	• Computer and stable internet connection for instructor use • Data projector and screen



Items	Resources
	• Audio speakers for multimedia presentations • (Optional) Smart board for interactive teaching
Other equipment	• Whiteboard markers and erasers • Portable microphone (if required) • Display or bulletin board for course announcements
Additional resources	• Access to the Saudi Digital Library (SDL) and online academic databases • (Optional) Language laboratory facilities for multimedia learning • (Optional) Audio equipment for listening to dramatic readings and literary adaptations • (Optional) Charging stations or designated tech-use areas for student devices

F. Assessment of Course Quality

Assessment Areas/Issues	Assessor	Assessment Methods
Effectiveness of teaching	Assessed by students, faculty, program leaders, and peer reviewers using direct feedback and evaluations.	Assessed through student evaluations, peer reviews, classroom observations, and teaching feedback surveys.
Effectiveness of students' assessment	Evaluated by students, faculty, and program leaders through exam performance, project outcomes, and feedback.	Evaluated through analysis of exam results, project outcomes, grading consistency, and student feedback.
Quality of learning resources	Reviewed by faculty and program leaders based on student feedback and peer reviews.	Reviewed via surveys, resource usage analytics, student and faculty feedback, and comparison with academic standards.
The extent to which CLOs have been achieved	Measured by faculty, program leaders, and peer reviewers using assessments, exams, and student portfolios.	Measured through direct assessments like exams, projects, portfolios, and indirect methods like student self-assessment and surveys.

G. Specification Approval

COUNCIL /COMMITTEE	ENGLISH DEPARTMENT COUNCIL
REFERENCE NO.	47-15-2





DATE

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

