

Cognition, Language & Communication

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Course website: <http://www.illc.uva.nl/laco/clas/clc13>

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All animals communicate, but only humans have language. In this course we investigate how human language relates to non-linguistic and non-human communication, and how it relates to other cognitive functions. Is our ability to learn and process language a consequence of advanced cognitive abilities? Or does language in fact facilitate advanced reasoning, music, pattern recognition and categorization? We will approach these questions by looking at experimental and modelling work that tries to identify and explain differences between human and animal communicative and cognitive abilities, with special attention for artificial language learning experiments and the hierarchical structure of natural language.

- Grading: 50% assignments 1-4 (individual) + 10% participation (individual) + 40% miniprojects (group).
- Discussions: hand-in the thesis you will defend on paper before each discussion session.
- Assignments and readings are due for the next class; pdf's will be available from the course website.

9/9	Lecture 1: Communication, Language & Evolution Reading: Hockett (1960), Fitch & Hauser (2003) Assignment 0: participate in webexperiment
12/9	Lecture 2: Design Features of Language, Chomsky Hierarchy Reading: Chomsky (1957): pp11-48 Assignment 1 (grammars, design features)
16/9	Discussion I, Lecture 3: Generative Linguistics, Nativism-Empiricism debate Reading: Chomsky (1967)
19/9	Computer lab: programming with Processing & computer/web-based experiments Assignment 2 (programming, falsifiability)
23/9	Lecture 4: Usage-based Grammar, Connectionism, Probabilistic Grammars Reading: Tomasello (2000), Abney (1996)
27/9	Computer lab: data-analysis with R Assignment 3 (data-analysis)
30/9	Discussion II, Lecture 4: Human & Animal Artificial Language Learning Reading: Saffran et al, (1996); Marcus et al (1998), Fitch & Hauser (2004)
3/10	Guest Lecture (Raquel Alhama): Rule learning vs. statistical learning Assignment 4: Research Proposals
7/10	Lecture 5: Iterated Learning Reading: Christiansen & Chater (2008), Zuidema (2003) Assignment 5: Miniprojects (in groups of 4 – reports due: 21/10, 1pm)
10/10	Lecture 6: Evolution of Language Reading: Pinker (2010), Zuidema (2013), Spelke (2003)
14/10	Discussion III, Miniproject presentations groups 1 & 2
17/10	Miniproject presentations groups 3 & 4 Lecture 7: Origins of Human Cognition