PLIN M205   PRAGMATICS and COGNITION

ESSAY TOPICS   **January 2006**

BA Students: one essay of approximately 3,000 words, due on Monday, 24 April 2006
(75% of final grade)

MA Students: one essay of approximately 5,000 words, due on Monday, 24 April 2006
(100% of final grade).

Guidance notes:

A.   The references given below are, of course, not exhaustive, though they are sufficient for an essay at this level. Please feel free to pursue further references of your own.
References marked with * are on the departmental file.
For short clear discussions of many of the topics and issues in the essays, see *The MIT Encyclopaedia of Cognitive Sciences.*

B.   I welcome suggestions for other topics, but please check with me first before embarking on a different topic from those listed.

C.   **Presentation of essay:** please word-process or type it; give a full set of references used, following an established format (see, for example, the reference list at the end of any published journal article). Essays much be submitted in hard copy, not electronically.
Extensions can only be given if supported by a doctor's note.

D.   **Plagiarism:** if you use a quote or an idea from the work of another writer you must acknowledge this in the text of your essay; failure to do so is plagiarism and will result in a severe penalty. If you have any doubts as to what constitutes plagiarism (or as to what the penalties for plagiarism are), this is clearly laid out on the departmental website at the following address:
http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/dept/student_information/plagiarism.html

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Topics:

1.   Discuss the distinction between linguistic processing (decoding) and pragmatic processing and consider the nature of the mental systems responsible for the two kinds of process (especially whether they are domain-specific or general, and whether they are informationally encapsulated or not).
[Your essay should include discussion of at least one task that seems to fall on the language processing side and one that falls on the pragmatics side.]

Fodor, J. 1983. Input systems as modules. In Fodor, J. 1983. *Modularity of Mind*.   *
[in this section Fodor concentrates on visual processing and linguistic processing]
Carston, R. 1996. The architecture of the mind: modularity and modularization. In: Green, D. et al . (eds.)
Cognitive Science: An Introduction. Blackwell. 53-83.   *
Marslen-Wilson, W. & Tyler, L.1987. Against modularity. In: Garfield, J. (ed.) *Modularity in Knowledge Representation and Natural-Language Understanding*. MIT Press. 37-62.   *

Swinney, D. 1979. Lexical access during sentence comprehension: (Re)consideration of context effects. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 18, 645-659.   *

Rubio, P. 2005. Models of lexical access: Studies on lexical ambiguity resolution.   *
    [This is a short section (10 pages) from a recent PhD thesis and provides a very helpful overview of work on the processing of lexical ambiguities.]

Garrett, M. 1990. Sentence processing. In: Osherson, D. & Lasnik, H. (eds.) *An Invitation to Cognitive Science, vol.1: Language*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 133-175.   *

Carston, R. 1997. Relevance-theoretic pragmatics and modularity. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 9, 29-53.   *
    [Also available at: http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/PUB/WPL/uclwpl9.html]

Wilson, D. & Sperber, D. 1986. Pragmatics and modularity. *Chicago Linguistics Society vol.22, part 2: Parasession on Pragmatics and Grammatical Theory*, 67-84. Reprinted in Davis, S. (ed.) 1991. *Pragmatics: A Reader*. Oxford University Press. 583-594.   *

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. 2002. Pragmatics, modularity and mind-reading. *Mind & Language* 17, 3-23.   *
    [Also available at: http://www.dan.sperber.com]

2.   Discuss and assess arguments for and against the idea that the pragmatic (post-linguistic) aspects of utterance interpretation might be carried out by a mental module.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. 1986/1995. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. (specifically pp.65-72)

Wilson, D. & Sperber, D. 1986. Pragmatics and modularity. In *Parasession on Pragmatics and Grammatical Theory. Chicago Linguistic Society* 22: 67-84. Reprinted in S. Davis (ed.) 1991. *Pragmatics: A Reader*. Oxford University Press. 583-95.   *

Carston, R. 1997. Relevance-theoretic pragmatics and modularity. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 9, 29-53.   *
    [Also available at: http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/PUB/WPL/uclwpl9.html]

Sperber, D. 2000. Metarepresentations in an evolutionary perspective. In: Sperber, D. (ed.) *Metarepresentations: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*. Oxford University Press. 117-137.   *
    [Also available at: http://www.dan.sperber.com]

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. 2002. Pragmatics, modularity and mind-reading. *Mind & Language* 17, 3-23.   *

Wilson, D. 2003. New directions for research on pragmatics and modularity. *UCL working Papers in Linguistics* 15, 105-127.   *
    [Also available at: http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/PUB/WPL/uclwpl15.html]

Happe, F. & Loth, 2002. 'Theory of mind' and tracking speakers' intentions. *Mind and Language* 17, 24-36.
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3.   What does an evolutionary perspective on human cognition suggest with regard to the modularity or nonmodularity of human cognitive architecture?

Fodor, J. 1989. Why should the mind be modular? In: George, A. (ed.) *Reflections on Chomsky*. Blackwell. 1-22.   *

Samuels, R et al. 1999. Rethinking rationality: From bleak implications to Darwinian modules. In Lepore, E. & Pylyshyn, Z. (eds.) *What is Cognitive Science?* Oxford: Blackwells. 74-120.
    [The section of the paper that is relevant for this essay is section 4 'The challenge from evolutionary psychology' (pp. 85-96)]   *

Cosmides, L. & Tooby, J. 1997. Evolutionary psychology: a primer.
    [Copied from their web-page: http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.html]   *

Cosmides, L. & Tooby, J. 1994b. Origins of domain-specificity: The evolution of functional organization. In: Hirschfeld, L. and Gelman, S. (eds.) *Mapping the Mind: Domain Specificity in Cognition and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 85-116.   *

Sperber, D. 1994a. The modularity of thought and the epidemiology of representations. In: Hirschfeld, L. and

Gelman, S. (eds.) *Mapping the Mind: Domain Specificity in Cognition and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 39-67.   *

Fodor, J. 1998. Review of Steven Pinker's *How the Mind Works* and Henry Plotkin's *Evolution in Mind*. In: Fodor, J. 1998. *In Critical Condition*. MIT Press. 203-214.   *

[[If you feel you need some background on the mechanisms of evolution you may find it useful to look at one of the following (the Evans & Zarate is particularly good):

Evans, D. & Zarate, O. 1999. *Introducing Evolutionary Psychology*. Icon Books UK.
Miller, J. & van Loon, B. 1992. *Darwin for Beginners*. Icon books UK.
Ridley, M. 1985. *The Problems of Evolution*, especially chapter 3 'The mechanism of evolution'.]]

4.   Discuss the nature of the human capacity to attribute mental states (beliefs, intentions, etc.) to other humans and assess whether or not this capacity has the features of a mental module.

Baron-Cohen, S. 1995. Mindblindness and mindreading. Chapter 1 of his book *Mindblindness: an Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind*. MIT Press.   *
[The rest of Baron-Cohen's book is excellent too, but not essential for the essay.]
Leslie, A. 1991. The theory of mind impairment in autism: Evidence for a modular mechanism of development? In: Whiten, A. (ed.) *Natural Theories of Mind*. Blackwell.   *
Segal, G. 1996. The modularity of theory of mind. In: Carruthers, P. & Smith, P (eds.) *Theories of Theories of Mind*. Cambridge University Press. 141-155.   *
Scholl, B. & Leslie, A. 1999. Modularity, development and 'theory of mind'. *Mind and Language* 14, 131-153.   *
Carruthers, P. 2003. Moderately massive modularity. In: O'Hear, A. (ed.) *Minds and Persons*. Cambridge University Press. [This paper is useful quite generally but the crucial section for this essay is 4.2]   *
For a different viewpoint:
Gopnik, A. 1996. Theories and modules: creation myths, developmental realities, and Neurath's boat. In: Carruthers, P. & Smith, P. (eds.) *Theories of Theories of Mind*. Cambridge University Press.169-183.*

[[The volume edited by Carruthers & Smith, referenced here a couple of times, contains many other fascinating papers on this topic, including some that take an evolutionary perspective on the theory of mind capacity and some that consider whether other primates, such as chimpanzees, have some sort of theory of mind.]]

5.   Discuss the human metarepresentational capacity and its role in communication.

Sperber, D. 2000. Metarepresentations in an evolutionary perspective. In Sperber, D. (ed.) *Metarepresentations: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*. Oxford University Press. 117-137.   *
Sperber, D. 1994b. Understanding verbal understanding. In: Khalfa, J. (ed.) *What is Intelligence?* Cambridge University Press. 179-198.   *
[Very useful and clear until the last few pages where it gets difficult]
Wilson, D. 2000. Metarepresentation in linguistic communication. In: Sperber, D. (ed.) *Metarepresentations: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*. Oxford University Press. 411-448.   *
Leslie, A. & Happe, F. 1989. Autism and ostensive communication: The relevance of metarepresentation. *Development and Psychopathology* 1, 205-212.   *
Happe, F. 1993. Communicative competence and theory of mind in autism: A test of relevance theory. *Cognition* 48, 101-119.   *
Bezuidenhout, A. & Sroda, M. 1998. Children's use of contextual cues to resolve referential ambiguity: An application of Relevance Theory. *Pragmatics & Cognition*, 6, 265-299.   *

6.   Discuss some cases of people with pragmatic (communicative) deficits and the extent to which these seem to be connected with a broader theory-of-mind deficit. You could concentrate on a specific syndrome (for instance: autism, schizophrenia, semantic-pragmatic disorder (SPD)) or some combination.

Leslie, A. & Happe, F. 1989. Autism and ostensive communication: The relevance of metarepresentation. *Development and Psychopathology* 1, 205-212.   *
Happe, F. 1993. Communicative competence and theory of mind in autism: A test of relevance theory. *Cognition* 48, 101-119.   *
Baron-Cohen, S. 1995. *Mindblindness: an Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind.* MIT Press.
Happe, F. 1999. Autism: cognitive deficit or cognitive style? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 3 (6), 216-222.   *
Bishop, D. 1989. Autism, Asperger's syndrome and semantics-pragmatic disorder: Where are the boundaries? *British Journal of Disorders of Communication* 24, 107-121.   *
Langdon, R. et al. 2002. Understanding minds and understanding communicated meanings in schizophrenia. *Mind & Language* 17, 68-104.   *
        [This paper contains a large and very helpful bibliography of other papers on theory-of-mind
        and pragmatic impairments across a range of different diagnoses.]
Wilson, D. 2003. New directions for research on pragmatics and modularity. *UCL working Papers in Linguistics* 15, 105-127.   *
        [Also available at: http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/PUB/WPL/uclwpl15.html]

        [[I can supply more references for this topic, if required. It is also easy to find a lot more
        relevant material by browsing the web.]]

7.   Compare Fodor's original characterization of a mental module (as domain-specific, mandatory, encapsulated, innately specified, etc.) with the conception of a module that emerges on the view of the mind as massively modular.

Fodor, J. 1983. *Modularity of Mind.*   [parts of this are on the departmental files]
Carston, R. 1996. The architecture of the mind: modularity and modularization. In: Green, D. et al . (eds.) *Cognitive Science: An Introduction.* Blackwell. 53-83.   *
Segal, G. 1996. The modularity of theory of mind. In: Carruthers, P. & Smith, P (eds.) *Theories of Theories of Mind*. Cambridge University Press. 141-155.   *
Samuels, R et al. 1999. Rethinking rationality: From bleak implications to Darwinian modules. In: Lepore, E. & Pylyshyn, Z. (eds.) *What is Cognitive Science*? 74-120. Oxford: Blackwells.
        [The relevant section for this essay begins on p.86: section 4.1 What is a mental module?]   *
Sperber, D. 1994a. The modularity of thought and the epidemiology of representations. In Hirschfeld, L. and Gelman, S. (eds.) *Mapping the Mind: Domain Specificity in Cognition and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 39-67.   *
Sperber, D. 2005. Modularity and relevance: how can a massively modular mind be flexible and context-sensitive? In: P. Carruthers et al. *The Innate Mind: Structure and Contents*. Oxford University Press. 55-68.   *
        Also available at :   http://www.dan.sperber.com/relevance%20and%20modularity.htm
            [[Note: this is quite a complex paper, but the crucial point for this essay is what Sperber says
            about the property of 'mandatoriness' and this is relatively straightforward and interesting.]]

8.　　Annette Karmiloff-Smith, who takes a developmental perspective on cognition, argues against the Fodorian view that there are innately specified modules and in favour of a process of progressive modularization of various capacities. Outline and assess her views, giving examples from a range of cognitive domains.

Karmiloff-Smith, A. 1992. *Beyond Modularity: A Developmental Perspective on Cognitive Science*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [This book is summarised in the next reference.]

Karmiloff-Smith, A. 1994. Precis of 'Beyond Modularity: A Developmental Perspective on Cognitive Science'. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 17, 4, 693-706.　　　　　　　　　　　　　*

Smith, N. 1994. Review of Karmiloff-Smith (1992) 'Beyond Modularity: A Developmental Perspective on Cognitive Science'. *European Journal of Disorders in Communication* 29, 95-105.　　　*

Fodor, J. 1998. There and back again: a review of Annette Karmiloff-Smith's *Beyond Modularity*. In: Fodor, J. 1998. *In Critical Condition*. MIT Press. 127-142.　　　　　　　　　　　*

Carston, R. 1996. The architecture of the mind: modularity and modularization. In: Green, D. et al . (eds.) *Cognitive Science: An Introduction.* Blackwell. 53-83.　　　　　　　*

Leslie, A. 1994. ToMM, ToBY and agency: core architecture and domain specificity. In: Hirschfeld, L. & Gelman, S. (eds.) *Mapping the Mind: Domain Specificity in Cognition and Culture*. Cambridge University Press. 119-48.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*

9.　　Outline the different sorts of pragmatic tasks involved in comprehending an utterance and consider whether these indicate that the pragmatic capacity is internally structured, with different tasks being performed by different subsystems (specifically, whether there is one subsystem for determining explicatures and another for determining implicatures).

Lecture notes for PLIN M202 Pragmatic Theory (2005/06).　　　　　　　　　　　　*

Recanati, F. 1993. Primary pragmatic processes. Chapter 14 of Recanati, F. 1993. *Direct Reference*. Blackwell. [This is kept on the departmental file as the second half of a reading under the title "Truth-conditional pragmatics"; it should be requested under that title]　　　*

Recanati, F. 1995. The alleged priority of literal interpretation. *Cognitive Science* 19, 207-232.　　*

Carston, R. 2000. Explicature and semantics. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 12, 1-44.　　　　　　　　[The relevant sections are 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.5]　　　　*
　　　[Also available at:　http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/PUB/WPL/uclwpl12.html]

Carston, R. 2002. Linguistic meaning, communicated meaning and cognitive pragmatics. *Mind and Language* 17, 127-148. [See especially sections 3 and 4.]　　　　　　　　　　*

Carston, R. forthcoming. How many pragmatic systems are there? To appear in: M-J. Frapolli (ed.) *Saying, Meaning, Referring: Essays on the Philosophy of Francois Recanati*. Palgrave.
　　　Available at:　http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/robyn/home.htm

Wilson, D. & Sperber, D. 2003. Relevance theory. In: Horn, L. & Ward, G. (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics*. Blackwells. 607-632.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*

　　　　　[If you have any difficulty in locating references, or any other problems with the essay, don't hesitate to email me: robyn@ling.ucl.ac.uk]