SLIPS OF THE TONGUE (SOTs)

Language is all around us and constitutes a major part of our waking lives. This assignment serves to ground your study of psycholinguistics in concrete events involving language, specifically as you go about speaking or signing. By starting to become aware of your own speech production and the errors you may make while speaking or signing, you will then report <u>three</u> speech/sign errors, commonly known as slips-of-the-tongue (SOTs).

What should I be looking for?

While speaking (or signing) seems like an effortless task, it is however not immune to some "accidents". As a native speaker or signer, you are bound to make some mistakes in the course of your language production. While you may not just report on any random speech or sign error, we need you to be specific and accurate in how your slips-of-the-tongue (SOTs) tie to **concepts covered in 491**. In order to help you have a sense of what we're looking for in this assignment, three sample SOTs have been provided.

One great source of speech errors actually comes from your instructors as they lecture in class. Be attentive to their speech (and the content of their speech!) and you'll find out that we slip up quite frequently!

How should I write up my SOTs?

Once you've experienced or heard an SOT and identified how it can be tied to course concepts, you will need to record each one of them using the template on page 4. You need to be as precise as you can in your reporting, and you may therefore use more than one page for this assignment. You will then need to upload your assignment as a PDF to the corresponding Blackboard dropbox.

How will my assignment be graded?

This assignment is worth **60 points**, 20 for each of the three SOTs, distributed as follows.

Reporter (you):   *(1pt)*
Relation to speaker (brother, sister, friend, spouse, etc.)

Date and approximate time: *(1pt)*

Speaker: *(2pts)*
General characteristics (sex? approximate age?)
Special characteristics (native speaker? bilingual?)
Can you identify a regional accent?
Was the speaker ill or very tired, angry or excited, sober or drunk?

Context: *(2pts)*
Casual conversation, heated argument, public lecture, radio, TV, etc.

Error: *(2pts)*
Include as much as you can accurately recall of the immediately preceding and following
wording, including any self-corrections.

Intended or Target: *(2pts)*
If not obvious from the error, write your inference regarding what the speaker meant to
say; if you're the speaker, include what you remember your message was.

Comments: *(10pts)*
This part of the assignment should be analytical. As you'll see in the following examples,
each report includes an analysis of the error. Your comments should also include any
details that you think affected your interpretation and analysis of the error data. So, for
example:
- Did the speaker appear to notice the error?
- Were you able to question the speaker about the error? If so, when did your
  questioning occur? Immediately after the error or after some delay and intervening
  conversation?
- Were other observers present? Did they notice the error? If you had the chance to ask
  them, did they agree on what the error was?
- Was the error uttered fluently, or was it hesitant? Were there pauses or fillers like *um*?
- Was the prosody of the whole utterance normal? If there was some departure from
  normal prosody, try to describe it.
- If the error was a word or phrase intrusion, did the intruding material (or any topically
  related material) occur earlier in the speaker's environment (e.g., conversation,
  billboard seen while driving)?
- How confident are you that you heard the error correctly? That is, did you notice it
  while listening or pick it up in a 'mental replay' after noting 'something funny' about
  what you just heard?

Note that sound-based errors require the use of the IPA.

Note that style of writing will be taken into account in the evaluation of your assignment.

Example 1

Reporter: MFG   Date: 1-2-95   Time: 8:40 a.m.

Speaker: MFG (self)
Context: conversation

Error: I think that's possibly one of the most dispress[ing] ...
Intended: I think that's possibly one of the most distress[ing] ... [ideas I've heard].

Comments: Error type: blend | Error element: word | Domain: not defined

The word *distressing* was the immediate felt target, but the word *depressing* was already in mind at time of utterance. Notice that these words are not synonyms, though in a general sense they are both adequate to what was being conveyed – namely negative emotion and dismay.

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Example 2

Reporter: MFG   Date: 3-24-95   Time: afternoon

Speaker: MFG (self)
Context: conversation

Error: We have to check on what Jen and Kenny are planning.
Intended: Ken and Jenny

Comments: Error type: exchange | Error element: sound, syllable | Domain: noun phrase

Jenny does not call herself *Jen*; Ken does not call himself *Kenny*. Their friends refer to them as *Ken and Jenny*, with the order K&J being the usual one for joint reference to this couple. The speaker never uses the J&K order.

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Example 3

Reporter: MFG   Date: August 17, 1999   Time: 9 a.m.

Speaker: Carol Shuherk (native speaker)
Context: academic retreat, intro remarks

Error: ... is one of the questions at key ... one of the key questions at the heart of the process.
Intended: Recruitment is one of the key questions at the heart of the matter, or one of key questions/one of the questions at the heart of the matter

Comments:
Error type: blend or complex reformulation | Error element: unclear | Domain: whole sentence

The intended utterance was not actually clear because she appears to have rephrased during her repair. If it was a blend, it would be *key* for _{NP}[*the heart of the matter*]. What she produced in the repair is redundant (*key = at the heart*], so I suspect it is a repair and reformulation.

Reporter: Date and approximate time:

Speaker:
Circumstances:

Error:
Intended:

Comments:

•••

Reporter: Date and approximate time:

Speaker:
Circumstances:

Error:
Intended:

Comments:

•••

Reporter: Date and approximate time:

Speaker:
Circumstances:

Error:
Intended:

Comments: