

PhD Comprehensive Theoretical Exam
2008–2009
Language

In the 20th century, language, its relation to what it represents (the world), and its relation to human beings becomes a central concern both within Analytic and Continental traditions.

Analytic Reading List and Study Guide

For the Analytic tradition questions of language's ability to be about the world replaced Modern philosopher's questions of how the mind represents the world. Descartes famously doubted the existence of the external world and the mind's ability to accurately represent the world, but he never doubted that his words had meaning. For Analytic philosophers, the question of linguistic meaning takes center stage. One of the major questions raised by Analytic thinkers at the turn of the 20th century is how language (inert marks on a page or sounds from another person's mouth) comes to be about the world. And because the meaning of a statement or a word involves not just reference to the world but ways in which a speaker represents the world, questions of linguistic meaning inevitably lead to issues regarding languages relation to human beings, specifically their thoughts, intentions, and modes of presentation. This in turn lead to a good deal of discussion of the role a speaker plays in determining the meaning of their words and, in some cases, it led to skeptical conclusions regarding our ability to mean anything by our words. In exploring the issue of language (and its relation to the world and human beings) in 20th century Analytic thought, one should start with an exploration of theories of linguistic meaning and the debates that arose surrounding these theories.

Frege

- “On Sense and Reference” (1892)
- “The Thought” (1918)

Russell

- “On Denoting” (1905)
- “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description” (1917)

Wittgenstein

- Tractatus* (1922)
- Philosophical Investigations*, Part I. (1953)

Schlick, “The Foundation of Knowledge” (1934)

Carnap, “The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language” (1932)

Hempel, “The Empiricist Criterion of Meaning: Problems and Changes” (1950)

Quine

“Two Dogmas” (1951)
Word and Object, chapters 1 and 2

Strawson, P. F., “On Referring” (1950)

John Searle, “Proper Names” (1958)

Kripke, Saul

On Rules and Private Language, chapters 1 and 2
Naming and Necessity or shorter version “Identity and Necessity” in Bailie book

Putnam, “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’” (1975)

Grice, P., “Meaning” (1957)

Austin, J. L., “The Meaning of a Word” and “Performative Utterances” in *Philosophical Papers* a collection of Austin’s writings

Searle, J., “What is a Speech Act?” (1965)

Continental Reading List and Study Guide

For the Continental part of the exam, it is important to note that views of language as chiefly a representational, instrumental, or adequate medium are not the starting—or ending—point of many preeminent Continental approaches to the philosophical study of language. Students will also do best to keep in mind that successful exams show evidence of a reflective and integrative assessment of the accounts drawn from the two (Analytic and Continental) approaches and explicated in the exam.

We recommend students begin their study of the topic of language in Continental philosophy with one of three major figures: Heidegger, Husserl, or Saussure. The accounts of language they offer have generated significant responses. Among the most important of these responses are those offered by Gadamer, Derrida, Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze.

Hence, to approach the topic of language in the Continental tradition, the committee recommends five possible paths, based on the three proposed starting figures. Two of these paths are oriented by phenomenological investigations into language, and three are oriented by a structuralist approach to language.

I. Phenomenology Paths

(1) Heidegger and Gadamer

(2) Husserl and Derrida

II. Linguistic Structuralism Paths

(1) Saussure and Merleau-Ponty

(2) Saussure and Deleuze

(3) Saussure and Derrida

Recommended Texts

Texts listed below are those we propose for the paths listed above. **Please note: We supply the publication data for the original texts since some students will want to read the original versions. Consulting these is NOT required for success on this exam.**

I. Texts for the Phenomenology Paths

Martin Heidegger

Being and Time

Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962) or

Trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996)

Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953)

Introduction; Division: One Chapter Five, esp. sections on *Rede* (discourse) and *Gerede* (idle talk)

“Language” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971)

“Die Sprache” in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959)

Hans-Georg Gadamer

Truth and Method, Second revised edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1993). *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960)

Part III: The Ontological Shift of Hermeneutics Guided by Language

Edmund Husserl

Logical Investigations, Volume I. “Investigation I: Expression and Meaning” (New York: Routledge, 2001). *Logische Untersuchungen* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1913)

Jacques Derrida

Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973). *La Voix et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967)

II. Texts for the Linguistic Structuralism Paths

Ferdinand de Saussure

Course in General Linguistics, eds. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye. Trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965). *Cours de linguistique générale* (Payot: Paris, 1931)
Part I (“General Principles”) and Part II (“Synchronic Linguistics”)

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

“The Body as Expression, and Speech” in *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 1962, 2002). *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945)

“Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence” in *Signs* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964). *Signes* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1960)

Gilles Deleuze

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, “4. November 20, 1923—Postulates of Linguistics” (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). *Mille plateaux: capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1980)

Difference and Repetition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968)
Pages 193; 203–208; 291–292 on the Linguistic Idea

The *Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). *Logique du sens* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1969)

Pages 28–35, “Fifth Series of Sense;” 48–51, “Eighth Series of Structure;” 66–73, “Eleventh Series of Nonsense”
“How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” in *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (New York: Semiotexte, 2004). *L’Île Déserte et Autres Textes* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 2002) and in François Châtelet, ed. *Histoire de la philosophie, Vol VIII: Le XXe Siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1972), pp. 299–335

Jacques Derrida

Of Grammatology (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London, 1974). *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967)
“Part I: Writing Before the Letter”