

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Dewey Section

To: Jonathan Furner, Chair
Decimal Classification Editorial Policy Committee

Cc: Members of the Decimal Classification Editorial Policy Committee
Karl E. Debus-López, Chief, U.S. Programs, Law, and Literature Division

From: Rebecca Green, Assistant Editor
Dewey Decimal Classification
OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc.

Via: Michael Panzer, Editor in Chief
Dewey Decimal Classification
OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc.

Re: Biolinguistics

We have received a request to make clear how to classify biolinguistics. First we must have a good idea what the subject entails:

- The [focus and scope statement of *Biolinguistics*](#) indicates that it is “a peer-reviewed journal exploring theoretical linguistics that takes the biological foundations of human language seriously. The Advisory Board and the Editorial Board are made up of leading scholars from all continents in the fields of theoretical linguistics, language acquisition, language change, theoretical biology, genetics, philosophy of mind, and cognitive psychology.”
- [The Cambridge Handbook of Biolinguistics](#) is part of the series, Cambridge Handbooks in Language and Linguistics, but the subject given by the publisher is Evolutionary biology.
- In “Biolinguistics: A Historical Perspective” (ch. 2, *The Cambridge Handbook of Biolinguistics*), Lyle Jenkins (of the Biolinguistics Institute at Cambridge) says that “Biolinguistics, as the study of the biology of language, poses exactly the same kinds of questions as in other areas of biology, e.g., questions about form/function, ontogeny, and phylogeny . . . 1. What is knowledge of language? 2. How does language develop in the child? 3. How does language evolve in the species?”

Should biolinguistics then be classed with language/linguistics or biology? While the authority record for the LCSH Biolinguistics lists both Biology and Linguistics as broader terms, the LCC class number given (P132) is a language/linguistics number. The correlation between DDC numbers assigned to works in WorldCat to which the LCSH Biolinguistics has been assigned also favors language/linguistics (see table on next page), which corresponds as well with the rule of application: the biology of language should be classed with language/linguistics.

DDC number(s)	Number of records retrieved
006.3	2
006.301	1
006.35	1
016.40157	1
121.68	2
153.6	1
155.7	8
155.9042	1
302.2	5
302.2242	2
302.2244	1
304	1
306.44	5
400	32
401	298
401.51	3
401.9	31
401.93	14
410	36
410.18	1
410.157	2
414.8	1
415	17
415.0182	1
417	2
417.7	10
418.02072	1
419	6
570	1
572.80285	1
573.21	1
600	1
612.78	3
612.82336	4
616.313	1
616.8552	4
808.0014	2

Concluding that biolinguistics should be classed with language/linguistics leads naturally to the question whether the comprehensive/interdisciplinary number for biolinguistics would be better classed in a 40x number as language (we have said that it concerns the biology of language) or in a 41x number as linguistics (it is, after all, called *biolinguistics*)? We argue for a 40x number on two grounds: (1) the core issues in biolinguistics are questions about language (“1. What is knowledge of language? 2. How does language develop in the child? 3. How does language evolve in the species?”), and (2) the treatment of biolinguistics should parallel the treatment of psycholinguistics. Psycholinguistics is in the class—here note at T4—019 and at 401.9; a class—elsewhere note leads from 410.9 to 401.9 for psycholinguistics. We would expect then to class biolinguistics in 401.5 Scientific principles, plus notation to express biology.¹ That leaves us with the further question whether the notation to be added is 57(0) Biology or something more specific. Biolinguistics is concerned primarily with human language, although it also takes into consideration animal communication more broadly. But adding notation 5999—from 599.9 Homo sapiens (Humans)—seems redundant, since the 400s are restricted to human language. We therefore come to 401.59 as the best number for biolinguistics. Curiously enough, this number has never been used in WorldCat in conjunction with the LCSH Biolinguistics, by itself or in number building. Direction is needed!

We should also note in passing that much—perhaps most—of the current work in biolinguistics tends to be theoretical in nature and comes out of formal linguistics. This leads to two further considerations: (1) the appropriateness of adding notation to express the biological aspects of the subject and (2) the desirability of expressing the linguistic school/theory/methodology that underlies a specific work in biolinguistics. The first question we will address here and now; the second question will be addressed later. While the current work in biolinguistics is of necessity theoretical in nature, it is the intent of biolinguists to generate hypotheses that can/should be tested in a biological context. We cannot be sure that biolinguistics will mature to this stage, but if it does, relocating biolinguistics to 401.59 at some later time or never having biolinguistics in a number that expressed its biological aspects would both be unenviable.

Making clear how to classify biolinguistics is more than deciding on the best number in which to class it. Since biolinguistics is interdisciplinary by nature and since closely related fields exist,² determining which numbers/topics should be referred to from that best number is also required. In addition to notes that parallel the treatment of psycholinguistics, notes are needed for other topics related to, or that need to be distinguished from, biolinguistics.³

The first two of these notes contrast (evolutionary) psychological and biological approaches to language, the former often being more concerned with language processes at the micro level / in the individual and the latter often being more concerned with language processes at the macro level / in the species.

¹ We leave T4—015* out of the picture because the biolinguistic concern with individual languages is limited to understanding the range of phenomena that must be accounted for; we do not anticipate literature on the biolinguistics of a specific language itself.

² It almost seems that biolinguistics is better defined extensionally (that is, by enumeration of researchers who self-identify with this research program) than intensionally (that is, by considering the problems investigated).

³ The definition note at 417.7 Historical linguistics (Diachronic linguistics)—Study of development of language over time—may have proved misleading for a few classifiers. But bringing 417.7 to the attention of someone dealing with biolinguistics seems counterproductive. Clearly indicating where biolinguistics should be classed should suffice to keep classifiers from even considering this other number.

- 155.7 Evolutionary psychology has the following scope note: “Evolution of basic human mental and psychological characteristics,” which includes the mental faculty for language. The evolutionary psychology of language itself, following the rule of application, is classed in 401.9. (Curiously enough, even though biolinguistics calls on both psychology and evolutionary biology, evolutionary psychologists working with language do not self-identify as biolinguists.) A class-elsewhere note leading to this number is justified.
- 401.93 Language acquisition concerns how language develops in the child, which is a core concern of biolinguistics. But, as with the evolutionary psychology of language, we need to distinguish between a psychological approach to language acquisition, classed in 401.93, and a biological approach to language acquisition, classed in 401.59. Again, a class-elsewhere note leading to this number is justified.

A scatter class-elsewhere note for biolinguistics of specific linguistic topics is appropriate, to draw off works on, e.g., the biolinguistics of grammar.

A scatter see reference for medical aspects of biolinguistics is also appropriate, to draw off works on, e.g., neurolinguistics.

We now return to the question whether it is desirable to express the linguistic school/theory/methodology underlying a specific work in biolinguistics. We consider it unlikely that linguistic school/theory/methodology will be the focus of a general work on biolinguistics and therefore unlikely to enter into its subject analysis. Moreover, we have no means of adding T4—018* notation at 401. We could, however, express, for example, the biolinguistics of generative grammar with 415.018220159, since Table 1 notation can be added to Table 4 notation. Since this is standard operating procedure, there is no need to provide instruction to that effect.

In summary, we propose to make the following changes:

- Add a schedule entry for 401.59 Zoological principles with biolinguistics in the class-elsewhere note. Add class-elsewhere notes for evolutionary psychology of language and language acquisition as considered in psycholinguistics. Add a scatter class-elsewhere note for biolinguistics of specific linguistic topics and a scatter see reference for medical aspects of biolinguistics.
- Add a class-elsewhere note for biology of language at 401.9, leading to 401.59.
- Add a class-elsewhere note for language acquisition as considered in biolinguistics at 401.93, leading to 401.59.
- Add a class-elsewhere note for biolinguistics at 410.159, leading to 401.59.

- .59 Zoological principles
 Class here biolinguistics
 Class evolutionary psychology of language in 401.9; class language acquisition from the viewpoint of psycholinguistics in 401.93. Class biolinguistics of a specific linguistic topic with the topic in 410, plus notation 0159 from Table 1, e.g., biolinguistics of grammar 415.0159
For medical aspects of biolinguistics, see the aspect in 610, e.g., neurolinguistics 612.82336
- .9 Psychological principles, language acquisition, speech perception**
 Notation 019 from Table 1 as modified below
 Including speech errors
 Class here psycholinguistics
 Class biology of language in 401.59; class speech errors in language acquisition in 401.93; class psychology of bilingualism in 404.2019
See also 306.44 for sociolinguistics
See Manual at 401.43 vs. 306.44, 401.45, 401.9, 412, 415
- .93 Language acquisition
 Class language acquisition from the viewpoint of biolinguistics in 401.59
See also 418.0071 for study and teaching of language; also 418.4019 for psychology of reading
See Manual at 407.1, T1—071 vs. 401.93, T4—019, 410.71, 418.0071, T4—80071
- .159 Zoological principles
 Class biolinguistics in 401.59

B

I_a Bilingualism 401.59
P 401.59

D

Developmental linguistics 401.93

F

I_a Fossilization (Linguistics) 401.93

L

Language acquisition 401.93
I_a Language awareness 401.9

M

I_a Masked priming 401.9

P

Pragmatics
psycholinguistics 401.9
Psycholinguistics 401.9

S

Second language acquisition 401.93
I_a Similarity (Language learning) 401.93
Speech errors 401.9