COGS 153/253
Ben Bergen

HW1: Word meaning
Assigned: January 5, 2011
Due: January 12, 2011

The goal of this assignment is to help you develop and allow you to demonstrate deeper understanding of course concepts. In working on this assignment, please feel free to consult your classmates, or anyone else for that matter. But make sure to write up your answers independently. Please double-space all work and use a font size no smaller than 12. The homework is due at the beginning of class on the due date.

The readings discuss three different approaches to thinking about meaning
1. Amodal mental lexicon (a.k.a abstract symbols)
2. Modal symbols (a.k.a. mental simulation, modality-specific representations, and embodied representations)
3. Implicit contextually-driven effects that words have on mental states

Please answer the following questions in separate, numbered responses. Each answer will be short, so this will be an exercise on being concise, clear, and to the point.

1.-3. Give an example of a model of meaning from each approach; explain how it works, what it assumes, what data it explains, and what it predicts. *[each answer 200 words max]*
4. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the three approaches. Are there things that one can explain that the others can't? Does one make unreasonable or false assumptions? Is one more likely than the others on independent grounds? *[400 words max]*
5. Is it possible that aspects of more than one of these approaches correctly characterize how people process meaning? If so, in what way—what would a hybrid model look like? If not, why not? *[200 words max]*