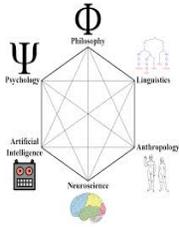




LING 790.02/ENGL 890.02

First Language Acquisition

Monday & Wed., 2:40-4:00, Hamilton Smith 218



Instructor: David Medeiros

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Hamilton Smith 39

Office hours: Monday 12:30-1:30 & Wed. 1:30-2:30

(603) 862-1313

Course Description: Humans are unique among animals in that we are able to attain native speaker competency in any language(s) we receive a sufficient amount of exposure to during our development. The path of acquisition is remarkably stable regardless of the language(s) being acquired, and is believed to yield insights into the nature of human language. In this course, we explore children's capacity to acquire language, with a focus on its implications for linguistic theory. Topics include acquisition of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, and acquisition in extraordinary circumstances. The study of child language acquisition is an entryway to many of the biggest questions in linguistic theory, and as such this course will be excellent preparation for those interested in theoretical linguistics. This course will also complement or provide background for fields such as psychology, speech pathology, computer science, and second language acquisition. Course attribute: Writing intensive course.

Text: *Child Language: Acquisition and Development* **Author:** Matthew Saxton

ISBN-13: 978-1412902328 Available in all the normal places.

Course Policies: It is very important that you attend every class and complete the readings and written assignments on time; you will learn more, enjoy the class more, and win more personal glory. Attendance and participation are expected. *I reserve the right to lower your course grade by five points (out of one hundred) for poor attendance and participation.* Also, I ask that you keep electronic distractions in class to a minimum.

Grade Distribution:

Exercises & Writing Prompts	10%
Paper Selection & Review	10%
CHILDES Task	10%
Midterm	15%
Child Center Observation	10%
Child Center Task	10%
Final Paper Draft (Introduction and One Section)	10%
Final Paper	25%

Course Components: There are different tasks I will ask you to complete for the course. Keep in mind that this is a writing intensive course. As such, the majority of graded work will be in the form of written assignments; for formal written assignments (I will let you know which assignments count as ‘formal’), writing style will be a consideration. Part of the class will be learning how to create documents in L^AT_EX (this syllabus is an example), which will increase the overall ‘look’ of your writing, teach you some basic coding skills, and win you enormous style points among academic types. The components of the course grade are the following.

1. Exercises and writing prompts: I will ask you to write up responses to two of the exercises in the Saxton book, as well as to complete a handful of informal 1-2 page written responses to questions that relate to course content.
2. Paper selection and review: The final third of the class is open for us to read papers chosen by you, the students. By October 27th, you will turn in a formal 2 page review of a paper of your choice for the class to read; please consult with me about the appropriateness of your paper *before* doing the write-up. This will give us a chance to look at topics not discussed earlier. Papers in 2nd language acquisition are a possibility as well, so long as they relate to 1st language acquisition (and a number of them do, though a majority do not). You will assist in leading discussion on the day your paper is read by the class.
3. CHILDES task: You will examine some aspect of child language using the CHILDES online database. You will present your question, methods, and results in a 2-3 page paper. More explanation to follow.
4. Midterm: This is designed to help consolidate the core knowledge presented in the Saxton book and in class; anything in the Saxton book is fair game for the exam. The best preparation is to read thoroughly and critically as we go along.
5. Child Center Observation: You will observe a group of children at the University of New Hampshire Child Care Center. You will write up your observations in a 2 page paper.
6. Child Center Task (pending approval): You will pick some task from the child language acquisition literature and replicate it with a 2 or 3 child subjects. A 2-3 page write up will illuminate what you did and your results. If you think there’s *any* chance that you might try to publish your results in any way, please talk to me about securing IRB approval.
7. Final Paper Draft: By December 8th, you should have a draft of the introduction and one section of your final paper. This should be at least 1.5 pages but more is welcome. Be prepared to circulate your writing with 1 or 2 students, who will read your work and comment on it during a writing workshop. We don’t often get a chance to improve our science writing in the classroom, so this is our chance.
8. Final Paper: A 3000 (for undergraduates) or 5000 (for graduates) word paper which either presents a theoretically informed empirical study (e.g. using CHILDES or child center data) or a theoretically informed review of some area of the language acquisition literature. A final paper option would be to propose an experiment, with careful attention to relevant literature. More instructions to follow.

University Policies:

Disability Services

The University is committed to providing students with documented disabilities equal access to all university programs and facilities. If you think you have a disability requiring accommodations, you must register with Disability Services for Students (DSS), Contact DSS at (603) 862-2607 or disability.office@unh.edu (<mailto:disability.office@unh.edu>). If you have received Accommodation Letters for this course from DSS, please provide me with that information privately in my office so that we can review those accommodations.

Academic Honesty

From UNH Students Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities Handbook: “Honesty is a core value at the University of New Hampshire. The members of its academic community both require and expect one another to conduct themselves with integrity. This means that each member will adhere to the principles and rules of the University and pursue academic work in a straightforward and truthful manner, free from deception or fraud.” For more information please see the following link: <http://www.unh.edu/vpsas/handbook/academic-honesty>

Relevant University Resources:

Connors Writing Center

The Connors Writing Center is a place where all members of the UNH community – students, faculty, and staff – are welcome to discuss their writing with trained writing assistants. Our writing assistants come from many academic backgrounds and work with students on all forms of writing during any stage in the writing process. They are undergraduate and graduate students at UNH who are passionate about writing and who love discussing writing with others. The Connors Writing Center is located in 329 Dimond Library. Students and faculty are welcome to call or stop by for further information about the Writing Center and our services. The Writing Center can be reached by phone at (603) 862-3272 or by email at writing.center@unh.edu.

Date	Content, Readings, and Assignments
Wed 9/3	Introduction
Mon 9/8	Landmarks in 1LA. Read Ch.1 Writing Prompt 1 Due.
Wed 9/10	Language, Communication, and Representation(s). Read Ch.2
Mon 9/15	Critical Period. Read Ch.3. Ex. 1.3 Due
Wed 9/17	Child Directed Speech. Read Ch.4
Mon 9/22	Sounds and Segmentation. Read Ch.5
Wed 9/24	The Lexicon. Read Ch.6. Ex. 4.1 Due
Mon 9/29	Morphology. Read Ch.7
Wed 10/1	Nativism and Structure Dependence. Read Ch.8
Mon 10/6	Usage-Based Models. Read Ch.9. Writing Prompt 2 Due
Wed 10/8	The Nature-Nurture Debate. Read Ch.10
Mon 10/13	In Class Exam
Wed 10/15	CHILDES Database. Read online tutorials
Mon 10/20	Toddler Meta-Linguistic Awareness. Read Shatz and Ebeling 1991
Wed 10/22	Pronoun Binding. Read Grimshaw and Rosen 1990
Mon 10/27	Infant P&P. Read Kuhl et al. 1992 and Petitto & Marentette 1991. Paper Review Due.
Wed 10/29	Atypical LA. Read Tager-Flusberg 2007 - CHILDES Task Due
Mon 11/3	Student Chosen Paper - Research Reports
Wed 11/5	Student Chosen Paper - Research Reports
Mon 11/10	Student Chosen Paper - Research Reports
Wed 11/12	Student Chosen Paper - Research Reports
Mon 11/17	Student Chosen Paper - Research Reports - Writing Prompt 3 Due
Wed 11/19	Student Chosen Paper - Research Reports
Mon 11/24	Student Chosen Paper - Research Reports - Final Paper Proposal
Wed 11/26	no class (classes follow Friday schedule)
Mon 12/1	Student Chosen Paper - Research Reports
Wed 12/3	Student Chosen Paper - Research Reports
Mon 12/8	Student Chosen Paper - Research Reports - Final Paper Introduction and Section Draft
Wed 12/10	Writing Workshop & Wrap-Up
Wed 12/17	Final Paper - due at 5:30pm.