Ling 197A: Language Acquisition and Development  
Spring 2019

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Office hours: TBD

Teaching Assistant: Katie Stenhouse (kstenhouse@brandeis.edu)  
TA office hours: TBD, to be held in/outside of Vertica Lounge (1st floor of Volen)

Course time and location: TF 11am-12:20pm, Volen 119

1 Description and goals

In this course, we will examine the fascinating topic of how children acquire language. Students will learn about the acquisition and development of phonology, syntax, morphology, and semantics in child language, and theories that have been developed to account for them. We will also discuss the brain and language development, experimental methods for evaluating the linguistic knowledge of children, bilingualism, and heritage languages. The overall goal is to arrive at a coherent picture of the language learning process.

This course also satisfies the Oral Communications requirement.

2 Prerequisites

Ling 100a (Introduction to Linguistics) is recommended. Students in other fields (including psychology) with a strong interest in language acquisition and development are welcome to take the course but may need to do additional background readings from time to time during the semester.

3 Readings

Our textbook will be: Lust, Barbara. Child language: Acquisition and growth.

Additional recommended and required readings will be made available on the course LATTE site from time to time.

4 LATTE

Please check the course LATTE site frequently. The course schedule, additional/supplemental readings, assignments, and other materials will be posted on the site as we progress through the semester.
5 Requirements and grading

Assignments

Reading responses 15%
Homework assignments 20%
Two projects (including presentations) 30% (15% each)
Quizzes 30%
Engagement 5%
Total 100%

5.1 Assignments

The assignments for the course comprise two types: weekly reading responses, and occasional written assignments.

Reading responses will be due by class every Tuesday that class takes place, and will require you to make two posts on the forum on the course website. The first post should contain the following two items: (i) something that you found interesting in the readings for the previous week, and (ii) a question that the readings raised for you, which may be a point of confusion or something that is unclear, something you wonder about, or something that may be interesting to investigate. In the second post, you must comment on (respond to) at least one other person’s post for the week. Reading responses will receive credit only if submitted on time; no extensions will be granted.

In addition, there will be approximately 4 written homework assignments during the semester. Assignments must be typed and submitted in hard copy, and will be graded on a 10-point scale. Late homework assignments will be accepted only for 2 days after an assignment’s due date subject to the late policy shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When submitted</th>
<th>Late penalty</th>
<th>How to submit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the beginning of class on the day it is due</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Hard copy brought to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the beginning of class on due date and by 5pm on the following day (if due by class on Tuesday, submitted by 5pm on Wednesday)</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>Hard copy left in my mailbox (in Volen 261)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By 5pm two days after it was originally due (if due by class on Tuesday, submitted by 5pm on Thursday)</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>Hard copy left in my mailbox (in Volen 261)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anytime thereafter (we will always correct your work and give feedback)</td>
<td>No credit</td>
<td>Hard copy given to one of us</td>
</tr>
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Please note that it is expected that you will expend three hours of out of class effort (e.g., reading, writing papers, completing assignments, studying for exams) each week for each hour of classroom instruction.

5.2 Projects

Two projects will be assigned during the semester and require both an oral presentation and brief write-up. The first project will involve the analysis of data from the CHILDES (Child Language Data
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Exchange System) corpus and will require the preparation of a handout to accompany the oral presentation.

For the second project, each student will select a topic of their choice (subject to approval) and present the results of their research using presentation slides. In addition, each student will prepare a short paper of approximately 10 double-spaced pages on their research topic. No extensions will be granted on either project.

5.3 Engagement

The engagement portion of the final grade has two components. The first half (2.5 points) of the engagement portion of the final grade is earned through class attendance and coming to class prepared to engage with the assigned material. Class attendance is required, but you may miss up to two classes for any reason; additional absences will result in a reduction of the engagement portion of the final grade. Please come to class each day on time and prepared to engage with the assigned material.

The second half of the engagement portion of the final grade is earned through active engagement with the course, which may include participating in class discussions, playing an active role in group work done in class, and coming to office hours with questions about class material or homework assignments. This aspect of engagement will be measured over each week, beginning with the week of January 29.

Please note that use of an electronic device in class without prior permission will negatively affect your engagement grade.

5.4 Quizzes

There will be two quizzes during the semester which will together comprise 30% of your final grade. I will provide more details on each as the dates approach.

6 Electronic devices

No electronic devices (including laptops, tablets, and cellphones) may be used in class without my prior permission. Please keep all cellphones put away (and turn them off completely if the thought of a new message is irresistible). (See also Engagement, above.)

7 Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

8 Academic integrity

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Research Guides - Citing Sources.
9 Topics and general schedule

The topics that will be covered in the course and general schedule, along with the chapters that we will read from the textbook in each section, are as follows (subject to minor change based on class progress and interests):

Weeks 1-2: What is the problem of language acquisition?

- Lust ch. 1: The growth of language
- Lust ch. 2: What is acquired?
- Lust ch. 3: What is the problem of language acquisition?

Week 3-5: Constructing a theory of language acquisition

- Lust ch. 4: How can we construct a theory of language acquisition?
- Lust ch. 5: Brain and language development
- Lust ch. 6: The nature of nurture
- Lust ch. 7: How can we tell what children know? Methods for the study of language acquisition
- *February recess: Feb. 18-22
- *Quiz #1 - Tues., Feb. 26

Weeks 7-11: Acquisition of the grammar

- Lust ch. 8: The acquisition of phonology
- The acquisition of morphology
- Presentations of Project #1 (tentatively sched. for week of Mar. 12)
- Lust ch. 9: The acquisition of syntax
- Lust ch. 10: The acquisition of semantics

Weeks 11-14: Bilingualism and heritage languages

- *Quiz #2 - Fri., Mar. 29
- Presentations of Project #2
  (week of Apr. 9, with papers due by 5pm on Monday, May 6)
- *Passover and spring recess Apr. 19-26

Week 16: Conclusions

- Lust ch. 12: Conclusions: toward an integrated theory of language acquisition