

**LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (Psych 830:484:01)**  
**Spring 2016 SYLLABUS** (Last Updated: 1/20/2016)

**WARNING: IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND CLASS REGULARLY, DO NOT TAKE THIS COURSE!**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Prof. Karin Stromswold  
**E-mail:** langacquis@gmail.com  
**Office hours:** TBA  
 Location: Busch Psych Building, Room 233

**Course Time:** Mondays & Thursdays 10:20 -11:40 am  
**Course Location:** Hill 009  
**Skype office hours:** by arrangement  
 Skype name: langacquis

**Sakai site:** Language Acquisition Sp16

**Learning goals:** Language Acquisition explores the cognitive and neural bases of language learning. The underlying question this course seeks to address is: *What makes the acquisition of human language special?* Despite the seemingly intractable learnability problem posed by language acquisition, why do most children acquire language with ease? What environmental, cognitive, and neural factors can cause children to have difficulty learning language?

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF LECTURES**

Date	TOPIC	Tentative READINGS
Thur 1/21	Intro to language & language development	Hoff ch. 1 (pp 13 – 27), Goodluck ch. 1 (pp 1 – 5)
Mon 1/25	Phonological development	Hoff, pp.143-179
Thur 1/28	Phonological development	Goodluck, pp. 29-38, Sedivey
Mon 2/1	Phonological development	Sedivey, Gómez et al 2014
Thur 2/4	Lexical development	Hoff, ch. 5
Mon 2/18	Lexical development	Hoff, ch. 5 & pp. 333-40
Thur 2/11	Lexical development	Trueswell et al 2013
Mon 2/15	Morphological development	Goodluck ch 3.
Thur 2/18	Morphological development	Clark (2009), Constructing words, p. 255 - 278
Mon 2/22	Morphological development	Clark (2009), Constructing words, p. 255 - 278
<b>Thur 2/25</b>	<b>Hourly 1</b>	
Mon 2/29	Syntactic development	Goodluck ch 4 (p 61-74); Hoff ch. 6 (p 228-249)
Thur 3/3	Syntactic development	Goodluck ch 4 (p 61-95)
Mon 3/7	Syntactic development	Goodluck ch. 4 (p 99-107); Hoff ch 6 (p 250-267)
Thur 3/10	Syntactic development	Goodluck ch. 5 (p 113-127);
Mon 3/21	Sentence processing	Trueswell et al (1999), Stromswold et al
Thur 3/24	Language learnability theory	Goodluck ch. 6 (p 140-169), Pinker (1995)
Mon 3/28	Language & learnability theory	Stromswold, pp 909-13
Thur 3/31	Pragmatic development	Hoff, ch. 3
Mon 4/4	Pragmatic development	Hoff, ch. 3, pp. 340-351
<b>Thur 4/7</b>	<b>Hourly 2</b>	
Mon 4/11	Bilingualism	Hoff, ch. 8,
Thur 4/14	Bilingualism	Hoff, ch. 8
Mon 4/18	Neural bases of language development	Kuhl & Rivera-Gaxiola 2008
Thur 4/21	Acquisition of signed languages	Pyers (2012), Pinchler (2012)
Mon 4/25	Atypical language development	Hoff, ch. 10
Thur 4/28	Atypical language development	Stromswold, pp 913-932
Mon 5/2	Wrap up	
<b>Wed 5/4</b>	<b>Last day to submit take-home essay</b>	

**Required Readings (all available on sakai site)**

Chen Pichler (2012). Language acquisition (chapter 12). In R. Pfau, B. Woll and M. Steinbach (eds.) *Handbook of Linguistics and Communication Science: Sign Language*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Clark, E (2009). Constructing words, p. 255 – 278. *First Language Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.

Hoff, E. 2008/2009. Chapters from *Language development, fourth edition*. Wadsworth.

Goodluck, H. 1991. Chapters from *Language acquisition: A Linguistic Introduction*. Blackwell.

Gómez, GM, Berent, I, Benavides-Varela, S, Bion, RAH, Cattarossi, L, Nespor, M and Mehler, J. (2014) Language universals at birth. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science 111*: 5837-5841.

Kuhl, P & Rivera-Gaxiola M. (2008) Neural substrates of language acquisition. *Annual Review of Neuroscience 31*:511-34.

Pinker, S. 1995. Language acquisition, pp 147-157. In LR Gleitman & M. Liberman (eds). *An Invitation to Cognitive Science, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Language*. MIT Press.

Pyers J.E. (2012) Sign Languages. In: V.S. Ramachandran (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*, vol. 3, pp. 425-434. Academic Press.

Stromswold, K. 2000. The cognitive neuroscience of language acquisition. M. Gazzaniga (ed.), *The new cognitive neurosciences, second edition*, 909-932. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Stromswold, K. et al. Why Children Understand and Misunderstand Sentences: An Eye-tracking Study of Passive Sentences

Trueswell et al. 1999. Kindergarten path effect. *Cognition*

Trueswell, JC, Medina, TN, Hafri, A, Gleitman LR (2013). Propose but verify: fast mapping meets cross-situational word learning. *Cognitive Psychology 66*(1): 126-56

**Note: Additional readings may be assigned throughout the semester.**

### GRADING

Final grades will be determined by the total number of points earned in the class. Grades will be scaled so that the top-scoring student receives 100 points for the course. For example, if the top scoring student earns 95 points during the course, all students will have an additional 5 points added to their final grade. Course grades will be assigned as follows: **A (90-100 points); B+ (85-89 points); B (80-84 points); C+ (75-79 points); C (70-74 points); D (60-69 points); F (<60)**

**Quizzes:** On-line, non-cumulative multiple choice quizzes, worth a total of 20 - 25% of grade

**Hourly 1:** In-class, closed book, cumulative exam, worth 20 - 25% of grade

**Hourly 2:** In-class, closed book, cumulative exam, worth 20 - 25% of grade

**Final paper:** 20 - 25% of grade

**Class participation** (e.g., attendance, discussion, in-class assignments): 10 – 20 % of grade

Makeup quizzes & exams will not be given without a note from a doctor, dean or other appropriate person.

## WEEKLY ONLINE QUIZZES

**Content.** There will be ~ 12 online quizzes

- Non-cumulative: covers material in that week's lectures and reading assignments
- Test basic understanding of material you need to know to understand subsequent material

**Format:**

- Usually between 4-8 questions (multiple choice, true/false, matching etc.)
- Untimed (but only available for a 24 hours)
- Open book & notes
- **All work must be done independently!**
  - No copying, photographing or recording the questions
  - No collaborations or consultations with anyone else
  - No posting or discussing questions/answers with anyone else
  - Anyone caught GIVING or RECEIVING help on a quiz will get a zero for ALL quiz grades

**Mechanics**

- Quizzes will be online on Sakai's tests/quizzes section
- Quizzes will generally be "live" on Sunday from 12 am to 11:55 pm
- Quizzes must be taken during the period that the quiz is "live."
- Location: You may take the quizzes wherever you want. Just make sure you have a GOOD internet connection and are able to see images and hear files.
- Number of quizzes: approximately 12 (plus "dry run" extra credit quiz)

**Benefits:**

- Can monitor progress/understanding of material
- The material in this course builds on itself, just like in a math class, so it is important to keep up
  - Weekly quizzes reduce the temptation to procrastinate until right before the midterm or final
- Spaced learning is more effective than cramming

**"Dry Run" Extra Credit quiz**

- Time: Friday 1/22 @ 12:00 am – Fri 1/29 @ 11:55 pm
- Value: worth 1 extra credit point
- Material covered: questions about you background, mechanics of the course & quizzes (e.g., exam dates, listening to files, viewing pictures)
- Goals
  - Successfully access the system, take the quiz & save the results
  - Learn what the interface is like
  - Learn if you have technical problems (software/hardware incompatibility, internet issues, etc.)
  - Help me pitch the course at the right left

## FINAL PAPER (Due at the end of reading period)

You will write a short (5– 7 page double-spaced) paper in which you compare and contrast the acquisition of signed and spoken languages. The basis of your paper should be the class discussion and readings, especially the papers on sign language acquisition by Chen Pichler (2012) and Pyers (2012), but you are free to use other articles or sources.

**DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.** If you are caught plagiarizing, you will not receive for any of the assignments. Furthermore, depending on the egregiousness of the plagiarism, I reserve the right to lower your final grade and/or notify your dean about the plagiarism.

## PLAGIARISM

1. If you copy something that is in print ANYWHERE (books, journals, popular magazines, on-line blogs, mailing lists etc.), you are plagiarizing.
2. Taking someone else's words and substituting a word here or there is still plagiarism.
3. Paraphrasing someone else's words but 'borrowing' their line of argument and reasoning is plagiarism.
4. Even if you are in a pinch and facing a looming deadline, don't plagiarize. It's stealing. Better to hand in something that is yours than to hand in something that you stole.
5. For more guidelines,
  - 20 minute interactive-tutorial on [Plagiarism and Academic Integrity](http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html): <http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html>
  - Camden Plagiarism Tutorial: <http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModule/Plagiarism/>
  - Don't Plagiarize: Document Your Research! : [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid\\_plagiarism](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism)

### LECTURE SLIDES

**WARNING: IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND CLASS REGULARLY, DO NOT TAKE THIS COURSE!** The exams will stress the material that I present in class, and some material is not in the books. The posted lecture slides are only meant to aid you in taking notes during class. They are not substitutes for attending class.

I will try to post the lecture slides before the lectures. I recommend you look over the slides before lecture and bring a copy of them to class to take notes on. Three caveats about the slides

1. The lecture slides are only meant to aid you in taking notes during class, and to remind you of what was covered in class. They are not substitutes for attending class.
- 2) Because I post the slides BEFORE the lectures, they are subject to change. I recommend that you check the sakai site periodically to make sure you have the most up-to-date version.
- 3) Despite my best efforts, sometimes the slides will contain typos. If you think you have found a serious typo (one that affects meaning), send email to [langacq@gmail.com](mailto:langacq@gmail.com)

### UNGRADED EXERCISES

Periodically, I may give you exercises to do at home. These exercises are designed to help you learn the material and/or extend your knowledge. You will not be asked to do hand them in and they do not count towards your grade. Answers will not be posted. Rather, if you have trouble with an exercise, you should ask me to go over it in class or you can get help during my office hours.

In general, you should do exercises after the corresponding lecture. For example, you should do the Speech Perception exercise after the Speech Perception lecture. Sometimes, we will go over the exercises in the beginning of the next class. Sometimes we will do so because a number of students had trouble completing the exercise, and sometimes we will do so because the exercise involves students generating their own examples of phenomena.

### WARNING ABOUT USING COMMERCIAL SITES (e.g., StudyBlue etc.)

1. All of the materials on this course's sakai site are copyrighted (e.g., syllabus, lecture notes, lecture slides, study guides, tests, readings, etc.)
  - They are exclusively for students enrolled in the course
  - You may download sakai resources and edit them as you wish for the purposes of preparing for this course.
  - You may not give or sell the material to anyone who is not enrolled in the course
  - Specifically, you may not publish or post any of the material on another non-commercial or commercial site (e.g., StudyBlue etc.). Doing so is illegal.
2. What appears on StudyBlue is often inaccurate, out-of-date etc.

## STUDY GUIDE FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

### 12 hints for doing well in this class:

- 1) Come to every class and take good notes. If you do miss a class, get the notes from a classmate. I stress different topics in my lectures than those stressed in the readings. The material I stress in lecture tends to appear on exams.
- 2) Spend 10 minutes immediately after each lecture going over your lecture notes, reconstructing the lecture and making sure you understand the "key concepts" for the day.
- 3) Spend the 10 minutes before each lecture going over the lecture notes and "key concepts" from the previous class.
- 4) At least skim the assigned lecture notes and readings before each class.
- 5) When you go back and reread the chapters and articles, use the lecture notes to guide your reading.
- 6) If you are having trouble with one of the readings for a topic, talk to me about supplementary readings.
- 7) If you don't understand something said in the lectures or in the readings, let me know. Ask a question in class or come to my office hours. Chances are if you are confused, others are too.
- 8) Use your lecture notes and the "key concepts" to review for exams
- 9) Do not try to cram. The material in this course builds on itself, just like in a math or physics course and the exams are cumulative. If you don't learn the material in the beginning of the course, you are going to be lost.
- 10) Use the chat room! Chances are if you have a question, someone can answer it.
- 11) Form a study group and quiz each other on key concepts. Study groups can be physical or virtual.
- 12) Create a group study document
- 13) Even though the quizzes are open book, the quizzes are timed, so make sure you have done the readings and reviewed your notes and the slides BEFORE taking a quiz.

### Some Related Websites

#### INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/ling001.html>

Humorous piece on language acquisition

<http://childes.psy.cmu.edu>

CHILDES: Child Language Data Exchange System. Tools for studying children's language acquisition through the study of conversational interactions. The site features a database of transcripts, programs for analysis, and methods of coding data, among other things.

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/index.html#baldi>

Tongue in-cheek language essays

<http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/3920/index.html>

An overview of the field and brief descriptions of its subdisciplines.

[http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/academic/cult\\_sci/anthro/Language/what1.html](http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/academic/cult_sci/anthro/Language/what1.html)

An introduction to the patterning of sounds, words, and phrases. Includes exercises and sound clips.

<http://www.zompist.com/langfaq.html>

Linguistics FAQ

#### PHONOLOGY

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/721554.stm>

Role of babbling in language acquisition

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/08/29/tech/main520252.shtml>

Decoding baby babble

<http://www.easytofindchildcare.com/Sounds/babybabble.wav>

Example of baby babbling: what type of babbling is this?

<http://hctv.humnet.ucla.edu/departments/linguistics/VowelsandConsonants/vowels/contents.html>

Lots of video and audio clips of sounds around the world

<http://www2.arts.gla.ac.uk/IPA/ipa.html>

Includes the full IPA chart and audio files, as well as information on the organization.

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/linguistics/russell/138/notes.htm>

Notes from a phonetics course at the University of Manitoba, including phonetic transcriptions of English, vocal tract anatomy, properties of consonants and vowels, and acoustic phonetics, among other things.

<http://www.ling.yale.edu/Ling120/index.html>

The homepage for a course at Yale. Includes lecture materials and audio-video clips.

<http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/project/siphtra.htm>

These interactive tutorials from University College London are part of a project called System for Interactive Phonetics Training and Assessment. They include voicing, plosives (i.e., stops), and other topics.

<http://hctv.humnet.ucla.edu/departments/linguistics/VowelsandConsonants/vowels/chapter10/percpetial.html>

Categorical speech perception demonstrations

[http://www.psy.cmu.edu/~holt/php/gallery\\_context.php](http://www.psy.cmu.edu/~holt/php/gallery_context.php)

More speech perception demos

## LEXICON

<http://www.sci.sdsu.edu/cdi>

The MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories. These are parent report forms to assess the development of language and communication in children. Included are lexical norms for English vocabulary acquisition showing when particular words and expressions are acquired.

<http://thisisnotthat.com/humor/language.html#conundrum>

Linguistic conundrums

<http://memory.psych.upenn.edu/wordpools.php>

Links to on-line lexicons & dictionaries that provide frequency information, imaginability ratings, orthographic regularities, free association norms etc. about words.

[http://www.psy.uwa.edu.au/mrcdatabase/uwa\\_mrc.htm](http://www.psy.uwa.edu.au/mrcdatabase/uwa_mrc.htm)

MRC psycholinguistic interactive lexical database. This database includes age of acquisition ratings

## MORPHOLOGY

<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~bender/paradox.html>

Morphological paradoxes

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/ling005.html>

This short essay from Robert Beard's files illustrating what morphology is begins with "Jabberwocky," compares lexemes and morphemes, and makes a stop at Tagalog reduplication along the way.

<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/morphemes.html>

A definition and illustration of the concept of a morpheme using examples from English.

<http://www.quinion.com/words/articles/unpaired.htm>

Unpaired words or why people aren't couth, kempt or ruly

## SYNTAX

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/ling004.html>

A lighthearted introduction to syntax from Robert Beard's files.

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/ling003.html>

A lighthearted introduction to syntax from Robert Beard's files.

<http://babelfish.altavista.com/translate.dyn>

This engine translates entire paragraphs back and forth between English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.

## SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND BILINGUALISM

<http://www.hw.ac.uk/langWWW/icsla/icsla.htm>

## NEUROLINGUISTICS

<http://www.biology.about.com/science/biology/library/organs/brain/blbrain.htm>

Anatomy of the Brain. An outline with illustrations for students. Includes concise sections on Broca's area and Wernicke's area

<http://www.stroke.cwc.net/niweb/faq.htm> - 14 different parts of the brain do

What Do Different Parts of the Brain Do? Question 12 in a series of frequently asked questions written for stroke victims and their families features a clear, color-coded, numbered diagram of the left hemisphere, with an explanation. Scroll down to read question 13 concerning speech problems.

### Aphasia

[http://www.asha.org/speech/disabilities/Aphasia\\_info.cfm](http://www.asha.org/speech/disabilities/Aphasia_info.cfm)

<http://fuzzy.iau.dtu.dk/aphasia.nsf>

<http://www.asha.org/speech/disabilities/index.cfm>

<http://www.med.harvard.edu/AANLIB/home.html>

<http://www.aphasia.org/aphasiawebbypeople.php>

## LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Growing up different: <http://www.pbs.org/saf/1205/video/watchonline.htm>

<http://www.asha.org/speech/disabilities/index.cfm>

Linguistic isolates ("wild children"):

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/transcripts/2112gchild.html>

Nova #2112G: Secret of the Wild Child. The broadcast transcript of a *Nova* program on Genie. Includes interview material with Susan Curtiss and others involved in caring for Genie and studying her development.

Deafness :

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/soundandfury/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/horizon/silenttran.shtml>

Deafplanet:

<http://www.deafplanet.com/en/deafplanet/>

Cochlear implant demonstrations: <http://www.utdallas.edu/~loizou/cimplants/cdemos.htm>

Down Syndrome: <http://www.nas.com/downsyn/>

Williams Syndrome: <http://www.williams-syndrome.org/facts.htm>

Autism: <http://www.autism-society.org/>