

Language Development
Psychology 6367 (CRN 19375)
Fall, 2022
Monday, 9-11:50 UGLC 338

Instructor: Christine Potter, Ph.D.

Email: cepotter2@utep.edu

Office: Psychology 109

Office Hours: by appointment (in person or by Zoom)

<https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/81575350326?pwd=UFhUSTE1djI6VGIramE4aXNDL29HUT09>

Course Description

Language is often described as a core part of the human experience. All human communities have rich linguistic culture, and children around the world appear to absorb language without explicit teaching, yet many adults struggle to master a language later in life. The goal of this course is to explore how children learn language and why that matters. We will consider theories and historical debates about the mechanisms underlying learning, as well as discussing recent empirical findings from the field, with a particular focus on learning in different populations and environments.

Class format

I will lecture and lead discussion for the first few weeks of this course. For the remaining meetings, class time will be roughly divided in half, and each student will be assigned one class to give a presentation. For the first 60-80 minutes, I will give a lecture designed to give some background on the methods or historical debates surrounding the topic (usually covering half of the readings for that week). Then, the presenting student will take over (see below for details) for around 80 minutes. For some classes, I will use the last 15-20 minutes to provide a quick preview of the topic for the next week's class when I think it is helpful to have context before doing the reading.

Course materials

All materials will be made available on Blackboard. Note that for some weeks, there are optional readings, or you have a choice about which papers to read.

Requirements

Lead one discussion. Your responsibility is to do an effective job in presenting the readings and related material and engaging the class in thoughtful, informed discussion. The assigned readings will serve as a starting point to spark discussion. However, the presentations should extend beyond just beyond 1-2 papers that the whole class has already read. For example, studies do not occur in isolation- what theory/research did the assigned paper follow? Have there been other studies that replicated/challenged/extended these findings? An effective presentation will require a decent amount of background reading, as well as some time spent on synthesizing facts and ideas. Because a lot of these material is likely to be new to you, you'll meet with ~2 weeks prior to your presentation to discuss the literature that you've flagged as potentially relevant, and we can go over other things that you might have missed, as well as the structure of your presentation

and ideas for bringing in other materials. Remember that the goal of the presentation should be to generate discussion and a deeper understanding of the topic of the day.

Attendance and participation. When you are not the presenter, your assignment is to prepare in advance to contribute to the discussion and then participate actively. There should be plenty to talk about. I realize that some people are more comfortable speaking in groups than others and that there will be variability in how much individual people talk. However, with a small group, there should be opportunities for everyone to contribute and to demonstrate that they have reflected on the readings and issues and bring their own unique understanding. To facilitate discussion, everyone must submit at least 2-3 *discussion questions* about that week's reading prior to class that the presenter can use to guide the conversation. Posts must be made by Friday at 5pm every week, beginning in Week 4 (except for the week where you are the presenter). If for some reason you are unable to attend class, these posts are how you can still contribute to the conversation. Please notify me in advance if you will need to miss class for an excused reason (e.g., religious holidays, family emergencies, illness, professional commitments such as conferences).

Writing. I want you to have a variety of opportunities to practice your writing, so you will be asked to complete multiple short writing assignments, rather than a single term paper. You have a lot of flexibility on when you complete these assignments, so please be mindful of your own schedule and spread them out over the semester.

Reflection papers (2). These papers are intended to allow you to reflect on readings that you found especially engaging, controversial, or relevant to your own research interests on weeks when you are not responsible for leading the discussion. They can be an endorsement of the paper's central claims, critiques of the authors' methodological approach, integration of the research with theoretical ideas not mentioned in the paper, etc. Reflection papers should be ~2 pages long and are due prior to class where we discuss that paper (and should not be for the same week that you are leading discussion).

Commentary paper. Your main paper will follow the format of a 'dispatch' (guidelines posted), which is a short-form paper that aims to draw attention to key points in a recently published experimental paper and helps place the paper in a broader context for non-experts. You can choose any paper that relates to language development, regardless of whether it is a topic that we discussed. You may turn in a draft of the paper (**by email**) AT ANY POINT during the semester. I'll grade it, and you can choose whether to submit that version or if you're not happy with the grade, you can make changes that I suggest and resubmit for a higher grade until you are satisfied. I will return papers within one week, and the final paper must be submitted by **December 1**.

Grading

- Presentation/leading discussion: 40%
- Attendance and participation: 25%
- Reflection papers: 10%
- Commentary: 25%

Academic Integrity

I hope this goes without saying, but academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Your work should be your own, and if you are using another author's ideas, you should provide citations in your papers and posts. If I suspect any type of plagiarism, I am required to report the case immediately, with no exceptions.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as one's own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

Accommodations Policy

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services \(CASS\)](#). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, or email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the [CASS portal](#).

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at (915) 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/>. If you choose, I also encourage you to reach out to me if there are ways that I can support you and help you take advantage of the resources and accommodations.

Course Schedule

Every attempt will be made to follow the guidelines and plans in this syllabus as much as possible. However, I reserve the right to make changes (e.g., the schedule of topics) if needed. I recommend reading papers in the order that they are presented below; often, earlier papers or reviews provide context for later studies.

WEEK 1, August 22: Organization, central issues in the study of language

- (recommended) Wojcik, E.H., de la Cruz Pavia, I., & Werker, J.F. (2017). Language acquisition. In O. Braddick (Ed). *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology*. Oxford University Press.

Additional readings:

- Chomsky, N. (1959). Review of B. F. Skinner, Verbal learning. *Language*, 35, 26-58.
- Seidenberg, M.S. (1997). Language acquisition and use: Learning and applying probabilistic constraints. *Science*, 275, 1599-1604.

WEEK 2, August 29: Intro to language science & studying infants

- Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2003). What is language? In *An introduction to language*. (pp. 3-32). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.
- Pick at least one from the following:
 - *Testing what infants know*
 - Aslin, R. N. & Fiser, J. (2005). Methodological challenges for understanding cognitive development in infants. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 9, 92-98.
 - *Artificial language experiments*
 - Gómez, R. L., & Gerken, L. (2000). Infant artificial language learning and language acquisition. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 4(5), 178-186.
 - *Parental language report*
 - Frank, M. C., Braginsky, M., Yurovsky, D., & Marchman, V. A. (2017). Wordbank: An open repository for developmental vocabulary data. *Journal of Child Language*, 44(3), 677-694.
 - *Naturalistic observation*
 - Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Kuchirko, Y., Luo, R., Escobar, K., & Bornstein, M. H. (2017). Power in methods: Language to infants in structured and naturalistic contexts. *Developmental Science*, 20(6), e12456.
 - *Neuroscience*
 - Arredondo, M. M., Hu, X. S., Seifert, E., Satterfield, T., & Kovelman, I. (2019). Bilingual exposure enhances left IFG specialization for language in children. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 22(4), 783-801.
 - *Computational modeling*
 - Beckage, N. M., & Colunga, E. (2019). Network growth modeling to capture individual lexical learning. *Complexity*, 2019.

WEEK 3, September 5 NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)

WEEK 4, September 12: Infant-directed communication

Infant preferences

- Cooper, R. P., & Aslin, R. N. (1990). Preference for infant-directed speech in the first month after birth. *Child Development*, 61(5), 1584-1595.
- Vouloumanos, A., Hauser, M. D., Werker, J. F., & Martin, A. (2010). The tuning of human neonates' preference for speech. *Child Development*, 81(2), 517-527.

Caregiver behavior

- Abu-Zhaya, R., Seidl, A., & Cristia, A. (2017). Multimodal infant-directed communication: How caregivers combine tactile and linguistic cues. *Journal of Child Language*, 44(5), 1088-1116.
- Casillas, M., Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (2020). Early language experience in a Tzeltal Mayan village. *Child Development*, 91(5), 1819-1835.

WEEK 5, September 19: Input & Interaction

Capturing early experience

- Cychosz, M., Cristia, A., Bergelson, E., Casillas, M., Baudet, G., Warlaumont, A. S., ... & Seidl, A. (2021). Vocal development in a large-scale crosslinguistic corpus. *Developmental Science*, 24(5), e13090.
- Clerkin, E. M., Hart, E., Rehg, J. M., Yu, C., & Smith, L. B. (2017). Real-world visual statistics and infants' first-learned object names. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 372(1711), 20160055.

Influences of parent behavior

- Hurtado, N., Marchman, V. A., & Fernald, A. (2008). Does input influence uptake? Links between maternal talk, processing speed and vocabulary size in Spanish-learning children. *Developmental Science*, 11(6), F31-F39.
- Elmlinger, S. L., Schwade, J. A., & Goldstein, M. H. (2019). The ecology of prelinguistic vocal learning: Parents simplify the structure of their speech in response to babbling. *Journal of Child Language*, 46(5), 998-1011.

WEEK 6, September 26: Learning the sounds of language (Kiran)

- Kuhl, P. K. (2004). Early language acquisition: cracking the speech code. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 5(11), 831-843.
- Werker, J. F., Yeung, H. H., & Yoshida, K. A. (2012). How do infants become experts at native-speech perception?. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 21(4), 221-226.

Statistical learning

- Pelucchi, B., Hay, J. F., & Saffran, J. R. (2009). Statistical learning in a natural language by 8-month-old infants. *Child Development*, 80(3), 674-685.
- Graf Estes, K., Evans, J. L., Alibali, M. W., & Saffran, J. R. (2007). Can infants map meaning to newly segmented words? Statistical segmentation and word learning. *Psychological Science*, 18(3), 254-260.

WEEK 7, October 3: Early word learning (Liam)

What do words refer to?

- Medina, T. N., Snedeker, J., Trueswell, J. C., & Gleitman, L. R. (2011). How words can and cannot be learned by observation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(22), 9014-9019.
- Yurovsky, D., Smith, L. B., & Yu, C. (2013). Statistical word learning at scale: The baby's view is better. *Developmental science*, 16(6), 959-966.

Understanding & learning words

- Bergelson, E., & Swingle, D. (2012). At 6–9 months, human infants know the meanings of many common nouns. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(9), 3253-3258.

- Goodman, J. C., McDonough, L., & Brown, N. B. (1998). The role of semantic context and memory in the acquisition of novel nouns. *Child Development*, 69(5), 1330-1344.

WEEK 8, October 10: Combining words and learning grammar (Ethan)

- Berko, J. (1958). The child's learning of English morphology. *Word*, 14(2-3), 150-177.
- Gerken, L. (2006). Decisions, decisions: Infant language learning when multiple generalizations are possible. *Cognition*, 98(3), B67-B74.

Early grammar knowledge

- Yuan, S., & Fisher, C. (2009). "Really? She blicked the baby?" Two-year-olds learn combinatorial facts about verbs by listening. *Psychological Science*, 20(5), 619-626.
- Lew-Williams, C., & Fernald, A. (2007). Young children learning Spanish make rapid use of grammatical gender in spoken word recognition. *Psychological science*, 18(3), 193-198.

WEEK 9, October 17: Age effects and the Critical Period Hypothesis (Sarah)

- Newport, E. L. (1990). Maturation constraints on language learning. *Cognitive Science*, 14(1), 11-28.
- Seidenberg, M. S. & Zevin, J. D. (2006). Connectionist models in developmental cognitive neuroscience: critical periods and the paradox of success. In Y. Munakata & M. Johnson (Eds.), *Attention and performance XXI: Processes of change in brain and cognitive development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Age-related changes

- Mayberry, R. I., Chen, J. K., Witcher, P., & Klein, D. (2011). Age of acquisition effects on the functional organization of language in the adult brain. *Brain and Language*, 119(1), 16-29.
- Senghas, A., Kita, S., & Ozyurek, A. (2004). Children creating core properties of language: Evidence from an emerging sign language in Nicaragua. *Science*, 305(5691), 1779-1782.

WEEK 10, October 24: Learning multiple languages (Rebeca)

Early bilingual development

- Byers-Heinlein, K., & Lew-Williams, C. (2013). Bilingualism in the early years: What the science says. *LEARNING landscapes*, 7(1), 95.
- Ferjan Ramírez, N., Ramírez, R. R., Clarke, M., Taulu, S., & Kuhl, P. K. (2017). Speech discrimination in 11-month-old bilingual and monolingual infants: a magnetoencephalography study. *Developmental science*, 20(1), e12427.

Consequences of bilingual experience

- Birulés, J., Bosch, L., Brieke, R., Pons, F., & Lewkowicz, D. J. (2019). Inside bilingualism: Language background modulates selective attention to a talker's mouth. *Developmental Science*, 22(3), e12755.
- Fan, S. P., Liberman, Z., Keysar, B., & Kinzler, K. D. (2015). The exposure advantage: Early exposure to a multilingual environment promotes effective communication. *Psychological Science*, 26(7), 1090-1097.

WEEK 11, October 31: Balance and dominance in bilingual environments (Diana)

Bilingual input

- Place, S., & Hoff, E. (2011). Properties of dual language exposure that influence 2-year-olds' bilingual proficiency. *Child Development*, 82(6), 1834-1849.
- Orena, A. J., Byers-Heinlein, K., & Polka, L. (2020). What do bilingual infants actually hear? Evaluating measures of language input to bilingual-learning 10-month-olds. *Developmental Science*, 23(2), e12901.

Processing two languages

- Conboy, B. T., & Thal, D. J. (2006). Ties between the lexicon and grammar: Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of bilingual toddlers. *Child development*, 77(3), 712-735.
- Potter, C. E., Fourakis, E., Morin-Lessard, E., Byers-Heinlein, K., & Lew-Williams, C. (2019). Bilingual toddlers' comprehension of mixed sentences is asymmetrical across their two languages. *Developmental Science*, 22(4), e12794.

WEEK 12, November 7: Language development in special populations (Josh)

Late talkers and language-specific delays

- Fernald, A., & Marchman, V. A. (2012). Individual differences in lexical processing at 18 months predict vocabulary growth in typically developing and late-talking toddlers. *Child Development*, 83(1), 203-222.
- Perry, L. K., & Kucker, S. C. (2019). The heterogeneity of word learning biases in late-talking children. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 62(3), 554-563.

Skills and challenges in other populations

- Naigles, L. R. (2021). It takes all kinds (of information) to learn a language: Investigating the language comprehension of typical children and children with autism. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 30(1), 11-18.
- Mervis, C. B., & Robinson, B. F. (2000). Expressive vocabulary ability of toddlers with Williams syndrome or Down syndrome: A comparison. *Developmental Neuropsychology*, 17(1), 111-126.

WEEK 13, November,14: Language and socioeconomic status (Erin)

- Huttenlocher, J., Waterfall, H., Vasilyeva, M., Vevea, J., & Hedges, L. V. (2010). Sources of variability in children's language growth. *Cognitive Psychology*, 61(4), 343-365.
- Kuchirko, Y. (2019). On differences and deficits: A critique of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the word gap. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 19(4), 533-562.

Language interventions

- Leffel, K., & Suskind, D. (2013, November). Parent-directed approaches to enrich the early language environments of children living in poverty. In *Seminars in speech and language* (Vol. 34, No. 04, pp. 267-278). Thieme Medical Publishers.
- Ridge, K. E., Weisberg, D. S., Ilgaz, H., Hirsh-Pasek, K. A., & Golinkoff, R. M. (2015). Supermarket speak: Increasing talk among low-socioeconomic status families. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 9(3), 127-135.

WEEK 14, November 21: Language & education

Vocabulary and school readiness

- Duff, F. J., Reen, G., Plunkett, K., & Nation, K. (2015). Do infant vocabulary skills predict school-age language and literacy outcomes?. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 56(8), 848-856.
- Montag, J. L., Jones, M. N., & Smith, L. B. (2015). The words children hear: Picture books and the statistics for language learning. *Psychological Science*, 26(9), 1489-1496.

Language variation & schooling

- Vangsnes, Ø. A., Söderlund, G. B., & Blekesaune, M. (2017). The effect of bidialectal literacy on school achievement. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 20(3), 346-361.
- Brennan, W. (2018, April). Julie Washington's question to get schools to respect African-American English. *The Atlantic*.

WEEK 15, November 28: Heritage language learning & loss (Andy)

- Pallier, C., Dehaene, S., Poline, J. B., LeBihan, D., Argenti, A. M., Dupoux, E., & Mehler, J. (2003). Brain imaging of language plasticity in adopted adults: Can a second language replace the first?. *Cerebral cortex*, 13(2), 155-161.
- Bylund, E., & Díaz, M. (2012). The effects of heritage language instruction on first language proficiency: A psycholinguistic perspective. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 15(5), 593-609.

Majority & minority language development

- Wright, S. C., Taylor, D. M., & Macarthur, J. (2000). Subtractive bilingualism and the survival of the Inuit language: Heritage-versus second-language education. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(1), 63.
- Hoff, E., Giguere, D., Quinn, J., & Lauro, J. (2018). The development of English and Spanish among children in immigrant families in the United States. *Pensamiento educativo: revista de investigacion educacional Latinoamericana*, 55(2), 1.