

# LINGUISTICS 355: LANGUAGE ACQUISITION 1

Winter 2024  
MWF 10:35-11:25  
Rutherford Physics 114

## INSTRUCTOR:

Heather Goad (she/her)

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Office hours: Mon 1:00-2:00 & Thurs 10:00-11:00  
1085 Penfield, room 320

## TEACHING ASSISTANT:

Jeanne Brown (she/her)

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Wed 9:15-10:15 (starting in Week 3)  
1085 Penfield, room 104

## OUTLINE:

This course undertakes a critical study of the application of linguistic theory and description to (first) language acquisition. Topics include: acquisition of phonetics and phonology, morphology, word meaning, and syntax; theories of language acquisition; properties of the input; acquisition strategies; methodologies. Second language acquisition, bilingualism, language impairment and language revitalization will be briefly touched on.

## PREREQUISITE:

LING 201: Introduction to Linguistics

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:

Becker, M. & K. Ud Deen (2020) *Language acquisition and development*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Book available for purchase through the McGill bookstore; eBook available through the library at:

<https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/courseReserves/course/id/18029409>

## EVALUATION:

2 Assignments (8% each)	16%	Final Paper	20%
Midterm Exam (1hr 50mins)	24%	Final Exam (3 hrs)	40%

## PROCEDURES:

### 1. LECTURES:

- Slides for the lectures will be posted on myCourses ahead of time.
- You may find it optimal to download the materials ahead of time and bring paper copies to lectures to annotate by hand or use a tablet with a stylus.

### 2. CONFERENCES:

- Conferences are held on Fridays, starting in Week 3 (January 19th). The TA will hold two conferences, one during the Friday lecture time and one at 9:35-10:25.
- To register for a conference, you must sign up on Minerva.
- You are responsible for the material covered in the conferences, just as you are responsible for the material covered in the lectures.
- Conference material will be posted on myCourses ahead of time; solutions to problems will be posted after Friday's second conference.

### 3. ASSIGNMENTS:

- Assignments will be posted on myCourses.
- Assignments can be done individually or in groups of up to three students. To avoid administrative confusion, each student must turn in a separate assignment, even if the assignment is identical for all members of the group.
- You can discuss your ideas, analysis and solution within your group but not across groups. You must indicate on your assignment with whom you worked.
- Assignments will be posted on myCourses on Friday and they are due the following Friday at 11:59pm.
- You must submit your assignment electronically in pdf format on myCourses (there will be an assignment folder created for this). You will receive confirmation from myCourses if you have successfully uploaded your assignment.

#### 4. FINAL PAPER:

There are two options for the final paper: critical review or report on data analysis.

##### **Option 1: Critical review:**

- You write a critical review of an article on language acquisition.
- The article must be about a specific phonetic, phonological, morphological or syntactic property (but not necessarily a topic that was covered in class).
- In the CR, you must demonstrate that you have clearly understood the article's objectives, hypotheses, methodology, and results. You must also point out possible shortcomings of the article, or ways to expand the proposed analysis.

##### **Option 2: Report on data analysis:**

- You report on an analysis of developmental patterns you have undertaken from one or two children using data available through the CHILDES website (<https://childes.talkbank.org/>).
- The analysis should examine a specific phonetic, phonological, morphological or syntactic property (but not necessarily a topic that was covered in class).
- In the paper, you must provide your objectives, hypotheses, methodology, and results. In your discussion/conclusion, you must point out possible shortcomings, or suggest ways to expand on the topic.

##### **General information:**

- The final paper can be done individually, or in groups of up to three students. To avoid administrative confusion, each student must turn in a separate paper, even if the paper is identical for all members of the group.
- The paper must be written up as a short essay of ~1500-2000 words; it is due April 5th (at 11:59pm).
- You must submit your paper electronically in pdf format on myCourses (there will be a folder created for this). You will receive confirmation from myCourses if you have successfully uploaded your paper.
- Further information on the final paper, including a list of possible articles for the CR, will be posted on myCourses.

#### 5. EXAMS:

- The midterm exam is scheduled for Wednesday February 21st in the evening (18:05-19:55).
- The 3-hour final exam is centrally administered. According to Senate regulations, instructors are not permitted to make special arrangements for final exams; please consult University Regulations and Resources (Undergraduate) at [https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2023-2024/files/study.2023-2024/2023-2024\\_regulations\\_and\\_resources\\_undergraduate\\_ealendar\\_1st\\_edition.pdf](https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2023-2024/files/study.2023-2024/2023-2024_regulations_and_resources_undergraduate_ealendar_1st_edition.pdf)
- The final exam is cumulative although there will be greater emphasis placed on material covered in the second half of the course.

#### 6. LATE ASSIGNMENTS, LATE FINAL PAPER AND MISSED EXAMS:

- Late assignments/papers will not be accepted unless you have a certified excuse (e.g., a doctor's note) and the course instructor has been notified via e-mail within 24 hours of when the assignment/paper was due.
- The course instructor must be notified within 24 hours of a missed midterm exam via e-mail.
- No make-up assignment or exam will be given to anyone who does not have a certified excuse.

#### 7. MARKING:

- Answers on the midterm that have been written over or that are written in pencil will not be considered for re-grading.
- Any issue about grading on assignments or the midterm exam must be addressed within two weeks of the date when the assignment/exam was returned.

#### 8. TUTORS:

- If you feel that you need more individual attention than the instructor and TA can provide, you can contact the VP Academic from SLUM (Society of Linguistics Undergraduates of McGill) ([vpacademic.slum@gmail.com](mailto:vpacademic.slum@gmail.com)) to arrange for tutoring.

**MCGILL POLICY STATEMENTS:**

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In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

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**SCHEDULE OF DATES:**

Dates for topics covered are approximate.

Week	Date	Evaluation	Lecture	Readings (all from Becker & Ud Deen text)
1	F Jan 5		Introduction	Ch 1
2	M Jan 8		Logical problem of language acquisition	Ch 2 (up to §2.1.3)
	W Jan 10		Logical problem of language acquisition	
	F Jan 12		Methodologies	Ch 2 §2.1.3; Appendix B
3	M Jan 15		Speech perception	Ch 3
	W Jan 17		Speech perception	
	F Jan 19		Conference 1	
4	M Jan 22		Speech segmentation	Ch 4
	W Jan 24		Speech production	
	F Jan 26	A1 posted	Conference 2	
5	M Jan 29		Speech production	
	W Jan 31		Syllabification	
	F Feb 2	A1 due	Conference 3	
6	M Feb 5		Word learning	Ch 5
	W Feb 7		Word learning	
	F Feb 9		Conference 4	
7	M Feb 12		Morphology	Ch 6
	W Feb 14		Morphology	
	F Feb 16		Conference 5	

8	M Feb 19		Emergence of syntax	Ch 7 §7.0-§7.1
	W Feb 21	Midterm (18:05-19:55)	Midterm questions; Emergence of syntax	
	F Feb 23		[no conference]	
9	M Feb 26		Functional structure	Ch 7 §7.2
	W Feb 28		Functional structure	
	F Mar 1		Conference 6	
	Mar 4 - 8		READING WEEK	
10	M Mar 11		Negation, questions, passives	Ch 7 §7.3.1-7.3.3
	W Mar 13		Negation, questions, passives	
	F Mar 15	A2 posted	Conference 7	
11	M Mar 18		Theories of language acquisition	Ch 2 §2.2-2.3; review Ch 2 §2.1
	W Mar 20		Theories of language acquisition	
	F Mar 22	A2 due	Conference 8	
12	M Mar 25		Late first language acquisition	Ch 8 §8.1
	W Mar 27		Language impairment	Ch 8 §8. 4
	F Mar 29		HOLIDAY	
13	M Apr 1		HOLIDAY	
	W Apr 3		Bilingualism	Ch 9 §9.0-§9.1
	F Apr 5	Paper due	Conference 9	
14	M Apr 8		Second language acquisition	Ch 9 §9.2
	W Apr 10		Language revitalization	Ch 9 §9.4
	Th Apr 11		Review	
	F Apr 12		Conference 10	

#### **TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.