



McGILL UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Medicine
School of Communication Sciences & Disorders
Fall 2019

SCSD 633
Language Development
Number of Credits: 3 Credit
Course Time: Mondays; 12:30-2:30 pm
Location: SCSD, Room 869

Instructor: Professor Laura Gonnerman
Office: SCSD, Room 865; **Office Phone:** 514-398-3878
Office Hours: Thursdays, 3:30-4:00pm or by appointment (set up by phone or by email)
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COURSE OVERVIEW: Theories of language acquisition, prerequisites to language development, and current issues in research will be studied. Topics include the role of input, individual differences in acquisition, and language socialization.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

ROLE 1: CENTRAL ROLE/CONTENT EXPERT

Foundational Principles	
Apply specialized knowledge of typical development, including knowledge in each of the following areas: Speech, communication modalities, cognitive and social aspects of communication, and literacy.	
Describe the course of linguistic knowledge typically mastered by children at different stages of development. Recognize important milestones achieved by children across domains of language. Understand the role of concurrent cognitive development in the acquisition of language. Understand the role of socialization in different communities and cultural contexts.	Midterm Exam Final Exam

Assessment	
Analyze a language sample from a young child. Include relevant information from other sources. Integrate and interpret findings.	
Understand how to relate an individual child's performance to the aggregate data from a group. Describe characteristics of the child's language and compare to age level averages.	Written Assignments

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD:

While the structure of the course is based on a lecture format, students are encouraged to ask questions and actively participate in discussions. Written work in the course will include assignments to be completed at home, as well as in-class exams.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:

Gleason, Jean Berko. (2017). *The Development of Language*. Boston, MA: Pearson. (9th edition)
Small packet of selected readings.

The textbook is available at the McGill bookstore or online. Packet readings will be available either as files to be downloaded from the course web site, sent via email, or handed out in class.

COURSE CONTENT

Learning your first language is one of the most amazing feats you will accomplish in your lifetime—yet you do it virtually effortlessly and without specific instruction! How does language emerge in an individual? What are the mechanisms that are involved? What are the stages that normal children go through in acquiring a language? What differences are there in language development depending on the particular language learned? How does society (parents, peers) effect language development? In this course we will look at current answers to these and other questions in an effort to understand how it is possible for human infants to become competent speakers of their native language.

In addition to learning facts about human language development, this course will also give you an opportunity to evaluate different theories of language acquisition. In addition to the textbook, you will read primary source material, giving you practice in uncovering the important questions asked, determining whether the methods used address these questions, and critically evaluating the conclusions drawn. You will gain an appreciation of the issues involved in language acquisition and the methods used to find answers.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to change)**I. Course Overview and Introduction**

Sep 9, Part 1: Course overview & organization

Assignment: Pre-reading essay on "How children acquire language"

Sep 9, Part 2: Species specificity

Readings: Gleason, Chap. 1; Packet Reading (Kaminski et al., 2004)

II. Cognitive and Social Foundations of Language

Sep 16, Part 1: The biological basis of language

Sep 16, Part 2: Neonatal capacities related to language and interaction

The cognitive and social bases of language acquisition: The emergence of intentional communication

Readings: Gleason, Chap. 2

III. Development of Speech Perception

Sep 23, Part 1: Becoming a native listener

Sep 23, Part 2: Word Segmentation

Readings: Packet Reading (Mehler et al., 1988) & (Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith, 2001)

IV. Phonological Development: From Babbling to Speech; Infants' Production of Sounds

Sep 30, Part 1: Babbling and the sounds of language

Sep 30, Part 2: The stages of phonological development

Readings: Gleason, Chapter 3

Homework assignment #1 distributed

V. First Words

Oct 7, Part 1: The meanings of the first words: semantic features and prototypes

Oct 7, Part 2: Structure and function at the one-word stage

Readings: Gleason, Chap. 4

Homework assignment #2 distributed

October 14: Thanksgiving, no class meeting

VI. Early Syntactic Development: The Two-Word Stage, Empirical Attempts to Characterize Children's Early Grammar

Oct 21, Part 1: Writing grammars at the two-word stage: MLU's and semantic relations

Oct 21, Part 2: Early comprehension of syntax

Readings: Gleason, Chap. 5 (1st half)

October 28: Midterm

Homework assignment #3 distributed

VII. The Development of Morphology: The Importance of Methodology

Nov 4, Part 1: "Telegraphic" speech and the emergence of morphemes

Nov 4, Part 2: Experimental methods in the study of morphological acquisition

Readings: Gleason, Chap. 5 (2nd half)

VIII. Later Syntactic Development: Theoretical Approaches

Nov 11, Part 1: Early studies of questions and negation

Nov 11, Part 2: Behaviorism vs. nativism; Input and acquisition

Readings: Gleason, Chap. 7

IX. Emergent Literacy

Nov 18: Guest Lecture

Readings: Gleason, Ch 10

X. Communicative Competence

Nov 25, Part 1: Linguistic versus communicative competence; Learning pragmatics

Nov 25, Part 2: Acquisition of Register Knowledge

Readings: Gleason, Chap. 6; Packet Reading (Andersen "Exploring register knowledge")

Homework assignment #4 distributed

XI. Individual and Population Differences

Dec 2 Part 1: Learning a signed language

Dec 2, Part 2: Language in blind children

Readings: Gleason, Chaps. 8 & 9; Packet Reading (Andersen et al); (Mayberry & Squires)

XII. Language Development through the lifespan: Normal Aging

Dec 3: Note, Tuesday!

Readings: TBA

December 10 (Tuesday): Final Exam, 10:00am-12:00pm

EVALUATION:

Written Assignments There will be four written assignments given out during the semester. This will give you the opportunity to analyze data from children. – **25% (5% for each of the first 3 assignments, 10% for the fourth one).**

Midterm Exam There will be an in-class midterm exam. – **35%.**

Final Exam There will be a final exam, details of which will be provided later in the semester – **40%.**

Assignment	Date	Sub Roles Targeted	Expected Performance Level
Written Assignments	Oct 7 Oct 21 Nov 4 Dec 3	Assessment	Novice
Midterm Exam	Oct 28	Foundational Principles	Advanced Beginner
Final Exam	Dec 10	Foundational Principles	Intermediate

McGILL POLICY STATEMENTS:

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

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No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Mobile computing or communications devices are not permitted to be used in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

Language of Submission

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.