

Department of Linguistics
University of Calgary
Term/Year: Winter 2013

LING 431: CHILD LANGUAGE: SYNTAX & MORPHOLOGY

Days and Time: Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-12:15

Room: KNB 131

Instructor: Dr. Carlos de Cuba

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REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Ambridge, Ben & Elena V. M. Lieven. 2011. *Child Language Acquisition: Contrasting Theoretical Approaches*. Cambridge University Press.
2. Guasti, Maria Teresa. 2004. *Language Acquisition: The Growth of Grammar*. MIT Press.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

Supplementary readings from the primary literature will be provided.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The study of child language acquisition is central to our understanding of human behavior because it engages issues of brain organization and processes, symbolic capacity, knowledge representation, socialization, communication, and culture. Moreover, study of the origins and course of normal language development raises important theoretical issues in both psychology and linguistics (e.g., innateness of grammar, bilingualism, language and thought). Because language defines us as human and the study of language is connected to so many areas of psychology and linguistics, it is an important and very active area of scholarship. In this course the focus is on the development of syntax and morphology in young children, and competing theoretical accounts of this development.

In the first part of the course, we will become familiar with the generative approach to the acquisition of syntax & morphology, going through the relevant chapters in the Guasti textbook. We will have a series of homework assignments on this material, and the midterm exam will also be on this material. Once we are familiar with the generative approach, the second half of the course will be dedicated to comparing the generative approach to other theories, as discussed in the Ambridge & Lieven text.

Becoming familiar with (learning how to read, understand, and synthesize) original research papers is a primary aim of the course. Writing is a powerful way to learn because it enables you to test your understanding of research material and to organize your thinking. Therefore, we will jump into some of the primary literature in our post-midterm assignments, and students will give group presentations on some primary literature. There will also be a final paper assigned where students will be asked to report on recent research topic on child language syntax/morphology.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS: We will have 7 homework assignments throughout the semester (see schedule below for due dates). I will drop the lowest mark (best 6 out of 7). The first three assignments (pre-midterm) will involve content from the Guasti textbook. The final four assignments (post-midterm) will be paper reports, where you will be assigned a research paper to read, summarize and evaluate. These reports will be 2 pages typed.

PARTICIPATION: At the end of the semester, each student will assign themselves a participation grade. Participation includes attending class (physically and mentally), doing the required readings in preparation for class, participating in class and group discussions, and refraining from social media. It also includes being engaged during other students' group presentations.

DISCUSSION LEADER/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: We will discuss assigned papers (our final 4 homework assignments) in class on the day they are due. We will divide the class into groups which will be lead by a discussion leader. The discussion leaders for a given paper will e-mail me discussion questions about the assigned paper the day before class, lead their group in discussion on the day of class, and report back to the class on the group discussion. Each student will serve as a discussion leader once.

MIDTERM EXAM: Our midterm exam will be on Feb. 14th. It will cover the material from the Guasti textbook. This will be our only exam this semester.

GROUP PRESENTATION: In the second half of the course, you will collaborate with a group and present a research paper or papers to the class. I will assist each group in finding relevant articles. Everyone in the group will participate in the preparation and presentation and everyone in the group will receive the same grade. Your presentation should take 20 minutes and we will devote 5 minutes to questions. You must use either a handout or a PowerPoint presentation. The handout/PowerPoint will contain:

- Your names
- The date of the presentation
- The titles and authors of the articles
- The main points of the articles
- The important data from the article that illustrates the points being made
- The main conclusions of the articles
- Your assessment of the conclusions

You will be graded on the clarity of the presentation (including the handout/PowerPoint).

FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL: A 2-page typed proposal for your final paper is due on March 26th. The proposal will introduce your topic, explain why this topic is interesting/relevant for child language syntax & morphology, and list references.

FINAL PAPER: You will write a final paper on a topic of your choice. It will be a literature review on a relevant topic of interest regarding child language syntax and morphology. The topic will be related to the material covered during the semester.

The paper will be graded for presentation of a coherent thesis, evidence to support the thesis, pertinent details of studies, integration of research results where possible (i.e., do not just present research paper summaries one after the other), and a conclusion. You may of course also use what you've learned in class and from the text to formulate your ideas. A paper proposal will be due a few weeks before the paper is due. The paper should be 8-10 typed pages (double spaced) and include integrated discussion of 4 related research papers.

ATTENDANCE

The lectures will be organized around the topics discussed in the readings, and I may at times depart from the readings, omitting, expanding upon, or taking issue with certain material. Regular attendance is therefore very important, as is class discussion. While I will not be taking attendance, in my experience poor attendance almost always results in poor grades (and it will certainly result in a lower participation mark). **You are responsible for any material you miss if you miss class, so please do not ask me or the T.A. to recreate lessons you have missed during office hours.**

LATE ASSIGNMENTS, PAPERS, MISSED EXAMS

Late assignments will not be accepted for credit (including the final paper), and no make-up exams will be given without a valid, well-documented excuse (i.e. illness, family emergency, etc.).

EVALUATION

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| Homework Assignments (best 6 out of 7) | 30% |
| Participation: | |
| General Class Participation | 5% |
| Discussion Group Leader/Discussion questions | 5% |
| Midterm Exam | 20% |
| Group Presentation | 10% |
| Final paper proposal | 5% |
| Final paper | 25% |

GRADING SCHEDULE

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|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| A+ = 97-100 % | B+ = 85-88% | C+ = 74-77% | D+ = 62-66% |
| A = 92-96 % | B = 81-84% | C = 70-73% | D = 58-61% |
| A- = 89-91 % | B- = 78-80% | C- = 67-69% | F = 0-57% |

BLACKBOARD

We will be using the Blackboard facility in this class. Announcements, homework, and other important information will be posted on the class site. Be sure to check it regularly. You can access class information on-line at: <https://blackboard.ucalgary.ca>. Some announcements may be distributed via email. Make sure that your correct address is listed on Blackboard, and be sure to check your email regularly.

Preliminary schedule of readings and assignments (subject to probable revision)

| Date | Topic | Readings for next class |
|----------|---|----------------------------|
| Jan 8 | Introduction | (Guasti Ch. 1, A&L Ch.1) |
| Jan 10 | Review of Carnie-style GB Theory | (Guasti Ch. 4) |
| Jan 15 | The Emergence of Syntax | |
| Jan 17 | The Emergence of Syntax (Homework 1 assigned, due Tues. Jan 22) | (Guasti Ch. 5) |
| Jan 22 | Null Subjects in Early Languages | |
| Jan 24 | Null Subjects in Early Languages (Homework 2 assigned, due Tues. Jan 29) | (Guasti Ch. 6) |
| Jan 29 | Acquisition of Wh-Movement | |
| Jan 31 | Acquisition of Wh-Movement (Homework 3 assigned, due Thurs. Feb 7) | (Guasti Ch. 7) |
| Feb 5 | Acquisition of NP-Movement | |
| Feb 7 | Acquisition of NP-Movement | |
| Feb 12 | Acquisition of NP-Movement | |
| Feb 14 | MIDTERM EXAM | (A&L Ch. 4) |
| Feb 19 | READING WEEK – NO CLASSES | |
| Feb 21 | READING WEEK – NO CLASSES | |
| Feb 26 | Theoretical Approaches to Language Acquisition | |
| Feb 28 | Theoretical Approaches to Language Acquisition | (A&L Ch. 5) |
| Mar 5 | Inflection | |
| Mar 7 | Inflection (Group Presentation 1) (Homework 4 assigned due Mar 12) | |
| Mar 12 | Inflection | (A&L Ch. 6) |
| Mar 14 | Simple Syntax (Group Presentation 2) (Homework 5 assigned due Mar 21) | |
| Mar 19 | Simple Syntax | |
| Mar 21 | Simple Syntax (Group Presentation 3) | (A&L Ch. 7) |
| Mar 26 | Movement and Complex Syntax | [FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE] |
| Mar 28 | TBA (Homework 6 assigned due Apr 2) | |
| Apr 2 | Movement and Complex Syntax | |
| Apr 4 | Movement and Complex Syntax (Group Presentation 4) (Homework 7 assigned due Apr 11) | |
| Apr 9 | Group Presentations 5-6 | |
| Apr 11 | Group Presentations 7-8 | |
| Apr 16 | Group Presentations 9-10 | |
| April 18 | FINAL PAPER DUE by 4pm | [FINAL PAPER DUE] |

GENERAL COURSE/UNIVERSITY INFORMATION FOR ALL STUDENTS

LINGUISTICS STUDENT ADVISING

For any questions regarding the undergraduate or graduate program in linguistics, the organization of your program, or the selection of courses, contact the appropriate advisor as follows:

Undergraduate Advisor Dr Robert Murray SS 824 lingadv@ucalgary.ca

FACULTY of ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING and STUDENT INFORMATION

The Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (PIC) is the overall headquarters for undergraduate programs in the Faculty of Arts. The key objective of this office is to connect students with whatever academic assistance that they require. The PIC is located in the Social Sciences Building (SS 102), please contact them by phone 220-3580, or email artsads@ucalgary.ca, or visit the website <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate>.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (SSC). Degree advisors assist undergraduate students in planning their overall degree programs along with providing broad educational planning, learning support, assistance with academic difficulties, academic program guidance, writing support, success seminars and peer support. The SSC is on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library, you can contact them at 220-5881, by email success@ucalgary.ca, or visit their website <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/>.

For registration issues, contact Enrolment Services who will also be able to help you with questions about fee payments, awards, financial aid, admissions questions, visiting and exchange students, open studies, transcripts, deferred exams. Enrolment Services are in the MacKimmie Library Block, Room 117, or you can contact them at 403-210-ROCK [7625] or visit their website <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/>.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodation. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. **You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.**

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY ACT (FOIP)

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act was enacted by the Alberta Legislature on June 1, 1994. The Act is intended first of all to allow any person the right of access to the records in the custody and under the control of a public body although this right is subject to limited and specific exceptions. The Act also includes a strong right to privacy component, allowing individuals to control the manner in which a public body collects personal information, to control the use that a public body may make of the information, and to control the disclosure of that information by a public body. It also allows individuals the right of access to personal information about themselves held by a public body and the right to request corrections to that information. For more information on FOIP, visit the website <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>, or contact Jo-Anne Munn Gafuik at 403-220-3602 or by email munngafu@ucalgary.ca

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course, when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

1. the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test);
2. parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author; ;
3. the whole work (e.g. an essay) is copied from another source; and/or

4. a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Students are often encouraged to work together in preparing homework assignments, but check with your instructor beforehand. However, unless noted otherwise in writing, students must write up their own answers for submission of the assignment. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism.

Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence. Possible penalties for plagiarism include: failing the assignment, failing the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion. Any student who voluntarily and consciously aids another student in the commission of plagiarism is also guilty of academic misconduct.

For more information on academic misconduct and related UofC regulations please consult the Student Misconduct pages in the on-line University Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY POINTS

The University of Calgary is committed to creating a safe and healthy living and learning environment. The health and safety of our employees, students and the general public are the highest priority of the University of Calgary's Emergency Management Program. During times of emergency, Assembly Points have been identified across campus. These areas have been selected as they are large enough to hold a significant number of people and will provide an evacuated population access to washroom facilities and protection from the elements. Assembly points are also designed to establish a location for information updates:

- from the emergency responders to the evacuees; and
- from the evacuated population to the emergency responders.

Please familiarize yourself with the following:

Emergency Assembly Points: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>
Emergency Instructions: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/node/28>

SAFEWALK INFORMATION

Twenty four hours a day and seven days a week, Safewalk volunteers walk people safely to their destination on campus. This service is free and available to students, staff and campus visitors. Requesting Safewalk volunteers to walk with you is easy:

- Call 403-220-5333 (24 hours a day/seven days a week, 365 days a year)
- Use the Help Phones (they are not just for emergencies)
- Approach an on-duty Safewalker and request a walk

For more information, contact the Safewalk main office at 403-220-4750, by email safewalk@ucalgary.ca or visit their website <http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

The Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) in partnership with the University of Calgary offers students a key advocacy resource to assist in addressing concerns and issues they encounter at the University with the Student Ombuds Office.

Students in undergraduate programs, contact the Student's Union in the MacEwan Student Centre, Room MSC 251, at 403-220-6551, by email arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, or visit their website <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/>.

The Student Ombuds Office offers a safe place for undergraduate and graduate students of the University of Calgary to discuss student related issues, interpersonal conflict, academic and non-academic concerns, and many other problems. The office is in the Admin. Building, Room A166, or you can contact them at 220-6420, by email ombuds@ucalgary.ca, or visit the website <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>.