Purpose

Language is one of the most complex abilities that humans possess. Paradoxically, children seem to acquire language easily while adults often struggle to learn it. The purpose of this seminar is to examine why. Two central perspectives will frame the course are: (1) whether language is a separate, innate, cognitive system, or (2) whether language is a reflection of general cognitive and social processes. To explore this issue, evidence from several different sources of language use and development will be considered. These include: (1) typical & atypical language acquisition, (2) deafness, language, and thought; (3) brain development, brain damage, and language; (4) second language acquisition; and (5) animal "language".

Objectives:

The objectives of the course are to understand:

(1) the nature of language and its relation to cognition;

(2) the theoretical arguments concerning language and its development;

(3) the relationship between these arguments and the empirical evidence;

(4) how to critically evaluate these claims; and

(5) the role of converging lines of evidence in supporting the theories.

Academic Honesty. All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines, which have been accepted by the University. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines. Those adjudged to have committed such conduct shall be subject to the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

Students with Disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Required Books & Readings:

1. Child Language, Matthew Saxton

2. Most article readings are available on-line on Sakai. A few articles will need to obtained through the UF library website.
**Requirements:**

1. **Exams:** Three exams (50%). The exams will be primarily short answer, essay, and multiple choice.

   *Exam dates are tentative and are subject to change.*

2. **Critical Reaction Papers:** (15%). Two critical reaction papers (4-5 pages) on selected topics. Each paper should be 4-5 double-spaced typed pages and are due approximately 1 week after they are assigned. Possible topics will be given out twice during the semester, based on issues discussed in class.

3. **Research Review Paper:** (20%). A 10-12 page research review of the empirical and theoretical issues considering any topic in language development. **Due Friday Nov. 30.**

4. **Class Participation:** (15%). Class format will be both discussion & lecture. Students are expected to *fully* participate in class discussions by reading the assigned articles and chapters.

   Each student must lead a Powerpoint presentation and discussion of one of the research articles. This should be done with a partner. These articles are designated by an “*” and students will sign up for them. Students should prepare discussion questions to give to the class before the assigned article is to be presented.

   Participation grades will be based on presentation, pattern of attendance, and contributions to class discussion.

   PowerPoint copies of the notes will also be available online after a section is completed. DO NOT RELY ON THESE NOTES EXCLUSIVELY—IF YOU MISS CLASS YOU WILL MISS IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

**Grades:** Grades will be assigned on a standard scale, although a curve is possible.

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Test and paper grades will be available online at [http://lss.at.ufl.edu/](http://lss.at.ufl.edu/)
CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE

**Aug. 22-24** Introduction to the Psychology of Language
Saxton, Chapter 1

**Aug. 27-Aug. 31** Critical Periods in Language Learning
Saxton, Chapter 3


**Sept. 3** Labor Day

**Sept. 5-10** Foundations of Language: Speech Perception & Prelinguistic Communication
Saxton, Chapter 5


**Sept. 7-12** Lexical Semantics: Words & Thoughts
Saxton Chapter 6


**Sept. 14-Sept. 21** Acquiring Words: Constraints or Culture


of gaze strategy to crack the code of language? Child Development, 68, 48-57.

**Sept. 24** EXAM #1

**Sept. 26-Oct. 1 Overview of Grammars & Grammatical Development**

**Oct. 3-8 Acquisition of Grammar: Nativistic Approaches**

Saxton, Chapter 8


**Oct. 10-17 Acquisition of Grammar: Cognitive Approaches**

Saxton, Chapter 9


**Oct. 19-24 Brain & Language**


**Oct. 26 Exam # 2**

**Oct. 29-Nov. 7 Dissociations Between Language and Cognition**


Nov. 9 Homecoming Holiday

Nov. 12 Veterans Day Holiday

**Nov. 14-19 Language in Impoverished Circumstances**


**Nov. 21-23 Thanksgiving Holiday**

**Nov. 26-30 Animal Communication and Language**

*Saxton, Chapter 2*


**Nov. 30 Paper Due**

**Dec. 3. Conclusions and Review**

*Saxton, Chapter 10*

**Dec. 5 Exam 3**