

ePsy 630 **Theories of Child Language Acquisition**
Winter 1993

Professor: Dr. Ron Channell, 128 TLRB, 378-6457 (office), 225-1526 (home).

Office Hours: 8:30 - 10, 2:30-4:30 T. & Th., or by appointment (call my extension and leave (your) name, number, and message).

Course Overview

This course discusses

- 1) Traditional grammatical description of child language
- 2) Current major theories & models of language acquisition
 - a. Government-Binding theory/Parameter setting
 - b. Learnability theory
 - c. the Competition & PDP models
- 3) Theories of syntactic analysis of child language samples
 - a. LARSP
 - b. Lahey's C/F, DSS

Readings (in sequence; *optional)

Traditional-Descriptive Grammar

Crystal, Fletcher, & Garman (1989). *The grammatical analysis of language disability* (2nd ed.). London: Cole and Whurr. {pp. 43-56}

*Morenberg, M. (1991). *Doing grammar*. New York: Oxford University Press.

*Greenbaum, S., & Quirk, R. (1990). *A student's grammar of the English language*. London: Longman.

Government-Binding theory/Parameter setting

Cook, V. J. (1988). *Chomsky's universal grammar: An introduction*. New York: Basil Blackwell. {Chapters 1-3}

Leonard, L. B., & Loeb, D. F. (1988). Government-binding theory and some of its applications: A tutorial. *Journal of Speech & Hearing Research*, 31, 515-524.

*Sells, P. (1985). *Lectures on contemporary syntactic theories*. Stanford: CSLI. {Chapter 2} and Cook (1988) {Chapter 4-6}

Learnability theory

Pinker, S. (1988). Learnability theory and the acquisition of a first language. In Kessel, F. S. (Ed.) *The development of language and language researchers: Essays in honor of Roger Brown*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. {Chapter 6}

Pinker, S. (1987). The bootstrapping problem in language acquisition. In

- MacWhinney, B. (Ed.) *Mechanisms of language acquisition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. {Chapter 12}
- *Pinker, S. (1989). Resolving a learnability paradox in the acquisition of the verb lexicon. In Rice, M. E., & Schiefelbusch, R. (Ed.s). *The teachability of language*. Baltimore: Brookes. {Chapter 1}

Competition & PDP models

- MacWhinney, B. (1987). The competition model. In MacWhinney, B. (Ed.) *Mechanisms of language acquisition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. {Chapter 8}
- Bates, E., & MacWhinney, B. (1987). Competition, variation, and language learning. In MacWhinney, B. (Ed.) *Mechanisms of language acquisition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. {Chapter 6}
- MacWhinney, B. (1989). Competition and Teachability. In Rice, M. E., & Schiefelbusch, R. (Ed.s). *The teachability of language*. Baltimore: Brookes. {Chapter 2}
- MacWhinney, B. (1989). Connectionism as a framework for language acquisition theory. {Chapter 4}
- *Rumelhart, D. E., & McClelland, J. L. (1987). Learning the past tenses of English verbs: Implicit rules or parallel distributed processing. In MacWhinney, B. (Ed.) *Mechanisms of language acquisition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. {Chapter 7}

Language Sample Analysis

- Crystal, Fletcher, & Garman (1989). *The grammatical analysis of language disability* (2nd ed.). London: Cole and Whurr. {Chapter 4}
- Crystal, D. (1982) *Profiling linguistic disability*. London: Whurr. {Chapter 2}
- Lahey, M. (1988). *Language disorders and language development*. New York: MacMillan.
- Lee, L. L. (1974). *Developmental sentence analysis*. Evanston: Northwestern U. Press.

Examinations

We'll have two exams and a final exam. The exams will be "closed book/ closed note." Exams will be essay type, calling on you to write one or more paragraphs per question. A single question may have several parts, such as asking for brief definitions of several related words. The relative weight of each question will be given. Essay-type questions are scored with 0 - 4 points, based on my rating of its correctness, completeness, and clarity. I will divide all score totals by the highest possible exam score. This division yields a percentage which will represent the point value recorded for the exam; each exam is thus worth a possible 100 points. Unless you give me written evidence of serious

illness, death, etc., late exams are subject to -15% per day penalty.

The final exam will be given Tuesday, April 18. It will consist of the same type of questions as the exams and will be worth a possible 100 points. University policy does not permit early finals and requires incompletes to be given for make-up finals.

Paper

Write a tutorial paper reviewing and explaining one of the three explanatory acquisition theories more completely than we cover that theory in class. Writing a paper on some other contemporary theory of child language acquisition is negotiable. The paper is due Thursday, March 18 at 1 pm and is worth a possible 50 points.

Class Participation

Complete the assigned reading before each class to be ready to teach the class on a topic or topics. I will select students to present and discuss part of each days readings.

I expect attendance and class participation. No unexcused absences are allowed; more than one such absence during the semester will cause grade lowering of one step per two absences. If you can't attend this class you should not be enrolled for it. Borrowing notes is a nuisance to other students and is a poor substitute for your own encoding and discussion of class material. Hire a babysitter for your children; don't bring them to class. Eating and drinking in class is okay except for noisy or odiferous things such as Corn Nuts or Fritos. Sleeping in class or privately conversing with a friend is not permitted.

Semester Grading

Semester grades will be based $\geq 90\%$ on the exams & paper and $\leq 10\%$ on class participation (which includes class preparation and discussion, pop-quizzes on assigned reading, and contributory attendance). No exam scores will be dropped. The grading scale used is: 95-100% A, 90-94% A-, 87-89% B+, 83-86% B, 80-82% B-, 77-79% C+, 73-76% C, 70-72% C-, 67-69% D+, 63-66% D, 60-62% D-, 59% & below E. No extra credit is possible.

Calendar

January

F 15	Last day to drop classes without receiving a "W"
M 18	Martin Luther King Holiday (no classes held)

February

T 4	Exam I about now
M 8	Last day to drop classes for academic reasons
M 15	President's Day Holiday (no classes held)

T 16 Monday classes held (not Tuesday classes)

March

T 9 Exam II about now

April

T 13 Last day of Winter '93 classes

T 20 Final Exam

Supporting References

Miller, J. F. (1981). *Assessing language production in children: Experimental procedures*. Baltimore: Univ. Park Press.

Pinker, S. (1984). *Language learnability and language development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.