ASLP 630 Theories of Child Language Acquisition  
Winter 1998

Professor: Ron Channell PhD, 128 TLRB, 378-6457 (office), 225-1526 (home).
Office Hours: 8:30-9:30 T. & 1:15-3:50 T.Th., or by appointment (call my extension and leave (your) name, number, and message), or drop by.

Course Overview
This graduate course exists to study theories of the processes that people use to learn language(s). I see the central tasks in language acquisition as being:
  a. to know the uses of language: requesting, telling, clarifying, persuading, being sarcastic, and so on.
  b. to isolate lexicals from the "stream" of spoken speech
  c. to link lexicals and lexical sequences to meaning (i.e., to concepts or knowledge)
  d. to sequence lexicals into conventional utterances
  e. to conventionally pronounce lexicals and utterances
This class focuses on (b), (c), and (d). We will approach the study of these tasks using empirical, clinical, and theoretical methods.

Textbook and Reading Schedule
Brazil, David (1995). A grammar of speech. Cambridge: Oxford University Press. In this book, Brazil (/bræ zl/) raises a number of claims integrating pragmatics, prosody, and syntax that, if true, could radically influence language assessment and intervention. We will understand and examine these claims.

  Jan 8 (thursday): intro, chapter 1, appendix
  Jan 13 (tuesday): chapters 2, 3, 4, 5                  Jan 15 (thursday): chapters 6, 7
  Jan 20 (tuesday): chapters 8, 9, 10, 11              Jan 22 (thursday): chapters 12, 13
  Jan 27 (tuesday): chapters 14, 15, 16                Jan 29 (thursday): chapters 17, 18
  Feb 3 (tuesday): chapters 19, 20

Other Major Reading
Lahey, M. (1988). Language disorders and language development. New York: MacMillan. We will understand Bloom & Lahey’s model of language acquisition, achieve high interrater reliability on using their analysis, and compare, contrast, and integrate their model with Brazil’s.

Class Participation
Complete each day’s assigned reading or exercise before class to be ready to present and discuss it. In class, I will mainly ask questions.

There are some pragmatic details that probably hold true for most professors and most classes but, at the risk of being less-than-subtle or redundant, I’ll mention them here. I expect attendance and class participation. If you can’t attend this class you should not be enrolled for it. Hire a babysitter for your children; don’t bring them to class. Watching the class from the observation hall does not count as attending the class because you can’t participate. Borrowing notes is a nuisance to other students and is no substitute for your own encoding and discussion of class material. 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 totally clueless.

Research Papers
We will do at least two papers; one will be a research report on some aspect of Brazil’s theory and the other will be a language sample analyzed using Bloom & Lahey’s methods.
Exams

We will have a midterm exam and a final; the final will be comprehensive and count twice as much as the midterm. Exams will probably be closed book & note, and will consist of essay questions. Unless you give me written evidence of serious illness, death, etc., late exams are subject to -15% per day penalty.

The grading of essay questions is always somewhat subjective. Here's how I do it: I first read all answers to a particular question. I usually then re-read the answers, laying them out spatially on a table from best to worst, left to right, based on my assessment of its correctness, completeness, and clarity. Then I decide how good (on a scale of 0 up to 4) the best answer is and, on the same scale, how poor the worst answer is. After assigning these answers their amounts, I return spatially to the best answer and diminish the point ratings given to answers as I move from left to right.

Honor Code

I expect you to adhere to the Honor Code. Too many qualified people are not admitted to BYU because of enrollment ceilings to allow a space to be wasted on someone who isn't keeping their commitment to obey the Code. Remember that the code applies to your behavior both on- and off-campus. Contents of exams are confidential and you must not share them until the exam has been passed back and is thus public information. This would include giving hints as to which areas to study or not study as well as reciting or paraphrasing specific questions from the exam.

Semester Grading

Over the past 15 years this class's GPA is about 3.3 (between B and B+). Semester grades will be based ≥ 80% on the exams and papers and ≤ 20% on class participation (which includes class attendance & preparation, involvement in discussion, and any exercises I assign). 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.