



LING 355 – Language Acquisition 1
Winter 2020 – TR 8:35 am - 9:55 am, STBIO S3/3

1. General information

Instructor:	Natália Brambatti Guzzo
Office hours:	Tuesdays and Wednesdays 11:00 am – 12:30 pm, or by appointment
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2. Course Description

This course provides an overview of properties of learner language (phonology, morphology, syntax) and the stages of acquisition that learners go through. The course also covers explanations of how language is acquired (theories of language acquisition). Students will come to understand the nature of learner grammars, and will be introduced to data analysis and to a variety of methodologies for investigating child language. The main focus is on first language acquisition, including normal and atypical development.

3. Prerequisite

LING 201 (Introduction to Linguistics), or permission of instructor.

4. Required textbook

[G] Guasti, Maria Teresa. 2016. *Language acquisition: the growth of grammar*. 2nd edition. MIT Press.

5. Format

This course comprises lectures, discussion of data, team work and readings. Slides, homework assignments and additional readings will be posted on MyCourses. Slides will be posted after class.

6. Evaluation

2 homework assignments	20% (10% each)
Midterm test	20%
Project	20%
Final exam	40%

No opportunities for extra credit are anticipated.

6.1 Homework Assignments

HW assignments will consist of problem sets and (short) essay questions.

For the HW assignments, group work is ****highly**** encouraged. Groups should have a maximum of three students, but each student must turn in his/her own assignment.

Assignments must be submitted through MyCourses by the indicated time/date.

Notify the instructor in advance if for some reason you or your group are not able to use MyCourses to turn in your assignment.

6.2 Project

Students will write a critical review of an article on L1 acquisition. The article must be about a specific phonological, morphological or syntactic property (but not necessarily a topic that was covered in class). In the critical review, students must demonstrate that they have clearly understood the article's (i) objectives, (ii) hypotheses, (iii) methodology, and (iv) results. Students must also point out possible shortcomings of the article, or ways to expand the proposed analysis.

The project may be done individually, or in groups of up to three students.

The project will be written up as an essay of \approx 1500 words.

The project is due on March 31st (6:00 pm) and may be submitted by a single group member through MyCourses.

Suggestions of readings for the project will be provided in February.

6.3 Midterm test and final exam

The midterm test is open book. The final exam is ****not**** open book. Study guides and reviews will be provided prior to the midterm and the final exam.

The midterm test will be done in class.

Date of the final exam: TBA.

6.4 Late assignments and missed tests

Late assignments will not be accepted unless the student has a certified medical excuse (or another reasonable excuse with relevant documentation). No make-up tests will be given to anyone who does not have a certified medical excuse (or reasonable excuse with relevant documentation).

7. McGill Policy Statements

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).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/fr/fairplay).

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.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., slides, handouts, conference materials, assignments, quizzes, exam questions, answer keys, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

7.1 Useful links

[Office for Students with Disabilities](#)

[McGill Writing Centre](#)

[Student Wellness Hub](#)

[International Student Services](#)

[Office for Sexual Violence, Response, Support and Education](#)

8. Readings

[G] is the required textbook for this course. The following articles/book chapters are additional readings. They will be posted on MyCourses.

[D] Demuth, Katherine. 1996. The prosodic structure of early words. In Morgan, James and Katherine Demuth (eds.). *Signal to syntax: bootstrapping from speech to grammar in early acquisition*, pp. 171–184. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

[dV-R] de Villiers, Jill and Tom Roeper. 2016. The acquisition of complements. In Lidz, Jeffrey, William Snyder and Joe Pater (eds.). *The Oxford handbook of developmental linguistics*, pp. 279–309. Oxford University Press.

[L] Lust, Barbara. 2006. How can we tell what children know? Methods for the study of language acquisition. In *Child language: acquisition and growth* (ch. 7). Cambridge University Press.

[W] White, Lydia. 2003. Ultimate attainment: the nature of the steady state. In *Second language acquisition and Universal Grammar* (ch. 8). Cambridge University Press.

9. Schedule (subject to change)

Date	Topic	Reading	Eval
Jan 7	Introduction		
Jan 9	Basic concepts	G (ch 1; 1.1–1.2, 1.5)	
Jan 14	Methodologies in child language research	L	
Jan 16	Early speech perception and production	G (ch. 2)	
Jan 21	Phonological bootstrapping	G (ch. 3; 3.1–3.3)	
Jan 23	Early prosodic structure	D	
Jan 28	Lexicon and meaning	G (ch. 3; 3.4–3.6)	
Jan 30	Emergence of syntax (verbal domain)	G (ch. 4)	HW1 out
Feb 4	Emergence of syntax (verbal domain)	G (ch. 4)	
Feb 6	Emergence of syntax (nominal domain)	G (ch. 5; 5.1–5.2)	HW1 due
Feb 11	Syntactic movement (passives)	G (ch. 7)	
Feb 13	Syntactic movement (passives) + review	G (ch. 7)	
Feb 18	Midterm (in class)		
Feb 20	Syntactic movement (negation, questions, relative clauses)	G (ch. 6; 6.1–6.4)	
Feb 25	Syntactic movement (negation, questions, relative clauses)	G (ch. 6; 6.1–6.4)	
Feb 27	Sentence interpretation (complement clauses)	dV-R	
Mar 2-6	Reading week – No classes		
Mar 10	Sentence interpretation (pronoun binding)	G (ch. 8)	HW2 out
Mar 12	Sentence interpretation (quantification, scalar implicatures)	G (ch. 9; 9.1–9.2)	
Mar 17	Theories of language acquisition	G (ch. 1; 1.3–1.4; 1.6)	HW2 due
Mar 19	Theories of language acquisition	G (ch. 1; 1.3–1.4; 1.6)	
Mar 24	Acquisition in atypical conditions	G (ch. 10)	
Mar 26	Acquisition in atypical conditions	G (ch. 10)	
Mar 31	Bilingualism	G (ch. 11)	Project due
Apr 2	L2 acquisition	W	
Apr 7	Bilingualism + L2 acquisition		
Apr 9	Final review		