

**PSY 333P, *Child Language*, Spring 2010**

**Meeting time & location:** MWF 11 a.m. – 12 noon, SEA 2.108  
**Unique #** 43875

**Professor:** Dr. Catharine Echols  
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**Office hours:** Mon 12-1 p.m., Wed 4-5 p.m., Fri 10-11 a.m. & by appointment

**Text:** Hoff, E. (2009). *Language Development* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

**Readings:** The text will be supplemented by articles that will be available from Abel's Copy Shop, 715D W. 23rd St. (in the bottom floor of the University Towers garage). These articles are also part of the required reading for the course.

**Course description:** The course will be an advanced introduction to language acquisition. It will cover various theoretical perspectives on language development as well as current knowledge and ongoing research in the areas of phonology, semantics, syntax and pragmatics. Topics of current interest, such as language and the brain, bilingualism, and language/thought interactions also will be discussed. The course is a substantial writing component course.

**Prerequisites:** The Psychology Department will drop all students who do not meet the following prerequisites: (a) PSY 301 with a C or better; (b) PSY 418 (or an equivalent listed in the course schedule) with a C or better; (c) Upper-Division standing (60 hours completed)

**Course objectives:**

1. To understand current theories of the process of language development.
2. To acquire a basic knowledge of research methods and issues related to the study of language development.
3. To develop your academic skills, particularly the ability to think and read from a critical perspective and to express your ideas in written form.

**Course requirements:**

**(1) Written assignments:** This class is a “substantial writing component course.” The writing assignments will include 3 term papers and 5 short “reaction papers.” In addition, you will be required to turn in a brief description of the topic for the papers.

**(a) Papers.** The primary writing assignment will consist of three interrelated papers. The first paper will be a summary of several research articles describing a specific aspect of language development. That paper should be about 3-5 type-written pages in length. For the second paper, you will expand the first paper, making it into a critical analysis of that particular area of research; it should be about 5-7 pages. Finally, in the third paper, you will build on your second paper by proposing a study to investigate an issue raised in that earlier paper (you will only need to *propose* a

study; the assignment does *not* involve actually carrying out a study). Thus, you will be incorporating the feedback received on your first paper into the second paper, as well as adding to it, and you will again incorporate feedback to produce the third paper. The length of that paper (including the revised section) should be about 8-10 pages. Detailed handouts on the assignment will be passed out during the semester. We encourage you to meet with us for help in coming up with a topic for your paper and in thinking about ideas for a study. We will also be happy to talk with you if problems or questions arise while you are writing your papers. The first paper will account for 10% of your course grade and the second and third each will account for 15%.

**Late term paper policy.** *Papers not turned in at the start of class on the day they are due will lose 2 points. For each additional day (ending at 5 p.m.), you will lose 2 more points.*

**(b) Reaction papers.** You will be asked to write 6 short papers (2-3 paragraphs each) responding to readings for the course. The goal is to provide an opportunity for thinking critically about current issues in language development, and expressing those thoughts in writing. Papers will be graded on a 10-point scale. We will be seeking your personal reactions to the reading, not simply a description of the content. Due dates for the reaction papers are listed on the class schedule (late papers will be penalized). The 6 papers, together, will be worth 12% of your grade. You will be getting a separate hand-out describing in greater detail what we expect from these “reaction papers.”

**(2) Exams:** There will be two midterms and one final examination. The exams will consist of multiple choice and short essay questions. Exam questions will be taken from lectures and from the text and readings. The midterms will each account for 14% and the final will account for 20% of your grade in the course. The final will focus on the latter part of the course; it will be similar to the midterm exams, although given during the scheduled final exam time. Probable exam dates are listed in the syllabus. Exam grades will be posted on Blackboard and you will be permitted to look over your exams during office hours; however, exams will not be returned to you.

**Exam make-up policy.** No make-up exams will be given without a medical excuse unless you have talked with Dr. Echols, have a very good reason for not being able to take the exam on the scheduled date and have explicitly been granted permission by her to take a make-up. If you have a real conflict, it is to your advantage to talk with Dr. Echols as early as possible (although she is making no promises that a make-up will be allowed regardless of when you talk with her). Make-up exams will differ from the regular exams and may be more difficult. We reserve the right to require verification both of medical and other excuses for requesting make-ups. If you miss any exam without a verifiable medical or personal excuse, you will be given a 0 for the exam.

**Attendance & preparation:** Class meetings will follow a lecture/discussion format. Attendance is strongly recommended. Lectures will include material that cannot be found in the book or assigned readings. The exams will include questions from all three sources. You will get more out of the lecture if you have done the readings ahead of time, and you will be better able to contribute to the discussion. If you miss a class, it will be your responsibility to find out from a classmate what happened in class (*including* handouts, assigned readings, announcements and lecture content). Do not, however, ask the TA or professor for notes from missed classes (exceptions may be made in the case of a long absence for a verifiable medical reason). *Please avoid being late to class as it is disruptive and you may miss important announcements.*

**Grading:** The final grades for the course will be assigned as follows: At the end of the semester, scores will be weighted so that the three exams will account for 48% of the final grade, the combined scores for the reaction papers will account for 12%, and the three papers will account for 40%. Letter grades will then be calculated as follows: Scores that are 90% or above will be an “A,” scores between 80-89% will be a “B,” scores between 70-79% will be a “C,” and scores between 60-69% will be a “D.” This course will use the plus/minus grading system. If you have questions about the grading policy, please talk to the professor or the TA.

**Academic integrity:** Academic integrity is an integral and essential part of the educational process. Because dishonesty harms the individual, other students and the integrity of the University, scholastic dishonesty of any type WILL NOT be tolerated. The penalty for academic dishonesty of any type is a grade of F and referral to the Dean of Student's Office.

**Students with disabilities:** The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY. I am available to discuss any appropriate academic accommodations that might be necessary for this course.

**Office hours:** The tentative office hours of the professor and TA are printed on the syllabus; any changes in office hours will be announced in class. Feel free to drop in during those times for assistance in understanding lecture materials or readings, to figure out what you may have done wrong on a test, or for help with writing assignments. You can also ask general questions about language development, the field of psychology or such issues as preparing for graduate school. If you can not come in during office hours, you can make an appointment by talking with us after class, calling us at the numbers listed on the syllabus or sending e-mail. We will try to schedule extra office hours before exams and/or paper due dates.

### Tentative Schedule

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topic/Assignments</b>	<b>Reading</b>
Jan 20-22	Intro/overview	
Jan 25-29	Intro to the study of language development <b>Library Information Session on Jan. 29; meet in PCL 1.124</b>	Hoff Ch. 1
Feb 1-5	Biological bases/critical periods/language universals Paper Topic due Feb. 1; RP 1 due Feb. 5	Hoff Ch. 2 (pp. 39-71) Senghas
Feb 8-12	Development of communicative competence RP 2 due Feb 15	Hoff Ch 3 (pp. 89-104) Baldwin
Feb 15-19	Infant abilities/phonological development Paper 1 due Feb. 19	Hoff Ch 4
Feb 22-24	Phonological devt cont'd	
Feb 26	EXAM 1	
Mar 1-5	Lexical development	Hoff Ch 5 Gleitman
Mar 8-12	Lexical devt/Language, culture & cognition RP 3 due Mar 8	Hoff Ch 7 Bowerman & Choi
Mar 15-19	SPRING BREAK	
Mar 22-26	Syntax & Morphological devt Paper 2 due Mar 26	Hoff Ch 6 Chomsky; Piaget
Mar 29-Apr 5	Syntax – alternate accounts RP 4 due Apr 2	Saffran et al.; Bates & Elman
April 7	EXAM 2	
Apr 9-12	Bilingualism	Hoff Ch 8 Werker
Apr 14-16	Later devts in communicative competence RP 5 due Apr 16	Hoff Ch 3 (pp. 104-131) Happé
Apr 19-21	Language in the school years	Hoff Ch 9
Apr 23-30	Language in special populations Final Paper due Apr 30	Hoff Ch 10 Goldin-Meadow
May 3-7	Language in other species; Summing up RP 6 due May 5	Hoff Ch 2 (pp. 72-86) Tomasello
May 14, Friday, 9 a.m. to 12 noon	FINAL EXAM	

THIS SCHEDULE IS TENTATIVE. There will some adjustment in reading assignments and topics as the semester progresses. Adjustments will be announced in lecture. You should rely on those announcements, in addition to the syllabus, for reading assignments and due dates.