



**Instructor**  
**Meetings**  
**Office Hours**

Prof. Kristen Syrett     [kristen.syrett@rutgers.edu](mailto:kristen.syrett@rutgers.edu)  
Tuesdays and Fridays 9:50-11:10 pm  
Wednesdays 3-5 pm and by appointment  
I will send you the zoom link once we schedule your appointment.

**Prerequisite**

615:201 (Introduction to Linguistic Theory)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course focuses on first language acquisition and development in children.

- We provide an overview of child language development in the major subfields of Linguistics: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.
- We explore the cognitive, biological, environmental, and social-cultural influences on linguistic knowledge; analyze the major competing theoretical approaches to language acquisition and development; cover experimental methodologies used to assess linguistic competence and performance; and review the empirical data used to identify developmental milestones, distinguishing between linguistic competence and performance.
- We briefly extend this 'typical baseline' into bilingualism, second language acquisition, and language acquisition and development in special populations.

**COURSE LEARNING GOALS**

In this course you will

- be able to identify the linguistic developmental milestones from infancy through the early school years
- understand the ways in which cognitive, biological, environmental, and social-cultural factors interact in the process of language development
- become acquainted with methodologies used in the field of child language research on different populations
- review empirical data used to plot language development in children
- become familiar with the major theoretical frameworks and proposals to account for language acquisition and development
- communicate related issues to a 'lay audience' such as parents and teachers to promote education, a connection between the classroom and the world, and a broader understanding of the process of language development

**GRADING SCALE**

You will be graded according to the following scale.

A:	≥90
B+:	85 to 89
B:	80 to 84
C+:	75 to 79
C:	70 to 74
D:	60 to 69
F:	<60

I will issue Warning grades for students who appear to be struggling with attendance, participation, and/or academic performance.

### ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

- You will be assessed according to four main components, which figure into your course grade.
- While I want to challenge you, I also value being fair, and generous in assessing student effort.
- I will not debate grades once assigned. Office hours are not for that purpose.

#### 1. Attendance and participation 10%

- You must attend every class, and actively participate. Please see the rubric in Canvas. Our class will be much more lively and enjoyable, and you will learn a LOT more if you ask questions, contribute to discussions, and support each other!

#### 2. Weekly discussion posts 20%

- Each week, you are required to participate in the designated discussion on our course website. The format of these posts may vary from week to week; instructions will accompany individual discussion.
- Discussion posts are due no later than Sunday at 10 pm. No exceptions! Posts must be substantive, be at least one paragraph in length, and follow the instructions. You may start your own thread or add to another.
- There will be 12 discussion posts; the lowest two will be dropped.

#### 3. Group projects (n=2) 40%

- There will be **two group projects** weighted equally. I will assign groups of 5 or fewer.
- The purpose of these projects is to help you to learn how to communicate what you've learned in class to "laypeople" outside of class in a clear and engaging way, and to make connections between the course content and the people and world around you. I will provide you with instructions for each.
- Grades will be assigned individually. You will indicate to me what you think your grade and the grade of your group members will be based on your respective contributions, and I will take this into account.
- Components for the group projects (20% each project)
  1. Topic, outline, proposed format 5%
  2. List of 5 annotated references (APA format) 5%
  3. Rough draft 5%
  4. Final project 5%

#### 4. Final exam (cumulative) 30%

### READINGS

- All readings can be found in the designated Canvas modules. These have been carefully chosen across various textbooks and language acquisition/development resources, listed below.
  - Clark, Eve. (2018). *First language acquisition*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (CLA)
  - Golinkoff, Roberta, & Hirsh-Pasek, Kathy. *How babies talk*. Plume. (GOL-HP)
  - Guasti, Maria Teresa. *Language acquisition*. Cambridge: MIT Press. (GUA)
  - Hoff, Erika. (2014). *Language development*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. (HOFF)

- Jusczyk Peter. (2000). *The discovery of spoken language*. Cambridge: MIT Press. (JUS)
- Saxton, Matthew. (2017). *Child language*. London: Sage. (SAX)
- Tomasello, Michael, & Akhtar, Nameera. (2000). Five questions for any theory of word learning. In Marc Marschark (Ed.), *Becoming a word learner* (pp. 179-186). Oxford: Oxford University Press. (TOM-AKH)
- Woodward, Amanda. (2000). Constraining the problem space in early word learning. In Marc Marschark (Ed.), *Becoming a word learner* (pp. 81-114). Oxford: Oxford University Press. (WOOD)

## CLASS PROTOCOLS

### Academic Integrity

- You are expected to know and follow the Rutgers University policy on Academic Integrity:
- <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>
- Cheating, plagiarizing, presenting someone else's work as your own, and not properly acknowledging another student's contribution **will not be tolerated**. All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. Making available notes or other materials from this course, especially in return for compensation, is also discouraged.

### Attendance and Absences

- You are expected to attend and participate in every class and actively participate. If you anticipate that you will be absent for a class whatever reason, you must notify me in writing via email as soon as possible AND report your absence here:
- <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> (Links to an external site.)
- [\(Links to an external site.\)](#) Not every reported absence is excused. You will still be responsible for the readings for that day, and you should coordinate with a classmate to cover the material covered in that class.
- Students who miss more than an occasional class (for whatever reason, excused or otherwise) should consult with the Dean of Students. It will be extremely difficult to perform successfully in the class if you miss multiple classes. Your groups also depend on you for the group activities. University policy excuses absences due to religious observance or participation in Rutgers-approved activities, and permits students to make up work missed for these circumstances. If this applies to you, please let me know at least a week in advance.

### Civility and Professionalism

In this class, we will be supportive of each other. All course participants will be guided by professionalism, civility, and inclusion. We will welcome diverse opinions, backgrounds, and perspectives. We will reflect respect for each other in our classroom discussions and in any online correspondence.

### Disability Services and Support

I am very happy to accommodate students who have a documented disability and a letter of accommodation. Please provide this to me at the start of the semester. You are responsible for coordinating taking your exam with the Office of Disability Services well in advance of the designated exam date (see course schedule). Find out more here:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations>

### Extra Credit

- Some faculty and graduate students in the Department of Linguistics (including me and my students) do experimental research on language. Some of this research is on child language and language acquisition and development, so it is directly relevant to the content of this course. You have the opportunity to raise your final grade by up to 2 % points through participation in a Linguistics experiment. You will get 1 point of credit for every half hour of experimental participation. Experiments are offered through the Linguistics department experiment management system (sona) here: <http://rutgerslinguistics.sona-systems.com/>
- Towards the beginning of the semester, your name and email will be added to the experiment system. You will be issued an anonymous id to participate in experiments through this system. Once Linguistics experiments are posted, you can sign up online.
- Any student enrolled in a Linguistics undergraduate course is eligible to participate in Linguistics experiments, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, language status, or impairments, disorders, or disabilities. You cannot be denied participation for any of these reasons. If you are taking multiple Linguistics courses that allow for experimental participation to count towards extra credit, you are responsible for making sure you have assigned the credit correctly through the experiment system online.

### Office hours

- Office hours are there for you! Please do not hesitate to set up an appointment with me to talk during office hours. Use this time to go over the material, talk about grad school plans, help organize your notes, figure out effective study strategies, or whatever would support you.
- Appointments can be one-on-one or in small groups.
- This is also a good time for us to get to know each other, and for me to learn more about your style of communication (which may help when I am reading your writing), or your career plans (which may help if you ask me for a reference letter later on!).

### Other Rutgers Resources

Academic Calendar

<https://scheduling.rutgers.edu/scheduling/academic-calendar> (Links to an external site.)

Counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

<http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/> (Links to an external site.)

Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance

[www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)

Date	Topic	Readings / Assignment
<b>Tues 1/19</b>	1 <i>Introduction</i>	after class: SAX ch1, CLA ch 1
<b>Fri 1/22</b>	2.1 <i>Developmental Milestones</i>	GUA ch 2 pp. 47-53 HOFF ch 1 pg. 20
<b>Tues 1/26</b>	2.2 <i>Developmental Milestones</i>	GOL-HP ch 2-8 JUS pp. 174-185
<b>Fri 1/29</b>	3.1 <i>Theories of Language Acquisition and Development</i>	TOM-AKH HOFF pp. 20-21 GUA ch 1 pp. 8-19 SAX ch 10
<b>Tues 2/2</b>	<b>No class</b>	
<b>Fri 2/5</b>	3.2 <i>Theories of Language Acquisition and Development</i>	JUS ch 2 pp. 17-27
<b>Tues 2/9</b>	4.1 <i>Methods of Studying LA and LD</i>	GUA ch 2 pp. 24-28 HOFF ch 1 pp. 21-26 HOFF ch 3 pp. 74-89 JUS appendix
<b>Fri 2/12</b>	4.2 <i>Methods of Studying LA and LD</i>	
<b>Tues 2/16</b>	5.1 <i>The Role of the Adult</i>	GOL-HP pp. 25-37 HOFF ch 3 pp. 97-106
<b>Fri 2/19</b>	5.2 <i>The Role of the Adult</i>	
	<i>In-class work on Project #1 (convene for class then split into breakout groups to get started)</i>	
<b>Tues 2/23</b>	6.1 <i>Acquisition of Phonology</i>	HOFF ch 4 GOL-HP pp. 23-25 GUA ch 2
<b>Fri 2/26</b>	6.2 <i>Acquisition of Phonology</i>	CLA ch 14 JUS ch 4 pp. 48-58 <b>Project #1 (a) due</b>
<b>Tues 3/2</b>	7.1 <i>Acquisition of Morphology</i>	CLA ch 8 HOFF ch 6 pp. 170-184 <b>Project #1 (b) due</b>
<b>Fri 3/5</b>	7.2 <i>Acquisition of Morphology</i>	<b>Project #1 (c) due</b>
<b>Tues 3/9</b>	<i>In-class work on Project #1 (convene as class, then split into breakout groups to finalize project)</i>	<b>Project #1 FINAL (d) due by 10 pm</b>
<b>Fri 3/12</b>	<b>Group Project #1 Showcase</b>	
	<b>Rutgers Spring Break!</b>	

Date	Topic	Readings / Assignment
<b>Tues 3/23</b>	8.1 <i>Acquisition of the Lexicon</i>	HOFF ch 5 JUS pp. 10-11 SAX ch 6
<b>Fri 3/26</b>	8.2 <i>Acquisition of the Lexicon</i>	GUA ch 3 pp. 55-80 WOOD
<b>Tues 3/30</b>	9.1 <i>Acquisition of Syntax</i>	HOFF ch 6 184-203 GUA ch 3 90-97
<b>Fri 4/2</b>	9.2 <i>Acquisition of Syntax</i> <i>In-class work on Project #2 (convene for class then split into breakout groups to get started)</i>	
<b>Tues 4/6</b>	10.1 <i>Acquisition of Semantics</i>	CLA ch 6
<b>Fri 4/9</b>	10.2 <i>Acquisition of Semantics</i>	
<b>Tues 4/13</b>	11.1 <i>Acquisition of Pragmatics</i>	<b>Project #2 (a) due</b> CLA ch 12
<b>Fri 4/16</b>	11.2 <i>Acquisition of Pragmatics</i>	<b>Project #2 (b) due</b> HOFF ch 7
<b>Tues 4/20</b>	12.1 <i>The Critical Period Hypothesis + Biology, Cognition, Memory, and Language Acquisition</i> <i>In-class work on Project #2 (convene as class, then split into breakout groups to finalize project)</i>	<b>Project #2 (c) due</b> GUA ch 1 pp. 20-21 JUS pp. 200-204 <b>Project #2 FINAL (d) due by 10 pm</b>
<b>Fri 4/23</b>	<b>Group Project #2 Showcase</b>	
<b>Tues 4/27</b>	13 <i>Bilingualism and L2 Acquisition</i>	CLA ch 14 HOFF ch 9
<b>Fri 4/30</b>	14 <i>LA and LD in Special Populations</i> <i>Wrap up, Exam review Last day to earn extra credit</i>	HOFF ch 11
<b>Wed 5/12</b>		<b>Final Exam Due by 11 am!</b>