Purpose

Language is one of the most complex abilities that humans possess. Paradoxically, children seem to acquire language easily while adults often struggle to learn it. The purpose of this seminar is to examine why. Two central issues will frame the course. First, is whether language is a separate, innate, cognitive system, or a reflection of general cognitive and social processes. Second, in what ways does language impact thinking. To explore this issue, evidence from several different sources of language use and development will be considered. These include: (1) typical & atypical language acquisition, (2) deafness, language, and thought; (3) brain development, brain damage, and language; (4) second language acquisition; and (5) animal "language".

Objectives:

The objectives of the course are to understand:

(1) the nature of language and its relation to cognition;

(2) the theoretical arguments concerning language and its development;

(3) the relationship between these arguments and the empirical evidence;

(4) how to critically evaluate these claims; and

(5) the role of converging lines of evidence in supporting the theories.

Academic Honesty. All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines, which have been accepted by the University. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines. Those adjudged to have committed such conduct shall be subject to the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

Students with Disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Required Books & Readings:

1. *Child Language*, Matthew Saxton

2. Most article readings are available on-line on Canvas. A few articles may need to be obtained through the UF library website.
Requirements:

1. **Exams**: Three exams (60%). The exams will be primarily short answer, essay, and multiple choice.  
   
   *Exam dates are tentative and are subject to change.*

2. **Research Review Paper**: (20%). A 10-12 page research review of the empirical and theoretical issues considering any topic in language development and/or the impact of language on cognition. **Due Apr. 9**

3. **Class Participation**: (20%). Class format will be both discussion & lecture. Students are expected to **fully** participate in class discussions by:
   
   - Reading the assigned articles.
   - Contribute online comments regarding the articles by **Midnight** the day before class (typically Thursday)
   - Contribute to in-class discussion/exercises.
   - **Lead 1 Powerpoint presentation and discussion** of one of the research articles. This should be done with a **partner**. These articles are designated by an “*” and students will sign up for them. Students should prepare discussion questions to give to the class **before** the assigned article is to be presented.

Participation grades will be based on presentation, pattern of attendance, and contributions to class discussion.

PowerPoint copies of the notes will also be available online **after** a section is completed. **DO NOT RELY ON THESE NOTES EXCLUSIVELY—IF YOU MISS CLASS YOU WILL MISS IMPORTANT INFORMATION.**

**Grades**: Grades will be assigned on a standard scale, although a curve is possible.

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Test and paper grades will be available online Canvas
**CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE**

**Jan. 9-11 Introduction to the Psychology of Language**

Saxton, Chapter 1


**Jan. 16-18 Lexical Semantics: Words & Thoughts**

Saxton Chapter 6


**Jan. 23-25 Metaphors and Concepts**


**Jan. 30- 31 Acquiring Words: Constraints or Culture**


**Feb. 6. EXAM #1**

**Feb. 8 Overview of Grammars & Grammatical Development**

Feb. 13-15 Acquisition of Grammar: Nativistic Approaches

Saxton, Chapter 8


Feb. 20-22 Acquisition of Grammar: Cognitive Approaches

Saxton, Chapter 9


Feb. 27-Mar. 1 Critical Periods in Language Learning

Saxton, Chapter 3


Mar. 13-15 Brain & Language


Mar. 20 Exam # 2
Mar. 22–Mar. 27  Language Learning in Unusual Circumstances


Mar. 29-Apr. 3  Animal Communication and Language

Saxton, Chapter 2


Apr. 5-10  Bilingualism


Apr 12-17  Language and Cognition

