I. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to provide students with breadth and depth of knowledge in the area of language development. The course begins with a discussion of the developmental milestones and processes of the different areas of language (i.e., early communicative skills, phonology, lexicon and semantics, grammar, pragmatics and discourse). The second half of the course covers the main theoretical debates around the major factors influencing language development (e.g., biology, cognition, and socio-cultural context). The course is also intended to introduce students to a major international network of child language researchers (CHILDES), teaching them the standardized transcription conventions (CHAT conventions), and programs used for analysis (CLAN programs).

Language development has become an enormous field. This course is by necessity selective and might not cover all students’ areas of interest (e.g., language disorders, development of sign language). In these cases, students are encouraged to use their final project as a way to learn more about their specific areas of interest.

II. READINGS

Required readings include classic and contemporary writings in the area of language development. In reading the required texts, students are encouraged to reflect upon why the classic contributions assigned are considered as innovative for their time.

A. Required Texts available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore


B. Additional Required Readings available on Blackboard

Bialystok (2001). Bilingualism in Development (Chapters 1 and 3). New York: Cambridge University Press


### III. Requirements

There are four requirements for this course. Students are highly encouraged to raise any issues in class or individually with the professor. They are also encouraged to seek additional help from the professor. Students are expected to complete all requirements. Failure to do so will result in a 0 averaged into the final grade. Students must contact the professor before the due date if they are unable to complete any of the requirements listed below.

**A. Weekly Assignments**

The first requirement, reading and active class discussion, is designed to ensure a lively and effective discussion of the assigned readings. In-class contributions will be recorded in the following way: 0, 1 or 2. A score of 0 is given when there is no participation in class discussions (0 is equivalent to an F or a 50); a score of 1 is given to minimal, or inappropriate contributions to the discussion (equivalent to a C or a 70), and a score of 2 is given to contributions that provide evidence of having read and thought about the material (equivalent to an A or a 95).

**B. Transcription/analysis exercise**

As a second requirement, students will need to audiotape, transcribe and analyze ONE language sample. Group work is encouraged! The purpose of this assignment is to introduce students to CHAT and CLAN conventions. Students will need to visit the CHILDES website at: [http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/](http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/)

One computer-printed write-up of the analysis needs to be turned in for the whole group along with a clean transcript.
C. Take-home essay examination
As a third requirement, students will complete one take-home essays exam. Answers should not exceed 5 to 7 pages, double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins. Students will be given three questions in advance; they will choose to answer ONE of the three essays. In answering their chosen questions, students are required to supplement their class readings with recent research studies.

D. Final project
The fourth requirement is to design in small teams an empirical research study. The purpose of this assignment is two-fold: (a) allow students to explore an area of child language research that is of special interest to them, and (b) provide a vehicle for students to demonstrate and apply the knowledge gained throughout the semester to a focused topic in child language research.

Students are reminded that the study needs to be simple and small in order to be completed within the semester. Students are encouraged to use their own data or any of the English or non-English databases available through CHILDES. These data can be downloaded from the Internet (http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/).

Under special circumstances, students will be allowed to submit individual projects, as well as research proposals instead of research projects.

On or before November 6, students are required to submit their research question and plan for analyses to be discussed in class on November 6.

Final manuscripts need to include:

• **Introduction**: Review relevant literature leading to research questions and/or hypotheses.

• **Methods**: Provide a description of the proposed methodology, including participants, procedure, coding schemes, and data analyses. Use CHILDES conventions to cite database used.

• **Results**: Provide a description of the results whether significant or not.

• **Discussion**: Interpret your results in light of past research (e.g., what do they mean, significance)

• **Appendix**: As part of the Appendices, group projects must include a one-page summary of the role and contribution made by each member of the group.

Final individual or group submissions should not exceed 20 double-spaced pages (including title page, references, tables and appendices). APA guidelines must be adhered at all times. Students not familiar with APA writing style are encouraged to purchase the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th Edition).
IV. EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis for Evaluation</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Contribution to Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Participation in Class</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcription Assignment</td>
<td>September 25</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take home essay-exam</td>
<td>November 6</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Research Project (includes mini proposal, oral presentation and written manuscript)</td>
<td>Variable; last day to turn in final manuscript December 4</td>
<td>50% (10% mini proposal, 15% presentation &amp; 25% for final written manuscript)</td>
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Assigned letter grades will reflect the following evaluation of work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade (Numerical Equivalent)</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (99-95)</td>
<td>Truly outstanding, exceptional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A- (94-90)</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+ (89-86)</td>
<td>Very good work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (85-83)</td>
<td>Good work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- (82-80)</td>
<td>Work has major flaws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below B- (79-)</td>
<td>Work is flawed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: No late papers will be accepted at any point, without previous consultation with the professor.

V. OUTLINE OF COURSE CONTENT

Week 1 (Sept. 4): Research in Language: Introduction to CHILDES.


ASSIGNMENT: Transcription exercise assigned.

Week 2 (Sept. 11): Main issues around the language development


**CLASS DISCUSSION: Transcribing and analyzing language samples**

**Week 3 (Sept. 18): The Context**


**ASSIGNMENT: Take-home essay question handed to students.**

**Week 4 (Sept. 25): Speech Perception**

Clark, E. (2003). Starting on language. *First language acquisition*


**ASSIGNMENT: Collection & discussion of transcription exercise**

**Week 5 (Oct. 2): Early Lexical Development**

Clark, E. (2003). Early words. *First language acquisition*


**Week 6 (Oct. 9): Acquiring Structural Aspects of Language: Early Development**


Clark, E. (2003). Modulating word meaning. *First language acquisition*
Brown, R. The study of Adam, Sarah and Eve. *First language acquisition: The essential readings.*


Brown, R. The order of acquisition. *First language acquisition: The essential readings.*

**Week 7 (Oct. 16): Acquiring Structural Aspects of Language: Later Development**


Clark, E. (2003). Combining clauses: More complex constructions *First language acquisition*


**Week 8 (Oct. 23): Conversational & Discourse Skills**

Clark, E. (2003). Honing conversational skills. *First language acquisition*

Clark, E. (2003). Doing things with language. *First language acquisition*


**Week 9 (Oct. 30): Acquiring multiple languages and language varieties**


Bialystok (2001). *Bilingualism in Development* (Chapters 1 and 3). New York: Cambridge University Press


**Week 10 (Nov. 6): Language and Biology**


**ASSIGNMENT:** Take-home essay exam due in class. Students are also expected to be ready to discuss in class their final projects (e.g., research questions & methods).

**Week 11 (Nov. 13): Language and Cognition**


**Week 12 (Nov. 20): Language and Socio-Cultural Context**


**Week 13 (Nov. 27):** Student Presentations of Final Projects

**Week 14 (Dec. 4):** Student Presentations of Final Projects

**ASSIGNMENT:** Final project write-up due in class.

**NOTE:** Tuesday Dec. 11 runs on a Thursday schedule, therefore Dec. 4 is the last day of class.