IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
CmDis/Ling 471: Language Development
TR 3:40 - 5:00 PM; FALL 2006; PEARSON 2131

INSTRUCTOR: H. S. Venkatagiri, Ph. D.  
OFFICE HOURS: TWR 11 AM – 12 Noon
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By appointment at other times
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DESCRIPTION: The course provides a theoretical and factual account of how children acquire their first 
language.

OBJECTIVES: After the successful completion of this course, you will be:
1. Familiar with the basic components of speech and language.
2. Aware of the genetic, anatomical, physiological, and cognitive bases of speech and 
language acquisition.
3. Able to describe the major milestones in the acquisition of English as a first 
language.
4. Acquainted with selected models of first and second language acquisition.
5. Familiar with the factors that may affect first language acquisition.
6. Aware of the theory and major scientific findings related to the development of 
reading and writing.


Web Site: https://webct.ait.iastate.edu/ISUtools/webhtml/login.html. Course grades are 
posted to the web by your five-digit ISU ID number as shown at left. Course overheads, 
tutorials, and study guides are also found on the web site.

GRADING: Grading is on a percentage basis as follows: (Total points: 320)
A = 94 - 100%  
A- = 90 - 93
B+ = 86 - 89  
B = 82 - 85
B- = 78 - 81
C+ = 74 - 77  
C = 70 - 73
C- = 66 - 69
D+ = 62 - 65  
D = 58 - 61
D- = 54 - 57

TEST FORMAT: The tests will consist of short-answer and/or multiple-choice questions. Short-answer 
questions require you to write a word, sentence or a paragraph for each question. Do write in 
complete sentences and do not use nonstandard abbreviations. Tests will cover both the 
assigned chapters in the textbook and your class notes and tutorials posted to the web page.
The final examination will cover material since the last test (approximately 40 points), all of 
your class notes up to the last test (approximately 30 points) and questions from the student 
papers (approximately 30 points).

ASSIGNMENT 1 Write a short paper summarizing an article related to the development of speech, language, 
reading, or writing. Select an article from a list of articles posted to the course web site. Be 
sure to follow instructions for selecting an article found on the course web site. The article 
summary is due on October 17. Instructions on how to submit the article are found on the 
course web site (There is no need to submit a paper copy).
The paper should be about two to three pages in length, double-spaced. At the end of the 
paper, include 2 multiple-choice questions that highlight the important ideas and facts 
presented in the paper. Each question should have five options (a, b, c, d, and e) with the 
correct answer starred. Some of the questions will be used in Test #2 and other questions in 
the final examination (after editing, if necessary).

Prepare the summary in such a way that a reasonably informed and interested lay person 
(such as the parent of a child), with no particular knowledge of linguistics and language 
development, should be able to understand it. This means that all concepts and terms that are 
not common knowledge should be explained.
The papers will be presented in class by its writer and will be posted to the course web site 
for other students in the class to read.
Evaluation criteria for the paper are: (1) content and organization (clear, accurate, comprehensive, and readable); (2) spelling, grammar, punctuation, timely submission, and adherence to all of the instructions included here; (3) class presentation (organized, clear, and accurate; use of overheads or multimedia is encouraged); (4) answering questions after the presentation (shows evidence of full understanding of the article and any background materials necessary to fully understand it; I will ask questions; other students may also ask questions). This assignment carries 40 points.

ASSIGNMENT 2

Read the chapters in the book preferably BEFORE the dates indicated in “Course Outline and Calendar” below. Answer the open-ended (not the multiple-choice) review questions found at the end of each chapter. Answers need not be lengthy but should be correct and complete. Use complete, grammatically correct sentences and do not use nonstandard abbreviations in your answers. The due date for this assignment is December 5. This assignment will earn you up to 30 points even as it prepares you for the tests!

CLASS ATTENDANCE:

Throughout the semester, there will be several unannounced extra credit in-class activities. Each activity is worth two points. If you miss an in-class activity for whatever reason, it cannot be made up later. In addition, exceptional class participation in the form of asking questions, answering questions, and raising points for discussion may earn you up to 4 extra credit points.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Please refrain from reading newspapers and other reading materials or making private conversations during class lectures. You are always most welcome to address any questions and comments to the instructor or the entire class.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

If you have a disability that requires special arrangements, please bring a SAAR form from the Disability Resources office (294-7220; 1076 Student Services Building) specifying the accommodation(s) you will need.

NOTE:

The course calendar, assignments, and the number of tests and the points and dates for tests are subject to change (with notice!).

COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

**August**

22  Course Description, calendar; tests, and grading; What is communication? (Chapter 1)
24, 29  What do children have to master when they acquire a language? (Chapter 1 continued)
31  What is the genetic basis of language acquisition?

**September**

5, 7  How do we speak and hear? (Chapter 2 continued)
12, 14  What is the neurological basis of language acquisition? (Chapter 2 continued)
19, 21, 26  What are the developmental bases of language acquisition? (Chapter 3)
28  Test # 1 (75 points; Bring a #2 pencil to the class)

**October**

3, 5  Do infants babble their way into language? (Chapter 5)
10, 12  How do toddlers tame language? (Chapter 6)
17, 19  Is language “child’s play” to preschoolers? (Chapters 7 and 8)
24, 26  Warning! School-age children use “adult language”!! (Chapter 9)
31  Class presentations

**November**

2, 7  Class presentations (continued)
9  Test # 2 (75 points; Bring a #2 pencil to the class)
14, 16  Is language “simply” acquired, developed, or learned? (Chapter 4 and 10)

☺ Thanksgiving Recess ☺

28, 30  How do children learn to read?

**December**

5  How do children learn to write?
7  Review and conclusion (Bring a #2 pencil to class for course evaluation on December 7; your suggestions and comments are greatly valued!)
14  Comprehensive final examination (2:15:4:15 PM; In the same room where we meet)
(Tentative) (100 points; Bring a #2 pencil to the class)