



**Instructor**  
**Hybrid Format**  
**In-person Meetings**

**Prof. Kristen Syrett** [kristen.syrett@rutgers.edu](mailto:kristen.syrett@rutgers.edu)

Once a week in person, otherwise asynchronous online

**Fridays 10:20-11:40 pm** (required!)

**Murray Hall Rom 208 CAC** (location updated AGAIN as of 2/3/25!)

**Student Support Hours**  
**Prerequisite**

Fridays 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm by appointment (in person or via Zoom)  
615:201 (Introduction to Linguistic Theory), one core B 615 class

### 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
- be able to describe 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. If you receive a Warning grade, let's talk!

## ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

- You will be assessed according to four main components, which figure into your course grade.
- These assessments are your opportunities to consolidate what you have learned and take it to the next level. These should be opportunities for you to recognize your progress in learning and meeting the course objectives. I value being fair, and generous in assessing student effort. I want you to succeed and love this topic!
- When you see a grade in Canvas, you are welcome to check for accuracy relative to the rubric for that assessment. I will not debate grades once they are assigned. Student support hours are not for that purpose. Let's use this time productively!

### 1. Attendance and participation 10%

- Active engagement is essential to your success in this class! **You must attend every scheduled class, and actively participate. You must watch the assigned videos and respond to the video prompts.** Ask questions and share contributions using the variety of platforms available to you! 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!
- I have created a weekly **"Learning Support Quick Check"** located [here](#). This is an entirely optional form that you can complete each week as you go through the modules, watch the videos, and do the readings. Use this form to assess yourself and/or provide me with feedback about how I can best support you and your learning for the topic.

### 2. Weekly Assignments 20%

- **Each week, you will complete an assignment on our Canvas website.** The format of these posts will vary from week to week; instructions and a rubric will accompany individual discussion. These should be enjoyable and invite you to think and learn!
- There will be 12 posts. The lowest two will be dropped.
- Your posts must be substantive, and follow the instructions. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.
- **Weekly Assignments are due no later than Wednesday at 11 pm.** There are no exceptions unless approved by me in advance. Life happens! Email me in advance and get approval if something urgent or pressing arises compromising this deadline. I don't expect this to be a common occurrence. Posts remain open until 11:59 pm (after the deadline), to allow for the possibility of *partial credit for late assignments* (-1 pt) as necessary.
- The goal of these posts is for you to apply what you are learning, and really understand the material. If you submit your post in advance of the deadline, and I realize that you have missed the mark, or there is something else you could do to improve your, then I may reach out to you to give you the opportunity to improve your post. I may also do this upon grading the posts after the deadline. Whether or not you do further work to improve your grade is entirely up to you. There will always be a strict time limit on turnaround for invited revisions.

### 3. Group project 40%

- The group project is your chance to work with each other and creatively bring together what you have learned in the class to convey it to a lay audience.
- The purpose of this project is to help you to learn how to communicate what you've learned to an audience outside of class in a clear, fun, and engaging way, and to make connections between the course content and the people and world around you. I will provide you with clear instructions and inspiration.
- You will work together in groups of 4 or 5.
- I will assign groups midway into the semester.
- The project will take place in 8 components, each worth 5 points (5% of your grade).

- (1)-(7) submitted and graded as a group, (8) submitted and graded individually:
- (1) Topic, proposed format, suggested division of labor, and timeline with associated responsibilities
- (2) List of 5 references with annotated summary with relevance to project, in APA format
- (3) Draft #1 – rough draft
- (4) Peer review and constructive critique of another group
- (5) Draft #2 – rough draft incorporating peer feedback
- (6) Presentation of final project
- (7) Draft #3 – Final (final!) project with summary of individual contributions
- (8) Reflection on personal contribution, group project experience and final project.

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

- The final exam is your chance to shine and show me and yourself how much you've learned in this class. It is the culmination of all of your hard work.
- If you have been attending classes, following the materials, meeting with me during student support hours, doing the Weekly Assignments, and have contributed actively to the group project, you have set yourself up for success on the final!

#### READINGS

- All readings can be found in the designated Canvas modules. I have carefully chosen these readings from various textbooks and resources. The lectures, posts, and final exam draw from these readings. They will also support your group project.
  - Clark, Eve. (2018). *First language acquisition*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1107143004 (CLA)
  - Golinkoff, Roberta, & Hirsh-Pasek, Kathy. *How babies talk*. Plume. 9780452281738 (GOL-HP)
  - Guasti, Maria Teresa. (2005). *Language acquisition*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 026207222X (GUA)
  - Hoff, Erika. (2014). *Language development*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. 1133939090 (HOFF)
  - Jusczyk Peter. (2000). *The discovery of spoken language*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 0262100584 (JUS)
  - Saxton, Matthew. (2017). *Child language*. London: Sage. 1446295621 (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. 0195130324 (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. 0195130324 (WOOD)

## CLASS POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS

### Academic Integrity

- You are expected to know and follow the **Rutgers University policy on Academic Integrity**: <http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/home/academic-integrity-policy/>
- 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. Making available notes or other materials from this course, especially in return for compensation, is also discouraged. Read more here: <http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/home/for-students/>

### Attendance and Absences

- **We're in this together, and I want you to succeed. Being present and active are preconditions for success. I'm always happy to talk and work with you.**
- **You are expected to attend class each Friday and actively participate in class, both in person and in the online components.**
- 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/>
- Please note: Not every reported absence is excused! Do not assume that because you have simply reported that you'll be absent or that you are facing challenges, there are no consequences. You will still be responsible for course content, and you should coordinate with a classmate to cover what was learned in that class. Do not simply stop attending or doing the work.
- Students who miss more than an occasional class (for any reason at all, excused or otherwise!) should consult with the Dean of Students. **It will be extremely difficult for you to perform successfully in the class if you miss multiple classes. Your groups also depend on you for the group project.**
- 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.
- Serious mental and physical health challenges may arise unexpectedly. Time management can be difficult. People make mistakes. I recognize all of this, and I understand. I will never ask you for a medical note (we're not allowed to!). At the same time, I will hold you to the highest standard of participation and engagement that you are able to provide. I expect for you to communicate with me about constraints impacting your attendance.

### Civility and Professionalism

In this class, we will be supportive and respectful of each other, and show each other grace as we learn together. All course participants will be guided by professionalism, civility, humility, and inclusion. We will welcome diverse opinions, backgrounds, and perspectives. We will demonstrate 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 (<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/common-forms>). You are responsible for coordinating taking your exam with the Office of Disability Services (<https://ods.rutgers.edu/>) well in advance of the designated exam date. Please coordinate with me the start of the semester to ensure we're on the same page about your 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.

### Student Support Hours

- These hours are there for you! Please actively take advantage of them. I enjoy setting aside this time to talk with you, because they help us get to know each other more, and allow me to learn how best to support you.
- Appointments can be one-on-one or in small groups.
- I invite you to use this time to go over the course content, help organize your notes, figure out effective study strategies, talk about post-bac or research plans—whatever would support you.
- This is also a good time 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>

Student Success Essentials

<https://success.rutgers.edu>

The Dean of Students

<https://studentsupport.rutgers.edu/>

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






<http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance

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

[See the syllabus on Canvas for a more extensive list of resources.]

WEEKLY FLOW

 <b>Friday</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ATTEND</b> in-person class sessions: intro to new topic or extensions of topic</li> <li>• <b>TO DO:</b> Group Project (GP) components</li> </ul>
 <b>Friday-Tuesday</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>TO DO:</b> Read assigned pages</li> <li>• Watch videos for new Module</li> <li>• Complete Playposit interactions along with videos</li> </ul>
 <b>Tuesday</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playposit interactions start to be reviewed and comments posted in Playposit</li> </ul>
 <b>Wednesday</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>TO DO:</b> Submit Weekly Assignment (WA)</li> </ul>
 <b>Thursday</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly assignments start to be graded, grades and comments posted on Canvas</li> </ul>

SCHEDULE

Module	Friday		Friday-Tuesday	Wednesday
	In-class	Group Project	Readings	Assignment
<b>1: Introduction</b>	<b>1/24</b>		<b>1/24-1/28</b>	<b>1/29</b>
			SAX ch1 CLA ch 1	Weekly #1
<b>2: Developmental Milestones</b>	<b>1/31</b>		<b>1/31-2/4</b>	<b>2/5</b>
			GUA ch 2 pp. 47-53 GOL-HP ch 2-8 JUS pp. 174-185 HOFF ch 1 pg. 20	Weekly #2
No class	2/7			
<b>3: Theories</b>	<b>2/14</b>		<b>2/14-2/18</b>	<b>2/19</b>
			TOM-AKH HOFF pp. 20-21 GUA ch 1 pp. 8-19 SAX ch 10 JUS ch 2 pp. 17-27	Weekly #3
<b>4: Methods</b>	<b>2/21</b>		<b>2/21-2/25</b>	<b>2/26</b>
			GUA ch 2 pp. 24-28 HOFF ch 1 pp. 21-26 HOFF ch 3 pp. 74-89 JUS appendix	Weekly #4
<b>5: The Role of the Adult</b>	<b>2/28</b>		<b>2/28-3/4</b>	<b>3/5</b>
		GOL-HP pp. 25-37 HOFF ch 3 pp. 97-106	Weekly #5	
<b>6: Phonology</b>	<b>3/7</b>	<b>3/7-3/11</b>	<b>3/12</b>	
		<b>Intro. to Group Project</b> HOFF ch 4 GOL-HP pp. 23-25 GUA ch 2 CLA ch 14 JUS ch 4 pp. 48-58	Weekly #6	
<b>7: Morphology</b>	<b>3/14</b>		<b>3/26</b>	
		<b>GP 1</b> CLA ch 8 HOFF ch 6 pp. 170-184	Weekly #7	
<b>Rutgers Spring Break 3/15-3/23</b>				

SCHEDULE

Module	Friday		Friday-Tuesday	Wednesday
	In-class	Group Project	Readings	Assignment
<b>8: Lexicon</b>	<b>3/28</b>	<b>3/28</b>	<b>3/28-4/1</b>	<b>4/2</b>
<b>Child Photo activity opens up.</b>		<b>GP 2</b>	HOFF ch 5 JUS pp. 10-11 SAX ch 6 GUA ch 3 pp. 55-80 WOOD	Weekly #8
<b>9: Syntax</b>	<b>4/4</b>	<b>4/4</b>	<b>4/4-4/8</b>	<b>4/9</b>
		<b>GP 3</b>	HOFF ch 6 184-203 GUA ch 3 90-97	Weekly #9
<b>10: Semantics</b>	<b>4/11</b>	<b>4/11</b>	<b>4/11-4/15</b>	<b>4/16</b>
		<b>GP 4</b>	CLA ch 6	Weekly #10
<b>11: Pragmatics</b>	<b>4/18</b>	<b>4/18</b>	<b>4/18-4/22</b>	<b>4/23</b>
		<b>GP 5</b> <b>Child Photo</b>	CLA ch 12 HOFF ch 7	Weekly #11
<b>12: Critical Period</b>	<b>4/25</b>	<b>4/25</b>	<b>4/25-4/29</b>	<b>4/30</b>
		<b>GP 6</b>	GUA ch 1 pp. 20-21 JUS pp. 200-204	Weekly #12
<b>13: Bilingualism and L2 Acquisition</b>	n/a	<b>5/5 (Monday!)</b>	<b>5/2-5/5</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Group Project Showcase</b>	<b>5/2</b>	<b>GP 7-8</b>	CLA ch 14 HOFF ch 9	
<b>14: Special Populations</b>	n/a		<b>5/2-5/5</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>5/5: Last day to earn extra credit via Linguistics experiment participation!</b>			HOFF ch 11	
<b>Rutgers Last Day of Classes 5/5, Reading Days 5/6-7</b>				
<b>Final Exam (in class) Wednesday May 14 8-11 am</b>				