Ling 248: Laboratory in Developmental Linguistics

Contact Information
Professor: Jeffrey Lidz
1417 Marie Mount Hall
301-405-8220
jlidz@umd.edu

Lab Manager: Tara Mease
0405 Marie Mount Hall
301-405-0518
taram@umd.edu

Course Description
Ling 248 is an individualized and collaborative research course aimed at developing skills for laboratory research in language acquisition. The particular objectives of the semester will vary by individual, though all participants have the goals of learning how developmental linguistic research is conducted and participating in the creation of new research findings in this field.

Ling 248 is the first in a two semester sequence in Developmental Linguistics with Ling 448 as the 2nd member of the pair. Ling 248 provides students with basic research skills which will enable them to engage more fully the theoretical context in which they occur, a primary goal of Ling 448. Registering for Ling 248 represents a commitment to taking Ling 448 as well.

Learning Outcomes
After completion of this course, students will
• Demonstrate an understanding of particular research questions being pursued in the Language Acquisition Laboratory.
• Demonstrate an understanding of the methods used to answer research questions in developmental linguistics, as well as which methods are best suited to answer particular questions.
• Gain experience in deploying research techniques (including all stages of carrying out a study, such as designing stimuli, recruiting participants, running participants, coding and interpreting data).
• Effectively communicate the logic of a research design and the interpretation of the results of a study both to other scientists and to the general public.
• Demonstrate an ability to collaborate and effectively communicate with members of a research team.

Expectations for Lab Work
• Respect the children and parents you interact with.
  - Communicate clearly and helpfully with parents in your interactions over the phone and in email.
  - Treat parents and children as important collaborators in your research activities.
  - If parents and children are not made to feel at home in the laboratory, we will not be able to conduct our research.
• Respect your lab mates. This means being friendly, cooperative, and open to providing and receiving constructive criticism, advice, and assistance.
• Be a good communicator.
• Focus on quality work, not quantity. It is more important to do your work carefully and double-check it than to do lots of work. Mistakes in the lab can be expensive, both in terms of resource utilization and data quality.
• Respect your time commitments. Once your hours are fixed for the semester, any deviations require prior communication with Tara. Those hours must be made up in a timely fashion.
• Take responsibility for your progress. If you are having trouble understanding your task or knowing what to do next, ask. Try to identify both what you do well and what you need help with.
• If there is assigned reading for the lab meeting, read it carefully and come to the meeting with questions and ideas.
• Training will continue throughout the semester.
Schedule of work
• Each research team will have a weekly meeting to discuss project background, project goals, weekly readings and project status. Project schedules will be determined by individual research teams and goals for the semester will be set by the team leader. Readings will be assigned weekly by team leaders and must be completed by the time designated by the team leader.
• Other lab schedule details should be arranged with Tara.

Lab Meetings
• We will meet twice weekly to focus on one study at a time, discussing the research goals, background, linguistic theory, results, data interpretations, and follow-up study options.
• The preview meeting for undergraduate students is Wednesdays 1-2pm, MMH 3416.
• The full lab meeting is Fridays 9:30-11:00am, MMH 1108.
• Presentations: Everyone will co-lead a lab meeting presentation, with the leader of the study that you are focusing on. The study team will prepare and present together.
  - Communicating about research will help enrich and deepen your understanding of the goals of the lab and the goals of developmental linguistics more generally. It is important to be able to explain the research to parents, family and friends, as well as other researchers.
• Students who have other classes scheduled during lab meeting times are excused, but should nonetheless make sure they understand the studies being discussed that week. Missing lab meetings does not excuse you from helping your team prepare their presentation.

Evaluation
• Grades: 25% lab meeting participation and presentation, 75% lab work, as listed below.
• We select students who we think will be motivated by the experience of working in the lab so we don’t expect your focus to be on grades. Factors we consider in giving grades are effort, attitude, quality of work, and participation over the course of the semester.
• By the end of the semester, you should be approved on each of the following, with case-by-case exceptions:
  - CITI & NIH certification
  - Informed consent
  - Activation calls
  - Scheduling calls
  - Running an appointment
  - Sign off after an appointment
  - Code a participant
  - Define the methods used in lab
  - Writing the board
  - Answering the phone
  - Opening & closing duties

Religious holidays
The University of Maryland’s policy provides that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs. Students shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. It is the student’s responsibility to inform Tara of any intended absences for religious observances within the first two weeks of the semester. All lab shifts that are missed due to religious observances must be made up. Please reschedule with Tara.

Students with Disabilities
If you have a physical disability or a learning disability, it is your responsibility to bring it to our attention at the beginning of the course. We will make every effort to accommodate your needs.