Ling 448: Advanced Laboratory Research in Developmental Linguistics

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Course Description
Ling 448 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.

Ling448 is the second in a two semester sequence in Developmental Linguistics, following Ling248. Ling448 enables students to develop and enhance the research skills they learned in Ling248 and to engage more fully the theoretical context in which they occur. Students in Ling448 will take on more responsibility for the research begun in Ling248. Your research project will be part of a larger research program, whose development spans multiple years.

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 ability to select, critically evaluate and apply research methods appropriate to questions in linguistic and psycholinguistic theory.
- Demonstrate an ability to evaluate empirical arguments in primary research articles in developmental linguistics.
- 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, in order to successfully develop an on-going research project.
- Produce a poster presentation reflecting the state of the research project at the culmination of the semester.

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.

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.
• 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.

Evaluation
• Grades: 25% lab meeting participation and presentation, 15% final poster presentation, 60% lab work, as listed below.
• Each student will produce a poster presentation, to be delivered in an open poster session during finals week, with participation from lab members in addition to linguistics graduate students and faculty who are not involved in the lab. Your poster presentation should explain the background, hypotheses and current status of your project, including results and interpretation, if these are available.
• 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.
• As in Ling248, you are expected to show mastery in each of the following laboratory responsibilities:
  - 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