SLS 750: SEMINAR IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
CHILDES & Learner Language

Wednesdays 3:00-5:50
Moore 155B (Faculty Development Lab) & Moore 105

Instructor: Lourdes Ortega
Contact information: Moore 585, 956-2707, lortega@hawaii.edu
Office hours: Mondays 12:30-3:30 or by appointment
(please use sign-up sheet on my office door or e-mail to schedule appointment first)

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Note: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; modifications are likely to be necessary and will be implemented as a result of students’ needs and classroom life.

Course Description

The goal of this 750 seminar is to learn to conduct research on learner language drawing on existing second language corpora and exploiting CHILDES as a resource for the analysis of second language development.

CHILDES (MacWhinney, 2000; http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/) can help address language development questions from a variety of theoretical perspectives. It offers analytical tools to study a wide range of developmental areas, including phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, narrative, early literacy, and discourse. CHILDES is widely used for the analysis of child language development but its enormous possibilities for the analysis of linguistic development by second language learners have not been sufficiently explored by the SLA community.

Here are some things to consider when developing ideas for a project for this seminar:

- Projects that focus on the analysis of already existing L2 corpora are encouraged
- Projects that involve collaborative research with other students are encouraged
- Projects focusing on any second language (not only English) are encouraged
- You don’t need to be constrained by type of data, topic, or theoretical orientation. For example, you could explore writing or speaking; lexical, morphosyntactic, or phonological development; and you can use theoretical lenses from interlanguage development, interaction, universal grammar, conversation analysis, genre analysis, and so on; finally, your purposes for the class project could be linked to other work you do on task-based interlanguage variation, assessment, classroom-based interlanguage needs analysis, measurement of interlanguage development, and so on.
Pre-requisite for this course: SLS 650 or consent of the instructor

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<tr>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
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<td>The goals of this seminar are:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. to explore theoretically cutting-edge questions about learner language</td>
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<td>2. to become conversant with capabilities and uses of CHILDES for the analysis of learner language</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. to develop a paper that extends some aspect related to goals 1 and 2, according to students’ background and their desired area of specialization</td>
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In the initial weeks of the semester, we will concentrate on advancing goal 1, with a view for students to begin formulating a specific project of interest. During the rest of the semester, we will concentrate on advancing goals 2 and 3.

Evaluation will be based on negotiated facilitation of class readings (related to goal 1) and lab sessions where students develop a series of CHILDES activities (related to goal 2) that eventually support the development of a final term paper reporting on some aspect of learner language and/or CHILDES (as related to goal 3).

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<th>Methods of Instruction</th>
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<td>The seminar will be conducted through a combination of:</td>
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<td>• student-led discussions of assigned readings</td>
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<td>• hands-on data analyses using CHILDES</td>
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<td>• informal lectures</td>
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<td>• regular progress reports on participants' work.</td>
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We will meet on Wednesdays, in the Faculty Development Lab (Moore Hall 155B) from 3:00-4:30 and in the regular classroom (Moore Hall 105) from 4:45-5:50. We will use the class email list sls750-l@hawaii.edu as a forum for communication outside of class.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Instructional Materials</th>
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<tr>
<td>Software and corpora: The CHILDES manual and the software (called CLAN) can be downloaded from the CHILDES website at no cost: <a href="http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/">http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/</a>. Several bilingual and L2 corpora are also available for use in the same website. I will make some of my learner corpora available for class use as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading packet: For purchase from Professional Image, 2633 S. King St. (close to King/University intersection). Call to check availability (phone: 973-6599).</td>
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Course Requirements and Grading

You will be expected to do the readings before each class meeting, to be fully prepared for class discussion, and to attend all class meetings. Please discuss with me openly and in advance any problems with class preparation or attendance that you may encounter during the semester and we'll try to find a solution.

I welcome email communication to deal promptly with any questions or queries that may rise as you work on the course. All assignments should be submitted both electronically and in hard copy.

Here is an overview of the requirements and how grading works:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Specifics</th>
<th>Grade reporting</th>
<th>Portion</th>
<th>% Course grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; preparation</td>
<td>Come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Perfect attendance is expected; <em>I reserve the right to lower grade if you incur more than one absence.</em></td>
<td>C/NC</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation of readings</td>
<td>Take responsibility for facilitating the discussion of some readings in class</td>
<td>C/NC</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hands-on CHILDES activities</td>
<td>Prepare and deliver activities that facilitate everyone’s learning of some aspects of CHILDES that you are interested in</td>
<td>letter</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographical search</td>
<td>Oral report due week 8</td>
<td>letter</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework &amp; proposal</td>
<td>Oral report due week 12</td>
<td>letter</td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Research paper</td>
<td>Final installment of the 750 paper is due May 12 (Tuesday) by 5:00pm (pls email submission plus put hard copy to be delivered in my box)</td>
<td>letter</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>letter</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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If your research involves human subjects (even if the corpus already exists!) and you think you may wish to present and/or publish this research later on, you will need to undergo a review with the UH Human Subjects Committee and Institutional Research Board’s (IRB) in order to attain the status “Exempt.” In practice this means that you will need to submit the *Declaration of Exemption Form*, which can be found at:


In addition, all corpora that have been are will be collected from students’ in HELP or ELI needs to be compliant with their research conduct policies:

- ELI: first read carefully the links under “Research in the ELI” at [http://www.hawaii.edu/eli/](http://www.hawaii.edu/eli/) and then contact the director, Kenton Harsch, at <kenton@hawaii.edu>
HELP: first read carefully the links under “Research at HELP”
http://www.hawaii.edu/eslhelp/?page=research and then contact the director,
Joel Weaver, at <joelw@hawaii.edu>

The letter graded assignments will be evaluated as follows:

A+ (100-96) Outstanding quality. The content coverage, research skills, and academic
writing/oral presentation qualities demonstrated are through, mature, and
sophisticated.

A (95-94) Excellent quality. The assignment product shows excellence in at least
two of three areas: content, research skills, academic writing/oral
presentation ability.

A- (93-90) Fair quality. The assignment product shows competent research skills,
good development of ideas, and satisfactory writing skills. It is, however,
towards the low side of quality given what is expected of graduate-level
work.

B+ (89-85) The assignment product is below what is expected of graduate work. It
shows only incipient research skills and/or minimally appropriate
writing/oral presentation skills.

Course Expectations

-Your grade in the course will be a combination of criterion-referenced and individual-
referred assessment. I will be looking at your semester-long progress regarding
research skills, adept presentation and academic writing skills, and development of
discipline-specific knowledge about CHILDES and learner language (the individual-
referred part of the assessment), and I will evaluate the extent to which you have
reached the learning objectives stated in this syllabus (the criterion-referenced part of the
assessment). I will not compare the quality of your performance to that of other students
in the class (i.e., I do not give grades by spreading student performances on a curve).

-The deadlines in our course exist to help you stay focused and improve your learning
processes. If you have reasonable reasons for asking for an extension on a deadline,
please immediately discuss it with me so we can negotiate a satisfactory solution.
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<tr>
<th><strong>Topics</strong></th>
<th><strong>Readings and assignments</strong></th>
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| **Week 1:** January 14 | Introduction to the course & CHILDES | Sokolov & Snow (1994)  
Myles (2005)  
Barlow (2005) [Chapter 14 of *ALL*] |
| **Week 2:** January 21 | Learner corpora: Elicitation & validity | *ALL*: Chapters 1-2  
| **Week 3:** January 28 | Lexical explorations with CHILDES | Hu (1994)  
Dóro (2007), Liu & Shaw (2001) |
| **Week 4:** February 4 | Interlanguage | *ALL*: Chapters 3-6 (Error Analysis, Obligatory Occasion Analysis, Frequency Analysis, Functional Analysis)  
Ortega (2009) |
| **Week 5:** February 11 | Grammar explorations with CHILDES | Housen (2002), Tono & Aoki (1998),  
| **Week 6:** February 18 | CAF: Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency | *ALL*: Chapter 7 |
| **Week 7:** February 25 | CAF explorations with CHILDES | Special Issue of *Applied Linguistics* (in press/2009):  
Norris & Ortega’s ms.  
Robinson, Cadierno, & Shirai’s ms.  
Skehan’s ms. |
| **Week 8:** March 4 | Course projects I | *Students’ oral report on bibliographical search & ideas for project* |
| **Week 9:** March 11 | Broader data analyses with CHILDES examples | *ALL*: Chapters 8-10 (Interaction, CA, sociocultural)  
Hands-on work on existing L2 oral and written corpora |
| **Week 10:** March 18 | TBN | Topics, Readings, & Hands-on lab exercises based on students’ projects |
| **Spring Break March 23-27** | [Lourdes at AAAL & TESOL] |
| **Week 11:** April 1 | TBN | Topics, Readings, & Hands-on lab exercises based on students’ projects |
| **Week 12:** April 8 | Course projects II | *Students’ oral report on theoretical framework & proposal* |
| **Week ☀:** April 15 | TBN | Topics, Readings, & Hands-on lab exercises based on students’ projects |
| **Week 14:** April 29 | TBN | Topics, Readings, & Hands-on lab exercises based on students’ projects |
| **Week 15:** May 6 | Research project for this course II | *Students’ presentation of projects* |

**Final installment of 750 paper is due May 12 (Tuesday) by 5:00pm** (pls email submission plus put hard copy to be delivered in my box)
**Week 1 – Introduction to the course & CHILDES**

*assigned:*


*additional recommendations:*


Week 2 – Learner corpora: Elicitation and validity

assigned:

ALL, Chapters 1-2


additional recommendations:


Week 3 – Lexical explorations with CHILDES

assigned:


additional recommendations:


**Week 4 – Interlanguage**

**assigned:**

*ALL*, Chapters 3-6


**additional recommendations:**


**Week 5 – Grammar explorations with CHILDES**

**assigned:**


additional recommendations:


Week 6 – Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF)

assigned:

ALL, Chapter 7

additional recommendations:


**Week 7 – Explorations of CAF with CHILDES**

*assigned:*

*Note: The following are pre-publication manuscripts for a forthcoming Special Issue of Applied Linguistics, distributed in class with permission of the authors*


*additional recommendations:*

L2 writing and learner corpora


Lexical issues in learner corpora


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**Accuracy & complexity**


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**Fluency, prosody, pronunciation**


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**Un-tested, appealing leads for learner language research**


