As per Saussure, a

Precise use of terms in linguistic investigation is essential because Clear

Use

COURSE

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  J.	
  Thibeau

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• Office Hours: MF 12:10 to 1:30 or by appointment
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COURSE APPROACH

Use of the term development in the course title is wholly deliberate, for two attendant reasons.

1. The term suggests theory-neutrality in that it sets emphasis neither on internal forces of some pre-existing language knowledge (i.e., acquisition) nor on patent external forces of experiences of a language environment (i.e., learning).
2. It indicates that these two forces act together in some vaguely defined way and, as such, leaves open the issue of whether one force functions as the primary determinant operating on non-native language learners acquiring greater proficiency.

Clear-cut Terminology

Precise use of terms in linguistic investigation is essential because a nomenclature for language (i.e., metalanguage) unavoidably refers to itself yet, nonetheless, may retain internal consistency.

Such standardization entails an expense of nuance, subtle difference rescued from resemblances.

a) Message-content may be intelligible (fluent) without also being grammatical (accurate), for example. Thus, it befits us, in considering language behavior of non-native speakers, to define proficiency as an inarticulately explained combination of fluency and accuracy.

b) Despite how improficient language learners behave (or perform), observations of it oblige us to presume a developing intergrammar underlies all outwardly evident interlanguage.

c) As per general linguistic method, performances and surface forms are viewed as parallel; similarly, grammar encompasses underlying forms, or some set of categorial labels which
   i. fulfill specific functions (e.g., tense, aspect, modality or number, count, animate) and
   ii. exhibit form classes (e.g., open/closed, content/function, bound/free, part-of-speech).

d) With regard to interlanguage, it is equally befitting for us to recognize that native shares an etymological relation with natural; while learner behavior may not often appear native (i.e., well-formed), inaccurate surface forms produced by learners still ought to be judged natural (contrary to wild), indicative of grammar (devices mapping forms and functions).

Clear-cut Methodology

Please be continually reminded that the propositions submitted in (a-d) also oblige us to regard any partition of underlying form (system) and surface form (usage) as strictly methodological: As per Saussure, similar distinctions separating system and usage describe no reality of language; system and usage are symbiotic, cannot exist alone, and boundaries between them are subjective.
The position being staked out is not intended to be unscientific; it is meant to be unphilosophical. In this course, it is inevitable you survey cognition, the entity that empowers humans to develop knowledge, mentally represented information stored in a neural network. Clear understanding of cognitive capacity and structure is rare, so mysteries abound, siting you in a realm of philosophy.

In scientific matters, objects of study are treated as organisms in nature (Chomsky 1975, p. 139).

Nonetheless, a query often posed is whether early usage is shaped out of linguistic resources or (purely) non-linguistic, cognitive material (thought to convert into knowledge of language later). The latter inclination adopts the viewpoint that initial developmental stages involve no reference to a structural code covering underlying forms but conform instead to remembered arrangements.

Without referencing grammatical properties, a language learner accesses knowledge of shapes of real-life goings-on, taken from human experiences: gestalts (figures), the (proto)typical being apt (Clark & Clark, 1977, p. 531, on Rosch's study of the Dani's classifying geometry, later labeled "configurational wholes" in D'Andrade, 1995, p. 115, as very economical but not decomposable).

Brief treatment of this disposition is given in the textbook by Towell & Hawkins (1994, p. 158), a few instances are included (p. 151), and the general fit of it into a construal of development (pp. 174-176) is elaborated on pages indexed next to the topic formulaic language (see p. 278).

When manifested, formulaic language displays attributes of usage as a surface form, but it maps onto a setting-specific function, shares no relations with any underlying forms in a grammar, and thus acts beyond system and is conceivably more suitably described as a case of something wild: For example, the textbook by Mitchell, Myles & Marsden (2013, p. 64) grants "wild grammars".

Methodologically speaking, the acute thrust is interlanguage is conversely (see b) interpretable as unregulated by intergrammar, not unsystematic behavior but conduct systematized in relation to semantic (proto)types installed by perceptual elements (i.e., cognition). Facts culled from data cognitively assigned are generalizable like grammatical facts and open to descriptive statements, such as learner language acts unlike natural language (Mitchell, Myles & Marsden 2013, p. 83).

A fairly deeper treatment of formula, or "unanalysed chunk" (ibid., p. 189), regards it as a way of communicating necessarily reliant on features specific to settings of non-native language speech, allegedly due to emerging development. Specimens of "prefabrication" (ibid., p. 15) are fully or partly unanalyzable (enabling substitutions in its array) and "lexical," neither rule nor property of grammar (Ellis, 1997, pp. 139, 143; see "creativity" in Mitchell, Myles & Marsden 2013, p. 14).
Linguistics 478  Second Language Development  Spring 2015
Dr. Tully J. Thibeau

A Course Preview
Both children and adults are capable of developing human language, but the genesis of this capability breeds debate. Equally debatable are claims that adults and children share an essentially identical language-development capability (a minimalist position) and claims that, as humans mature, the capability for becoming more proficient in a language becomes attenuated (critical period hypothesis). The latter position regards cerebral change, primarily lateralization, as the point when the course of language development no longer remains indistinguishable from its onset (infancy).

Description
Some direct observations (empirical evidence gathered both naturally and experimentally) of language development among learners indicate that their progress toward proficiency follows an (almost) identical path, despite other data indicating an incapacitation of learning language on entering the path at a point nearby adolescence (pre-adult age).

The course considers both the manner in which (i) the path toward proficiency (native capability) may be typified and (ii) the obstacle breaching that path (adult learners' prevailing non-native capability) is optimally characterized.

Focus is on several directly observable behaviors exhibited by adults and children who are undertaking proficiency in a target language, or TL (i.e., child native TL development and adult non-native TL development). Concentration includes abstracting what is indirectly observable, namely, learners' grammars that mentally represent and develop TL knowledge. Three assumed sources brace TL knowledge: experience of TL input, any mental representations which have already been established as an adult's native knowledge of language, or KoL (in a child's case, ostensibly a priori KoL, given innately), and general cognitive problem-solving procedures applied to attaining any skill-set(s).

In defining TL proficiency, these two emphases (on observed variations across time and inferred systems of mind), fuse two phenomena, communicative fluency (ability to function in terms of oral as well as aural comprehensibility) and grammatical accuracy (ability to perceptibly demonstrate the use of TL forms, or sounds, words and sentences).

These phenomena are distinguishable in TL production, typically in speaking, so fathoming speech-processes rises to a degree of relative significance for the course; however, tasks that involve speech (e.g., narrations/descriptions, oral interviews, recitations, etc.) have been shown to influence learners' rates of proficiency. Moreover, tasks elicit data that sometimes involve no production (i.e., comprehension), and others concern only grammaticality judgments (i.e., adult subjects usually intuit prearranged forms as target-like, grammatical, or non-target-like, ungrammatical). Any task demands attentional resources and thus influences measures of proficiency, this effort largely understood as a factor external to learners' mental grammars, to be contrasted with any factor construed to be grammar-internal (e.g., the reputed properties of sound-, word- and sentence-formation systems). The issue of task-demands becomes imperative when considering pre-school age subjects whose level of maturity precludes the hitherto described tasks and therefore requires more natural responses to linguistic stimuli (e.g., gaze at a TV screen, perform with figurines, and operant conditioning that includes a priming stimulus, like a toy monkey banging a drum, prior to a trial form).

The preceding paragraph's descriptive content seems to concern diverse matters of data-collection methodology, yet these varieties of observations present a way of generally educating students with no empirical-methods background in reasoning and conjecturing scientifically (i.e., devising, testing and revising hypotheses based on data collected specifically to assess the inquiry in an intelligible totality, or theory, including evaluation/selection among theories).

Scientific understanding entails finding (missed) generalizations, expressed such that they can be tested empirically, and, when possible, experimentally if theory affords precise definitions crafted into hypotheses that can be falsified.
**Goals (instructor's objectives)**

Some instructor's objectives are suggested in the previous sections titled **COURSE PREVIEW & COURSE DESCRIPTION**, for example, being able to define a minimalist position and illustrate how such accounts of language development must make reference to a mental grammar in support of its explanations, or, for example, being able to demarcate some critical period(s) intervening at developmental stages of older language learners (e.g., beyond pre-school ages) and provide evidence exemplifying interruptions in proficiency as well as identify conceivable sources for obstacles. Other examples include understanding and explaining the role of scientific theory and scientific thinking in studies of language development, how definitions of theoretical constructs lend themselves to formulation of hypotheses, and why the methodology used in collecting data functions decisively in ascertaining any hypothesis falsifications.

**Outcomes (students' performance)**

Among the variety of students' performance (cited in the section titled **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**), please keep in mind the major difference between these activities and the instructor's objectives: The course goals are intended to instill a habit of mind that is applicable to most systematic and methodical scholarship (i.e., reasoning abilities transferable outside of this course); the course outcomes, however, concern the type of work involved in observing some behavior of a language learner in terms of linguistic properties judged to speculatively constitute a grammar of the individual.

- a. use word class/part of speech as a point of reference for further investigation of the behaviors observes
- b. investigate these points to determine how they vary from proficient behavior and whether a pattern emerges
- c. (iia) if no pattern emerges, then consider if this variability might be an artifact of the empirical method
- d. (iib) if a pattern emerges, then consider if this systematicity may conditioned by a grammar or a method
- e. employ nomenclature of language analysis (linguistics) in recording observations of relevant behaviors
- f. summarize/report how a particular method is (un)justified in making strong claims about development
- g. separate traits of a strong claim (e.g., **continuity hypothesis**) from weaker versions and contradictory claims

**Course Grading**

I assess final grades based on points accrued from activities, assignments, and exams. I gauge points earned in several ways: according to percentage (points earned divided by total points), percentile (points earned to be measured on a "curve"), and quartile (points earned as separated into fourths, e.g., top 25%, bottom 25%, etc.). Based on these measures, I make assessments that are represented by traditional letter grade and may also include a distinction made between + / - . THIS COURSE MUST BE TAKEN FOR A TRADITIONAL LETTER GRADE ONLY, NOT CR/NC.

If you are unsure what traditional letter grades represent, then please note these general descriptions:

- A means excellent (above 90%)
- B means superior (roughly 80% to 90%)
- C means competent (roughly 70% to 80%)
- D means below average (below 70%)

**Work (weighting for ling 478*)**

Performance Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exams</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-Quarter</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Probable Data Sets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One</th>
<th>5%</th>
<th>(Sound Segments and Suprasegmental Units)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>(Lexical Items and Vocabulary Organization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>(Negation Morphology and Sentence Distribution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>(Reflexive Pronouns and Antecedent Reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>(Question Formation and Structural Changes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>(Adjunct Placement and Marked Distinctions)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*LING 578: First-Quarter 10%, Mid-term 22.5%, Final 27.5%, Probable Data Sets 4.25% each, a **grad increment**
The Graduate Increment (*up to 15% of final grade)
A most enduring facet in the history of second language development studies concerns a phenomenon that is defined in various ways, as interlinguistic influencing by Edward Sapir (1925), and interference by Uriel Weinreich (1953), each one an attempt at accounting for the impact of one language (L₁) on another (L₂) and vice versa, a consequence of the type of language contact ensuing in a given bilingual society and/or a bilingual individual.

Eventually, bilingualism became more prevalently construed as the non-native development of language by adults; meanwhile, these incidents mainly involved native language transfer (Lado, 1959), understood to entail permanence of habits established by learners' first languages (L₁) during their performance on tasks designed to occasion uses of their non-native language (L₂). Construing instances of transfer were grounded on behaviorist psychological theory and structuralist linguistic theory, both eventually acceding to Chomsky's mentalist generative theory (1957, 1965).

Graduates in Linguistics 578 are treated to a series of data sets to an extent reminiscent of occurrences in question. The types of languages that come in contact during the course of development are classified as subject-prominent, like English, and topic-prominent, like Chinese; moreover, developmental data exhibit not only phenomena related to the aforesaid cross-linguistic impact but also exhibit stages of variation of learners' grammars, or interlanguages, during learners' approaches toward the non-native language type (resembling some behaviors observed in children).

Students will apply to methods of linguistic analysis, one related to sentence-formation (syntax) and another related to text-formation (discourse), in order to try to ascertain some primary factor conditioning the affect of (L₁) on (L₂) in early stages of development and subsequent changes transpiring during intermediate stages (e.g., do conditions start discursive and grow syntactic?). Pertinent issues also implicate word-order typology, so additional data sets can provide information of cross-linguistic serialization of subject-verb-object (or SVO), which may be conditioned syntactically or discursively, as per one or two additional reading assignments that are included in the increment.

Late Policy
All activities, assignments or exams given to the instructor after its due-date are not guaranteed to be either graded (and entered into the grade record) or returned (i.e., students must keep track).

Attendance Policy
Perfect attendance is desired but not expected; excessive absences typically intersect adversely with late policy and affect final grades. Students who miss the first two class meetings must drop the course (see URL presented below):
(http://www.umt.edu/catalog/acad/acadpolicy/default.html, under attendance/absence).

Special Accommodation
If you will need special accommodation in this course due to some learning challenge that has been verified by DSS, please see me early in the semester, and we can come up with some appropriate accommodation.

Technology:
You may, of course, take class notes on a laptop or iPad or the like. Aside from that, I expect that technology will not intrude during class time. Please turn your phones to “vibrate” or a similar setting that will not disturb the class. Do not plan to receive phone calls during the class period.

Withdrawal Policy
To know more information about withdrawing from a course, see the URL below:
(http://www.umt.edu/withdrawal/AlternateOptions.aspx)
Academic Honesty
All students must observe academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to academic penalty by the instructor of the course and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. As a student in this course and at this university, you must be familiar with the Student Conduct Code (see URL presented below):
(http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php)