

THE STRUCTURE and ACQUISITION OF GERMAN
GERM 601
 Spring 2008

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This course is an introduction to the subsystems of German – phonology, morphology, semantics and lexicon, and syntax, with an emphasis on problems in their acquisition for adult learners. The course assumes advanced proficiency in German and some knowledge of basic linguistic terminology.

Each subsystem topic will stress 3 main areas:

- ❑ Basic repertoires and their notations
- ❑ Functional relevance of specific structural features
- ❑ Principles and problems of acquisition, particularly for late learners

By the end of the course you will:

- ❑ Be knowledgeable about basic structural features of German, specifically: phonology and phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics;
- ❑ Be aware of contrastive analyses between English and German;
- ❑ Understand the role of function in determining both usage and acquisition of specific features;
- ❑ Be able to read and critique original research pertaining to the acquisition of a specific feature or subsystem of German as a second/foreign language.

Texts

Modern German Pronunciation. 2nd Ed. Christopher Hall. Manchester University Press. ISBN: 0-7190-6689-1

The Structure of German, 2nd Ed. Anthony Fox. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 0-19-927399-5

Additional course readings available through Blackboard: <http://www.elms.umd.edu>

NB: Course updates, assignments, announcements, etc. will be posted there. **Please log on to Blackboard to ensure that you can access the course documents and tools on our site within the first week of class.** Any problems should be reported to the help staff (email address on entry page of www.elms.umd.edu).

I will periodically update assignments on Blackboard, so please make a habit of checking it every day.

Course Components

Class Participation and Homework: 35%

Each student is expected to participate actively in class during all exercises and discussions. Thorough reading and timely preparation of all homework assignments is a crucial aspect of participation and learning for this course, as is attendance. No late assignments will be accepted. Excessive tardiness will count as an absence. More than 1 absence will affect your participation grade.

Midterm: 25%; Final Exam: 25%

These exams will include short answer items on significant terms/concepts and essay questions on problems in structure and acquisition. There will be some range of choice in the items. (These exams will NOT be take-home.) The final is not comprehensive, but covers the materials presented after the midterm.

Case Study Presentations: 15%

Two times during the semester, you will present and discuss a study of the acquisition of a language subsystem to the class, appropriately citing the author(s) and thoroughly describing the study (see syllabus for studies you can present - Weeks 6, 10, 12 & 13). You should also include 2-3 discussion points or questions relevant to your study to facilitate class discussion. (Depending on the number enrolled in our course, this may be done as a partnered presentation.)

1. The first presentation (5%) is based on 1 relevant study (5%), either on a pedagogical approach, or a more acquisition-oriented experimental study. The important point is that the study must be empirical, i.e., involve the presentation of original data; it cannot be a lit review or position paper. Please provide a 1-page outline (Frame, Focus, Method, Results, Implications) with the proper citation at the top (this can be done as a PowerPoint to save paper – just reserve equipment in advance). Your outline should also include an *annotated* bibliography of at least 3 related, i.e., relevant studies for which you have read an abstract and skimmed the paper for relevance (at the very least). The use of the database LLBA* (Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts), available through Research Port on the library's homepage, will be of great help in finding relevant sources and abstracts. Your total maximum time to present and discuss is 20 minutes, including 2-3 questions for the class, and you will be timed!
2. The second presentation (10%) adheres to the same requirements as the first, but compares 2 studies. In this presentation, you will pay special attention to the differences in methodological approach between the studies and how this impacts the implications of the results. Your total maximum time to present and discuss is 30 minutes, including questions for the class (again, you will be timed).

**Big Hint for LLBA: Put "German" "second language learning" and your linguistic subfield, e.g., "morphology", as Descriptor terms for good results on the acquisition of German among non-natives)*

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Introduction to Phonetics; Phonemic repertoire of German (Jan. 29)

- Introduction to course; Overview of the systems of German – Fox, Chapter 1
- Speech perception; production of speech sounds and the vocal tract

Week 2: Beginning Phonetic Transcription (Feb. 5)

- Phonetics, Phonemics and the IPA - Hall Chapters 1 and 2

Week 3: The Phonemic Inventory of German (Feb. 12)

- Consonants in German – Hall Ch. 3
- Vowels in German – Hall Ch. 4

Week 4: Suprasegmentals (Feb. 19)

- Stress & Intonation – Hall Ch. 5

Week 5: Phonotactics and Phonological Rules (Feb. 26)

- Phonotactics – Hall Ch. 6 and Benware chapter (Blackboard)
- Phonological Alternations and Rules – (handouts)

Week 6: Problems in Phonological Acquisition of German (March 4)

Possible CASE STUDIES include (you are free to find others!):

- O. Bohn & J. Flege, "The production of new and similar vowels by adult German learners of English." (1992)
- F. Eckman, "Markedness and the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis." (1977)
- C. Lleo, M. Rakow & M. Kehoe, "Acquisition of language-specific pitch accent by Spanish and German monolingual and bilingual children." (2003)
- A. Moyer, "Ultimate attainment in L2 phonology." (1999)
- R. Queen, "Bilingual intonation patterns: Evidence of language change from Turkish-German bilingual children." (2001)
- M. Young-Scholten, "Prosodic constraints on allophonic distribution in adult L2 acquisition." (2004)

Week 7: Midterm - March 11

March 18 – Spring Break!

Week 8: Introduction to Morphology (March 25)

- Introduction to Morphology: units, alternations, models, derivational and inflectional morphology – Fox Ch. 3, S. 102-144.

April 1 – no class (no joke!)

Week 9: Morphological Processes in German (April 8)

- Compounding, Fox Ch. 3, 144-157; Exercises and Questions, S. 157f. (*all such assignments are to turn in*)

Week 10: Problems in the Acquisition of German Morphology (April 15)**Possible CASE STUDIES (you are free to find others!):**

- C. Pfaff, "Turkish in contact with German: Language maintenance and loss among immigrant children in Berlin (West)." (1991)
- H. Clahsen, "German plurals in adult second language development." (1997)
- V. Kempe & B. MacWhinney, "The acquisition of case marking by adult learners of Russian and German." (1998)
- G. Levine, "Gender assignment to German nonsense nouns: What does the native Speaker know that the non-native speaker doesn't?" (1999)
- M. Pienemann, "Unanalysierte Einheiten und Sprachverarbeitung im Zweitspracherwerb." (2002)

Week 11: The Lexicon-Morphology Interface: Word Classes (April 22)

- Introduction to word classes and categories, Fox Ch. 4; Exercises and Discussion Qs, p. 211f.

Week 12: Introduction to Semantics (April 29)

- Lexical Semantics, Fox Ch. 6; Exercises and Discussion Qs, p. 295f.

Possible CASE STUDIES (you are free to find others!):

- C. Pfaff, "The development of co-constructed narratives by Turkish children in Germany." (2001)
- S. Rott, "Effects of exposure frequency on intermediate language learners' incidental vocabulary acquisition and retention through reading." (1999)
- D. Singleton & D. Little, "The second language lexicon: Some evidence from university level learners of French and German." (1991)

Week 13: Introduction to Syntax (May 6)

- Fox, Ch. 5; Exercises and Discussion Qs, p. 270f.

Possible CASE STUDIES (you are free to find others!):

- A. Moyer, "Formal and Informal Experiential Realms in German as a Foreign Language: A Preliminary Investigation." (2005)
- J. Treffers-Daller, A. Özsoy, R. van Hout, "(In)complete acquisition of Turkish among Turkish-German bilinguals in Germany and Turkey: An analysis of complex embeddings in narratives." (2007)

Week 14: Introduction to Pragmatics and Speech Acts (May 13)

- Fox. Ch. 7; Exercises and Discussion Qs, p. 321f.

In-Class Final: TBA
