

Syllabus: Second Language Phonetics and Phonology

Linguistics 526, UNC-Chapel Hill
Elliott Moreton*

2017 August 23 (W)

<i>Time:</i>	MWF 2:30–3:20	<i>Instructor:</i>	Elliott Moreton
<i>Place:</i>	Dey 304	<i>Office:</i>	Smith 101
<i>Textbook:</i>	None	<i>Office hours:</i>	M 1:15–2:15? W 3:30–4:30?
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1 Description

What we will study: The sound system (phonetics and phonology) is one of the very hardest things to learn in a second language (Granena and Long, 2012). This class addresses questions like

- Specifically which aspects of L2 phonetics and phonology are hard? Production? Perception? Phonological rules?
- What makes them so hard? Does the difficulty stem from incompatibility with L1? From language-universal phonetic and phonological factors?
- Is it possible to acquire native-like L2 pronunciation? Does success depend on age? On the learning situation? On particular training techniques? Does improved L2 pronunciation have side effects on L1 pronunciation?

These questions are connected with major theoretical issues in phonetics, phonology, and language acquisition, as well as cognitive science, biology, and even philosophy.

How we will learn about it: This is a seminar-style class aimed at advanced undergraduates and at graduate students. The “textbook” consists of primary research papers from journals, written by experts for experts. Most of them will be recent (within the last five to ten years). None of them have been edited or softened with a student audience in mind; they are what “the frontiers of knowledge” look like.

To make that possible, part of what we will do in this class is learn *how* to read primary literature — how to tell old information from new; how to recognize a *point*; how to follow the logical links between theory, hypothesis, experimental design, results, and implications of the results for the theory; how to follow a scientific debate and recognize when something new has happened; how to tell when something is *interesting*, in the special sense that that word has in research culture.

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In addition to the scholarly and critical components (reading papers and arguing with or about them), there is also a creative component, in that students will plan (but not carry out) a research study of their own that would constitute a respectable contribution to our knowledge in this area.

2 Course organization

Partnerships. Some of the readings in this class will be pretty advanced, and will probably require the use of more than one head. I will assign students to partnerships of two or three on the basis of a questionnaire in order to roughly equalize the distribution of background knowledge across partnerships.

Events. The main events in the class will be *paper discussions*, *exams*, and a *research proposal*.

2.1 Paper discussions (with partners)

We'll be reading one published research paper each week for most weeks in the semester. Partnerships will take turns leading the discussion, and each partnership will be responsible for leading as many papers as it has members.

Dibs. I will post the discussion papers on the Sakai site, in Forums: Papers for discussion. Each paper will be a .pdf attachment to a Topic. If your group wants to lead discussion on that paper, just add a message saying so.

Here's what will happen in a normal week:

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Week n		Begin reading Pa- per n .	<i>Instructor:</i> Back- ground for Paper n . <i>Students:</i> Pre- questions on Paper n due, 6 p.m.
Week $n + 1$	<i>Instructor:</i> Back- ground for Paper n . <i>Followers:</i> Reading reactions on Paper n due, 6 p.m.	<i>Leaders:</i> Lead dis- cussion. <i>Every- one:</i> Discuss arti- cle. Post-questions on Paper n due Thursday at noon.	<i>Leaders:</i> Lead discussion of post- questions on Paper n .

Pre-Questions. Everyone starts reading the paper after class on Wednesday, if they can manage to wait that long. By 6 p.m. on Friday, *pre-questions* about the paper are due on Sakai. Each group should contribute three to five questions that have not yet been posted by anyone else. To do this, please put your group's questions together as a Sakai forum post, and add it to the Topic for the paper.

Preparation lectures. The Instructor will use some of Friday and all of Monday's class time to prepare for Wednesday, by (e.g.) discussing some of the literature that Wednesday's paper cites, demonstrating some of the relevant acoustic-phonetic phenomena, reviewing relevant phonological theory, etc.

Reading reactions. By 6 p.m. Monday, each Follower group has posted a *reading reaction* — a paragraph or two commenting on some aspect of the reading. These, again, go on the Sakai forum Topic for that paper.

Paper discussion. On Wednesday, the Leaders will *lead class discussion* of the paper. The Leaders don't necessarily have to present the article formally to the class as a lecture, but should take charge of organizing the discussion, and come prepared with a set of topics or questions for the class to discuss, formulated as a handout on paper and arranged in a way that you expect to lead to a vigorous discussion.

Post-questions. After Wednesday's discussion, each Follower group posts at least one more question to Sakai. They are due by noon on Thursday.

Post-question discussion. The Leaders read the post-questions, and lead discussion of them in class.

I'll provide more details on all phases of this cycle later. For the first two times through this cycle, I'll take the role of Leader on Wednesdays and Fridays to demonstrate what's involved.

2.2 Exams (as individuals)

There will be two exams, a midterm and a final (see schedule). The exams will be taken independently (i.e., not as partnerships). Both will be cumulative from the beginning of the class. They will focus on concepts, facts, and skills that we have been using in the class. They may cover material that was in the readings, but that we didn't go over in class.

2.3 Research proposal (with partners)

Reading these papers should make you want to write one yourself. I'm not going to ask you to do that; instead, your task is to write a *proposal* for a research study on second-language phonology. The proposal should be detailed enough that someone could actually carry it out from your description. (I owe this idea to my colleague Misha Becker.) That someone might be you, down the road!

The proposal should identify a question that hasn't been answered, review what we now know about it and why we might expect different answers, explain what data you would collect in order to answer it, and say what conclusions you would draw if the results came out this way or that way. (It will make more sense after reading a few empirical papers.) The proposal should run to about 3000 words of actual text (about 10 pages). The partners will have different roles to play in this process. More details will appear in a separate handout.

2.4 Grading

- Each *partnership*:
 - 15% Leading paper discussions.
 - 15% Posting questions.
 - 15% Posting reading reactions.
 - 25% Project proposal.
- Each *individual*:
 - 10% Midterm
 - 10% Final
 - 10% Attendance and participation

3 Policies

Attendance — Everyone is expected to be in class on time every day. If you miss a class, neither I nor the student discussion leaders will re-teach it for you; you'll need to get class notes from other students. (I am of course still available to discuss questions about what you missed, but you need to bone up on it before we meet.)

Late work — Will not be accepted unless the lateness is caused by an emergency, or is pre-arranged between us. That includes the midterm and final exam, the questions and reactions due on Sakai, the project proposal, etc.

Staples — If you're turning in multiple paper pages, they must be stapled together with a stapler. I reserve the right not to accept unstapled multi-page documents.

Recording — Permission to make audio or video recordings of lecture or recitation will be given only in special circumstances (e.g., to students with hearing impairments).

Communication — Email will be the main channel for official communications. Hence, everyone should check email at least once a day from Monday through Friday.

<p>The Carolina Honor Code is in effect in this class, and I will treat violations seriously. You should review it at http://instrument.unc.edu. If you have questions about interpretation, you should bring them to me. Every assignment you hand in must be accompanied by a signed statement that you have complied with the Code requirements in everything related to that work, e.g., "I completed this assignment in full compliance with the Honor Code."</p>
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4 Approximate schedule

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings
1	8/23, 8/25	Course organization and overview	Syllabus
2	8/28, 8/30, 9/1	L2 learning is imperfect	Abrahamsson and Hyldenstam (2009)
3	9/6, 9/8	Phonetics review. Spectrograms.	
4	9/11, 9/13, 9/15	Sources of systematic error: L1 transfer and universal biases	Broselow and Kang (2013)
<i>Perception</i>			
5	9/18, 9/20, 9/22	How does a language become L1 or L2? Focusing of perception on L1 at the end of the first year.	Kuhl (2007)
6	9/25, 9/27, 9/29	Can you have two L1s? Limits to bilingualism in perception.	Sebastián-Gallés et al. (2005)
7	10/2, 10/4, 10/6	What does it take to learn to perceive a difficult non-native contrast?	Takagi and Mann (1995)
8	10/9, 10/11, 10/13	MIDTERM. Phonology review.	
<i>Phonology</i>			
9	10/16, 10/18	Learning subset and superset phonotactics.	Trapman and Kager (2009)
10	10/23, 10/25, 10/27	L1 transfer effects on L2 sequence perception.	Matthews and Brown (2004)
11	10/30, 11/1, 11/3	L1 transfer effects on L2 phonological processes.	Darcy et al. (2007)
12	11/6, 11/8, 11/10	Universal biases in L2 perception?	Berent et al. (2007)
<i>Production</i>			
13	11/13, 11/15, 11/17	L1 transfer effects on L2, <i>and vice versa</i> , in production of L2 sounds.	Guion (2003)
14	11/20		
15	11/27, 11/29, —	L1 and universal-bias effects in production of L2 sequences. Concluding discussion.	Broselow et al. (1998)
<i>Endgame</i>			
15	—, —, 12/1	Project presentations	
16	12/4	Project presentations	
Exam	12/8 (Fri.)	FINAL EXAM, 4 p.m.	

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