Doctor of Philosophy in Child Language

Child Language Doctoral Program

The doctoral program in Child Language offers the first specialized degree in this new area of study. The program crosses traditional academic boundaries to give students the theoretical, empirical, and methodological competence necessary to study basic and applied issues in language acquisition. This multidisciplinary program is a cooperative endeavor of faculty members from the Departments of Applied Behavioral Science, Clinical Child Psychology, Linguistics, Psychology, and Speech-Language-Hearing: Sciences and Disorders.

Students study 4 areas:

1. Core theoretical and experimental work on language acquisition,
2. Relevant methods and theories in linguistics and psycholinguistics,
3. Theoretical perspectives on developmental psychology, and
4. The nature of disordered language development and methods and techniques for language intervention.

Each student is advised by a support committee of 3 faculty members. Enrollment in a proseminar in language acquisition is required of all students in addition to participation in research activities. Opportunities for individual research projects include the projects of participating faculty members and the research teams of the Schiefelbusch Institute for Life Span Studies, the Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic, and the clinical/research facilities of KU Medical Center.

Graduates are candidates for teaching and research positions, clinical positions providing service to communicatively disabled persons, and research work in business and governmental sectors.

The Child Language doctoral program reports to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in collaboration with participating departments. The 23-member faculty is drawn from the participating departments. The Institute for Life Span Studies provides additional instructional, research, and clinical experiences.

Admission to Graduate Studies

An applicant seeking to pursue graduate study in the College may be admitted as either a degree-seeking or non-degree seeking student. Policies and procedures of Graduate Studies govern the process of Graduate admission. These may be found in the Graduate Studies (http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies) section of the online catalog.

Please consult the Departments & Programs (http://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences) section of the online catalog for information regarding program-specific admissions criteria and requirements. Special admissions requirements pertain to Interdisciplinary Studies degrees, which may be found in the Graduate Studies section of the online catalog.

Graduate Admission

Students must submit 3 letters of recommendation, 1 copy of all undergraduate and graduate transcripts, and scores from the Graduate Record Examination (verbal, quantitative, analytical). Applicants should have earned bachelor’s degrees that include course work in linguistics, psychology, speech pathology, and statistics with minimum grade-point averages of B. Preference is given to those with master’s degrees in linguistics, psychology, education, special education, or speech and hearing sciences or to applicants with relevant post-baccalaureate work experience. No one is admitted for a terminal M.A. degree. Admission materials are reviewed by a subcommittee of the advisory council. The admissions committee supervises the admission process and recommends applicants to the faculty committee.

Submit your graduate application online (http://www.graduate.ku.edu). Send all other requested application materials to the program:

The University of Kansas
Child Language Program
Dole Human Development Center
1000 Sunnyside Ave., Room 3031
Lawrence, KS 66045-7561

Ph.D. Degree Requirements

For the Ph.D. degree, the student must complete all general requirements. These include residence, research skills, comprehensive oral examination, preparation of a dissertation, and the final oral examination and defense of the dissertation. 3 options for fulfilling the research skills requirement are available:

1. Competence in the use of computers can be demonstrated by course work or by a successful demonstration of proficiency. Competence in both programming skills and computer applications is required.
2. Proficiency in a language other than English or reading knowledge of 2 languages other than English can be demonstrated.
3. A record of professional research experience or publication may be used to demonstrate research skills.

Note: Contact your department or program for more information about research skills and responsible scholarship, and the current requirements for doctoral students. Current policies on Doctoral Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship are listed in the KU Policy Library.

For students entering without the master’s degree, the requirements for the M.A. are at least 8 credit hours of core courses in language acquisition; 9 hours of supplemental courses in linguistics, psycholinguistics, developmental psychology, or language intervention; 6 hours of statistics; and 6 hours of thesis. Continuous enrollment in the child language proseminar is required. Within 3 years of entering the program, students normally complete the required 30 graduate credit hours, prepare an M.A. thesis, and pass a final general examination and defense of the thesis.

Ph.D. post-master’s requirements include a minimum of 47 additional graduate credit hours. These should include at least 8 hours of additional core courses, 18 hours of additional supplemental courses, 9 hours of additional statistical and methodological courses, and a minimum of 6 hours of dissertation. Continuous enrollment in the proseminar is required.

After completing the research skills requirement and the major portion of the course work, the doctoral student must pass a written preliminary examination and a comprehensive oral examination. The written examination covers 4 areas:

1. Language acquisition,
2. Psycholinguistics,
3. Developmental psychology,
4. Disordered language development or language intervention.
The comprehensive oral examination covers the major field, taking one of 5 forms:

1. A defense of the written preliminary examinations,
2. A defense of a completed research project,
3. A prospectus for a future research project,
4. A discussion of a major review paper, or
5. A review of a research grant proposal and a simulated site visit defense of the proposal.

All students are expected to be engaged continuously in research on child language. Research involvement is documented with appropriate enrollment in research, thesis, and dissertation credit hours, and in the proseminar in child language.

Courses

See course listings for the cooperating departments.