

WIT Overview  
*Linguistics Department Meeting, Oct. 28<sup>th</sup> 2011*

## What is WIT?

### ***WIT = Writing Instruction for/by TAs***

- Funded by the Curriculum Renewal Initiatives Fund (CRIF) since Dec. 2007
- Department submits a proposal to be part of the program.
- WIT has its own funding.

### ***Goals of WIT:***

- To help students learn how to write in the Humanities.
- Benefits large numbers of students since LIN200, 203, 204 often have large enrollments from students across the disciplines.
- To give more focus to writing in courses that students often take for writing credits.
- To give TAs opportunities for professional development, by providing training and support for instructing and grading written work.
- ***New this year:*** To expand into courses that Linguistics majors take, in order to further promote the idea of “writing within the discipline” of linguistics (LIN306, LIN241).

## Components of WIT:

***Training for course TAs:*** Training session at the beginning of their TA appointment that covers the following:

- What is the WIT program?
- Why is the department involved in WIT?
- What are my responsibilities as a WIT TA?
- Where will I get support?
- How do I grade written work?
- How do I give effective feedback on written work?
- How do I help students prepare for writing assignments (in tutorials)?
- What do I want *my students* to get out of WIT?

**Training focuses on hands-on practice grading writing using a rubric and giving effective written feedback to students on their writing assignments, using real samples of student writing from previous courses.**

***Training for LWTA:*** Week-long training session in June for new and returning LWTAs from all departments involved in WIT.

***Extra support hours and extra grading hours for course TAs:*** TAs get extra hours to meet with the LWTA for help with grading writing (i.e. “benchmarking”), and extra hours for grading writing assignments.

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**Extra course support from LWTA:** Instructors get to make use of some of the LWTA's hours for extra support, which usually involves things like the following.

- Planning how to integrate writing into the course.
- Modifying and helping create writing assignments for the course.
- Creating/ modifying rubrics for the course writing assignments.
- Running meetings with TAs regarding the marking of writing assignments.
- Collaborating with TAs/instructor on writing grading & instruction issues that arise.
- Collaborating with TAs on how to improve writing instruction in their tutorials.
- Collecting feedback from TAs and instructors.

**The funding for the LWTA's hours and training, and for the course TAs' extra training and extra marking/meeting hours are paid for by the WIT program.**

## WIT's Approach to Writing Instruction:

**"Global" writing issues** are things that have more to do with the structure and organization of a student's writing.

vs.

**"Sentence-level" writing errors** are things like prescriptive grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. rules.

**Inventing the University:** "Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion [...] He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define. . . the various discourses of our community..."

~ David Bartholomae, "Inventing the University"

## Writing Across the Curriculum/ Writing in the Disciplines

**Writing as Critical Thinking:** "Writing is both a process of doing critical thinking and a product communicating the results of critical thinking."

~ John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*

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## LIN200 Assignment 4 (Writing Assignment 2)

Review the information in the box, “Babies Are Better at Language” on p. 105 of the textbook. Then, read Werker & Desjardins original article, **Listening to speech in the first year of life: Experimental influences on phoneme perception**. A full citation is given below:

Werker, J. & R. Desjardins. 1995. Listening to speech in the first year of life: Experimental influences on phoneme perception. *Current Directions in Psychological Sciences*, 4(3). 76 – 81.

You should **read** the above article before tutorial on **October 12<sup>th</sup>**. The assignment is **DUE OCTOBER 19<sup>th</sup>** in tutorial. (\*Note: you may skip the section of the article titled “New Directions.”)

**Assignment:** Write a maximum one-page essay on **ONE** of the following two topics:

***\*\*Choose 1 topic from the two topics below. Do NOT write on both topics.\*\****

**Question 1:** You have learned from the textbook and from lectures that phonemes are abstract sound categories. But how do we know that phonemes really exist? We can’t look inside speakers’ heads to “see” their phonemes when they speak or listen to speech! How do we know phonemes are real? Referring to the studies discussed in the article, discuss how these studies might provide evidence for the existence of phonemes. You can also draw on any material you’ve read in the textbook or seen in lectures. This is not a research essay. You only need to refer to the article (and possibly the textbook and instructor’s lecture notes). Any sources you use (including the article, textbook, and lecture notes) should be properly cited. There is no straightforward “right” or “wrong” answer to this question. You will be evaluated on how clear, logical, and well-organized your discussion is.

More details:

- Your answer should begin with a short introductory paragraph where you state the main point of your essay. Make sure you clearly state in your own words what the problem is that you are addressing, and how your essay will respond to this problem. You may find it useful to provide a definition of ‘phoneme’ in the introduction.
- You must discuss or refer to at least **two** specific studies/experiments that are discussed in Werker & Desjardins (1995).
- There is no one “right” answer. But you must support your point with careful reasoning that is clear and structured/organized.

***\*\*OR\*\****

**Question 2:** How do the studies/experiments reported on in the Werker & Desjardins article support or refute the Critical Period Hypothesis? Drawing on information from the article as well as the textbook and your lecture notes, discuss whether you think the studies reported on in this article provide evidence for or against the Critical Period Hypothesis. Note that this is not a research essay. You do not need to refer to sources outside of the article, the textbook, and the

course lecture notes. Any sources you use must be properly cited. There is no straightforward “right” or “wrong” answer to this question. You will be evaluated on how clear, logical, and well-organized your discussion is.

More details:

- Your answer should include a definition of the Critical Period Hypothesis, and must discuss or refer to at least **two** studies/experiments from the article.
- It is important that you clearly define the version of the Critical Period Hypothesis that you are adopting for the purpose of this assignment, since this might change your opinion of whether the evidence in the article supports the hypothesis or not.
- You will be evaluated on how clear and coherent and logically argued and organized your discussion is.
- Make sure to begin with a brief introductory paragraph where you state in your own words what the question is, and what position you are taking with respect to the question.

**Assignment guidelines/formatting guidelines:**

Maximum length is 1 page.

Page formatting: 1-inch margins, Times New Roman size 12 font, **double**-spaced.

Bibliography/citations may be included on a separate page.

Please type your assignment and staple a copy of the rubric to it before handing it in.

**Due in tutorial on Oct 19<sup>th</sup>.**

**Reminder about properly citing:**

In addition to citing the article (and, if you use them, the textbook and lecture notes) on a separate page under the heading “References,” “Bibliography,” or “Citations,” you should also use in-line citations in the body of the text to indicate which ideas you are getting from the Werker & Desjardins article and which ideas are your own.

*Examples of proper in-line citations:*

Example 1: As Werker & Desjardins (1995) report, English-learning infants perform better on certain phoneme-discrimination tasks than English-speaking adults.

Example 2: Werker & Desjardins (1995:79) claim that older children’s inability to discriminate non-native phonemes is due to “a reorganization rather than a loss.”

The full citation for the article is given at the beginning of this document. Lecture notes can be cited as follows:

Kyriakaki, Maria. 2010. *Introduction to Language* course lecture notes, University of Toronto.

**Grading Rubric: LIN200, Tutorial 5, Werker & Desjardins article**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student #: \_\_\_\_\_

**A. CONTENT, ARGUMENTATION, & ORGANIZATION ( /17)**

**1. Is response on topic?: ( /2)**

Response clearly addresses the question(s) posed in the prompt.	2
Relation of student's response to the prompt question(s) is unclear.	1
No discernable connection to the prompt questions.	0

**2. Thoroughness: ( /3)**

Student attempts to address all parts of the prompt; some parts may be addressed in more detail than others.	3
Student addresses most of the questions in the prompt.	2
Student addresses few questions in the prompt, <b>or</b> crucial parts are not answered in enough depth.	1
Student does not address any of the questions in the prompt.	0

**3. Do the studies/experiments discussed & the discussion provided support the main claim? ( /6)**

Studies mentioned & student's discussion of studies support the claim, and the student's reasoning is clear and logical.	6
Not all studies chosen seem relevant or in support of the claim &/or the discussion of those studies is inadequate (vague, not clearly reasoned, insufficient, or not clearly explained).	4
Poor choice of studies/evidence &/or poor reasoning connecting the studies to the main claim.	2
Studies mentioned have no connection to the main idea and discussion is off topic.	0

**4. Understanding of core linguistic concepts: ( /6)**

Excellent, clear understanding of the core linguistic concepts of the question.	6
Adequate understanding of the core linguistic concepts of the question. Mistakes are not significant.	4
Poor, vague, muddled, or incomplete understanding of the core linguistic point of the question indicating <i>significant errors</i> in understanding.	2
No evidence that the student understands the core linguistic concepts of the assignment.	0

**B. CLARITY OF WRITING (GRAMMAR, ETC.): ( /3)**

Writing is very clear: small grammar mistakes may be present, but <i>do not inhibit the clarity</i> of the student's points.	3
Small mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. <i>marginally inhibit</i> clarity of student's writing.	2
Writing is unclear: mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. <i>make it difficult for TA to understand</i> student's writing and evaluate student's ideas.	1
Student's ideas/points are <i>completely obscured</i> by problems with grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.	0

**C. OVERALL COMMENTS (OPTIONAL). TA may also make comments on student's assignment directly.**

**\* This rubric is a guideline; the final grade is at the discretion of the TAs and instructor, who reserve the right to modify the grading scheme and/or make additional deductions.**

**TOTAL: ( /20)**

**Research Question & Annotated Bibliography Rubric**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. RESEARCH QUESTION: *Relevant, focused, and shows original thinking (goes beyond what was covered in class)?* ( /3)**

Relevant (addresses issues covered in the course), sufficiently focused (neither too broad nor too narrow), and shows originality/evidence of critical thinking beyond what was covered in class.	3
Relevant (addresses issues that may be relevant to course), but specific connection somewhat unclear, &/or question is relevant/original but too broad or too narrow in scope &/or doesn't extend beyond covered material. *	2
Only tangentially related to course material, &/or too broad or narrow in scope, &/or doesn't extend beyond covered material, (i.e. not require additional references to answer).*	1
Unrelated to material covered in this course/linguistics, &/or lacks originality/doesn't extend beyond class material; not appropriate for a research topic and/or overly broad or narrow scope.*	0

\* Consider seeking advice from instructor/TA.

<b>2. Is the strategy for answering the research question clearly outlined?</b> ( /1)	
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**3. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Are your sources appropriate & properly cited?* ( /5)**

At least one print source?	Y	N
All internet sources are scholarly (NO Wikipedia, blogs, etc.)?	Y	N
At least one source by a linguist?	Y	N
At least three sources provided?	Y	N
Have you cited your sources correctly? (Very minor errors aside.)	Y	N

**4. Do annotations show clear understanding of sources and how each will be used? (Half marks if contribution/understanding of the source is vague.) ( /3)**

Source 1?	Y	Vague	N
Source 2?	Y	Vague	N
Source 3?	Y	Vague	N

**Total Mark: ( /12)**

<b>1. Annotated bibliography is 5% of your final mark. How you use the feedback given here affects your final paper mark.</b>
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<b>2. When your TA returns your bibliography/research question to you with this form, KEEP THEM BOTH as you'll resubmit this form with your graded bibliography/research question, with your final essay draft on Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, and again with your final essay on Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>. MISSING FORMS etc. WILL RESULT IN GRADE DEDUCTIONS.</b>
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**TA COMMENTS:** (TA may also comment directly on your bibliography/research question, or on the back of this rubric.)**TA will tick this box if appropriate:**  You are **strongly recommended** to consult your TA/instructor to refine or develop your research question/ annotated bibliography *before* starting your paper.

## Is this plagiarism?

### Source:

The human mouth is relatively small compared to other primates, can be opened and closed rapidly, and contains a smaller, thicker, and more muscular tongue which can be used to shape a wide variety of sounds inside the oral cavity. In addition, unlike other primates, humans can close off the airway through the nose to create more air pressure in the mouth.

### Student's writing:

Compared to other primates, humans have fairly small mouths which can be opened and closed quickly. This is not like other primates. In addition, humans have a smaller, thicker, and more muscular tongue that can form a variety of sounds in the oral cavity. Also, unlike many other primates, human beings can close the passage of air through the nose to increase air pressure in the mouth, and this helps humans to produce sounds. Without this adaptation, human language would not be as complex as it is.

### Bibliography:

Yule, G. 1985. *The study of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Is this plagiarism?

### ○ Yes!

- It isn't clear what parts are written by the student and which parts are written by the author.
- All the ideas, and the order of the ideas, are directly from the article.
- The student has not written this in his/her own words.

**Changing one or two words here and there does not constitute writing in your own words.**

## How do I fix it?

### Source:

The human mouth is relatively small compared to other primates, can be opened and closed rapidly, and contains a smaller, thicker, and more muscular tongue which can be used to shape a wide variety of sounds inside the oral cavity. In addition, unlike other primates, humans can close off the airway through the nose to create more air pressure in the mouth.

### Student's Writing:

Yule (1985:5) reports that humans and other primates differ in terms of several characteristics: as humans, we have smaller mouths, muscular tongues, and are able to close off our nasal passages to increase air pressure in the oral cavity. All of these things contribute to humans' being more suited to creating human speech sounds than other primates. Thus, we see how humans are anatomically suited to producing human language.

### References

Yule, G. 1985. *The study of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

15

## Is this plagiarism?

### Source: Professor's lecture notes:

- ◉ Universal Grammar is the hypothesis that there are common features underlying all human languages, despite the phonological, morphological, and syntactic differences we observe in these languages.
- ◉ One instantiation of the theory of Universal Grammar is the Principles and Parameters framework.

### Student's writing:

Universal Grammar is a theory of grammar that says there are common features underlying all human languages, despite the phonological and morphological differences between them. One example of this theory is the Principles and Parameters framework.

16