

## **MA Thesis Information (for Rachel Hayes-Harb's students)**

The information contained here is consistent with, but in most cases more detailed than, the requirements of the Department of Linguistics with respect to MA Theses. The purpose of this document is to orient you to what will be expected of you as a MA Thesis writer under my supervision. My goals are for you to complete the highest quality thesis possible within a reasonable amount of time (usually up to three semesters) and for you to find the process empowering and enjoyable.

### **Important Dates**

Please remember that if you plan to graduate at the end of a Spring semester, your thesis usually must be defended and a final draft submitted to the Graduate School in March (and the schedules are similar for Summer and Fall graduation dates). This means that data collection must be complete by the end of the semester *before* your ideal graduation date, and the final semester is devoted to finishing the thesis manuscript and preparing for the defense.

### **Supervisory Committee**

We will develop your supervisory committee together. Your committee should be determined at least 12 months before your ideal graduation date.

### **Communication**

Out of respect for you, I will communicate with you straightforwardly about your progress and your work. I expect you to be open in your communication with me.

### **Thesis Hours**

You are required by the MA curriculum to take six thesis hours. We will decide together how to distribute these hours over semesters, although you should keep in mind that you will need to be registered for thesis hours in the semester that you graduate.

### **Thesis Topic**

Your thesis topic must be within my areas of expertise (for information about my areas of expertise, please visit the Speech Acquisition Lab website at: <http://www.linguistics.utah.edu/speechlab/index.html>). This ensures that your research will be of high quality and that it will be doable within an appropriate time frame, in addition to ensuring the value of your degree (as I am not qualified to direct theses that are outside my areas of expertise). Ideally, your MA thesis topic will relate to current work in the Speech Acquisition Lab, which further guarantees that the necessary resources are available to you. Please discuss your thesis topic ideas with me so that we can agree on a topic at least 11 months prior to your ideal graduation date.

## **Thesis Proposal and Structure**

Believe it or not, once you write a thesis proposal and it is approved by me, you will have completed the most difficult parts of your thesis. A well-composed thesis proposal represents about 75% of the work on a thesis, leaving you only with data collection and analysis to complete. Please see below for information about what your proposal should contain. The thesis proposal should be approved at least 8 months prior to your ideal graduation date (but earlier is preferred).

### **Chapter 1. Introduction**

- Introduce the issue and your general research question
- Provide an overview of the organization of the paper

### **Chapter 2. Background/Literature Review**

- Motivate the gap in the literature that you intend to fill—why is the research question important and why should the reader care about the research?
- Motivate your hypotheses with previous research—draw explicit logical connections between what is already known and what you expect to find
- Explicitly state the research question and hypotheses
- Motivate your methods (stimuli and procedures)
- Define all terms and constructs, according to the literature and also for your specific purposes

### **Chapter 3. Study**

#### **A. Introduction**

- Explain the big picture of the study

#### **B. Subjects**

- Describe population tested (subjects) in detail, how they were recruited, who they are representative of

#### **C. Materials & Procedures**

- Explain how you operationalize the relevant constructs
- Describe all variables (control, independent, dependent, extraneous)
- Explain explicitly how all variables fit into the study design
- Explain how stimuli are chosen/constructed, and what stimuli are representative of
- Provide example/representative stimuli (and/or all stimuli in an appendix)
- Explain materials and procedures in enough detail that study could be replicated by the reader

#### **D. Results**

- Begin with an explanation of exactly what the data should look like if each hypothesis is supported/not supported
- Describe descriptive and inferential statistical analyses you will use
- Describe how visuals will be used to present results

### **Chapter 4. Discussion**

- Describe the expected limitations of your study
- Describe the expected implications of your study (assuming all hypotheses are confirmed)

## **Human Subjects**

Your data collection method must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before you begin data collection. You should submit an application for permission to use human subjects to the IRB immediately upon approval of your thesis proposal. Before submitting an application to the IRB, you must have successfully completed the online CITI training (<http://www.research.utah.edu/irb/training/online.html>). Thus it is best to complete the CITI training immediately.

## **Speech Acquisition Lab Membership and Participation**

As a student under my supervision, it is important to me that you are exposed to the research culture of the Speech Acquisition Lab. As a Lab member, you will find support for many aspects of your thesis and your academic development in general. Lab members support each other by providing feedback about ideas and practical help with issues such as the operation of equipment. Lab members also run subjects for each other, proofread each others' work, and provide moral support. As a Lab member you are expected to attend bi-weekly meetings and participate meaningfully in Lab activities.

## **Collaborative Work**

Laboratory work is by nature collaborative. While your thesis must report largely independent work (and must be written by you alone), I share responsibility for the quality of the work and will be very involved in your project. In addition, you may find that your thesis work relates in interesting ways to the work of other Lab members, in which case it is expected that you will share ideas and work together in your research.

## **Presentation/Publication of your Thesis**

It is my expectation that all MA theses will be of sufficient quality to present at regional, national, and/or international professional conferences. Whether or not a thesis has broad enough scope to stand alone as a publication depends on the thesis, but I will make every effort to help you develop your projects into publishable work.

## **Funding your Thesis**

If I approve your thesis proposal, I am committing (within the limits of the Lab's financial resources) to funding the thesis as proposed. This may mean that you will be limited in the kinds of methods you can use unless you are willing to commit personal funds to (or secure outside funding for) the project.

## **Quantitative Analysis**

Your thesis will involve the analysis of quantitative data. I do not expect you to know how to do inferential statistics, but I do expect you to learn as much as you can as we analyze your data together.

## **Research Ethics**

I expect you to meet the highest ethical standards in your work, but I do not expect that you will know what these standards are without having discussed them. For this reason, we will have ongoing discussions about the responsible conduct of research and you are encouraged to bring up issues if/when they arise.

## Schedule

Fill in the following table to determine your personal MA thesis schedule.

<b>Your Ideal Graduation Date:</b> _____	
<b>Month Due</b>	<b>Due</b>
Minus 12 mos. _____	Supervisory committee complete
Minus 11 mos. _____	Thesis topic determined Online CITI training completed
Minus 8 mos. _____	Thesis proposal approved by me IRB application submitted
Minus 5 mos. _____	Data collection complete
Minus 3 mos. _____	Thesis draft complete
Minus 2 mos. _____	Thesis defended (check the Graduate School web page for exact dates)
Minus 1 mo. _____	Thesis submitted to the Graduate School (check the Graduate School web page for exact dates)