

LING 311 Second Language Acquisition

Instructor: Christine Shea ceshea@ucalgary.ca

Time: MWF 12-12:50pm

Location: SS 010

Office Hours: Wednesday, 11-11:50am

The goal of this course is to introduce the students to the formal study of second language acquisition by adult learners. SLA is a theoretical and experimental field of study which looks at the phenomena related to the development of language, in this case, adults learning a second, third or fourth language. The overarching goal of adult SLA research is to understand the complex processes related to the acquisition of language by people who already have fully elaborated knowledge of a first language.

In this course we will look at such things as:

- i) the acquisition of the formal areas of linguistic knowledge such as syntax/phonology/semantics
- ii) the interaction of social contexts with second language acquisition
- iii) the acquisition of specific skill areas, such as speaking/reading/writing in a second language
- iv) theoretical explanations and models for the representation of second language knowledge in the brain and in the linguistic system

B) Evaluation

Comments on Readings (BB)	10%
Group Presentation and handout	15%
MidTerm Exam	25%
Final Project	50%
Breakdown:	
proposal	10%
1 st draft	20%
2 nd draft	20%
Final Version	50%

Required Textbook

Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. New York: CUP.

Articles will be available through the library databases.

1. Comments on Readings

Students will be assigned one or two research articles to read per week and will have to post questions and comments about them on Blackboard. Questions can be related to clarification or criticism. Questions and comments must be posted by Wednesday at 5pm for the following Friday's reading.

2. Presentation and Handout:

- i) Presentations will be held on Friday's class, during the first 15 minutes (with ten minutes for questions). Students will present in pairs or groups and the same grade will be given to all members.
- ii) Handouts will be graded for clarity AND brevity (i.e., not longer than 2 pages)
- iii) Presenters will address the questions and comments posted on Blackboard by their classmates.
- iv) Questions to answer for the presentation:

Most of you will be reading/summarizing primary research on SLA. Use these questions as a guide when you are doing your presentation.

- 1) What is the larger issue addressed in this study? (HINT: look at the abstract, and towards the end of the introduction section)
- 2) What particular hypothesis is being tested? (should be explicitly stated)
- 3) How do the authors go about testing the hypothesis? (design and methodology)
- 4) What are their results? (DO NOT go into detail about statistics- if you do not know how to interpret the stats, don't worry, we don't need that for this class)
- 5) How do they interpret the results? (support of their hypothesis? rejection of their hypothesis?)
- 6) Is this the only interpretation you can get from their results?
 - a. For example, "The authors say the group that had learned Spanish in Mexico had better pronunciation of the Spanish vowels than did the group that learned Spanish in Calgary. They say this was due to being immersed in the language and receiving better input. However, our group thought the results could also be attributable to individual differences, higher motivation among other things."
- 7) What is the "take-home message" of the study?

3. The Midterm Exam will be held during regular class hours and will consist of multiple choice questions and short answers. The exam will cover articles, class lectures and presentations.

4. For the final project, students will collect data from a non-native adult speaker of a language they

are interested in studying. The project can take a number of different forms. Students may examine the acquisition of a linguistic aspect of language (e.g., morphosyntax or phonology/phonetics) or psycholinguistics (experimental) or a combination of different aspects of acquisition. You will be required to hand in drafts of the project as the semester progresses. Each part of the project will have a separate due date. The final project will be due one week after the last week of class.

**** NB: this is not the final version of the outline. The final version will be posted in August. However, the textbook/grade breakdown will not change***

		ARTICLE	DUE
Weeks 1 and 2	Introduction	What is SLA	
	Foundations	The SLA challenge	Read Chapters 1,2 in ISLA Read article, post comments PRESENTATION 1
Week 3	Linguistics of SLA	Morphosyntax	Read Chapter 3 in ISLA Monday – proposal due Read article, post comments PRESENTATION 2
Week 4		Phonology, phonetics/ Speech perception, production in an L2	Read article, post comments PRESENTATION 3
Week 5			1st draft due PRESENTATION 4
Week 6	Psycholinguistics of SLA	Language and the brain	MIDTERM (Wednesday) Read article, post comments PRESENTATION 5
Week 7			Read article, post comments PRESENTATION 6
Week 8	Social Contexts of SLA	L2 pragmatics, sociolinguistic aspects of SLA at the individual level	2nd draft due Read article, post comments PRESENTATION 7
Week 9	Acquiring the skills of an L2	Reading, writing, listening, speaking in a second language	Read article, post comments PRESENTATION 8
Week 10			Read article, post comments PRESENTATION 9
Week 11	Sociolinguistics of SLA	Societal/Cultural/Educational levels	Read article, post comments PRESENTATION 10

Week 12	Wrap-up		Poster Presentation
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Final project is due the Friday following our LAST day of class.

Grading.

Each exam will be assigned a numerical grade, based on the total number of possible points. The final letter grade will be assigned based on the sum of the total points awarded. The following grading system will be used:

A+ 97-100	B+ 83-87	C+ 68-72	D+ 53-57
A 93-96	B 78-82	C 63-67	D 50-52
A- 88-92	B- 73-77	C- 58-62	F 0-49

(See the University Calendar for interpretation of the letter grades.)

Absence from exams/tests and late assignments: A completed Physician/Counselor Statement may be required to confirm absence from a test for health reasons. Late work will only be accepted in extremely exceptional circumstances. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor beforehand to request accommodation if the stated deadlines cannot be met. Valid reasons include illness, birth, death, marriage, and religious holidays. If you miss a test, the weight of the test will be transferred to the final assignment. There will be no re-scheduling of the MidTerm exam.

Reappraisal of grades: A student who feels that a piece of graded work has been unfairly graded shall discuss the work with the instructor within fifteen days of receiving the graded work. No reappraisal is permitted after the fifteen-day period.