

Introduction to Second Language Acquisition

Note: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; modifications are likely to be necessary.

Course Description

This course is a general introduction to scientific research into how people learn a second language. Although the course is designed to be accessible to students from a wide variety of backgrounds, some knowledge of the linguistic structure of English will be assumed.

Second language acquisition, or SLA, is a theoretical and experimental field of study which, like first language acquisition studies, looks at the phenomenon of language development -- in this case the acquisition of a second language.

The dominant aim behind the research of this field is to extend our understanding of the complex processes and mechanisms that drive language acquisition.

By virtue of the fact that language itself is complex, SLA has become a broadly-based field and it now involves:

- Examining how **non-native** language ability develops, stabilizes, and undergoes attrition (forgetting, loss)
- Carrying out an analysis and interpretation of all aspects of **learner language** with the help of current linguistic theory
- Developing **theories** that are specific to the field of SLA that aim to account for the many facets of non-native language and behavior
- Testing hypotheses to explain second language knowledge and behavior

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- [1]. Identify major issues in current SLA research and theory
- [2]. Discuss problems and challenges in current research and theory
- [3]. Describe how the field developed historically, including major trends in research/theories, major figures)
- [4]. Summarize the important studies and basic ideas of research studies
- [5]. Formulate questions about aspects of research articles and theories that you do not understand

- [6]. Analyze second language learner data from multiple perspectives
- [7]. Articulate your own stand on theories of SLA (develop your own theory) and describe the principles that will inform your future work in the field

Methods of Instruction

The course will be conducted via lectures by the instructor and via group work and student-led facilitation of topics.

I expect from you that you make every effort to contribute meaningfully to planned and spontaneous discussions and that you consciously create and exploit opportunities for personally relevant learning.

Instructional Materials

Required reference texts

Saville-Troike, Muriel. 2012. *Introducing second language acquisition* (2nd edition). Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Slabakova, R. 2016. *Second language acquisition*. Oxford University Press.

Other reference texts:

文秋芳 二语习得重点问题研究. 2010. 外语教学与研究出版社. (索书号: H003/1)

Ortega, Lourdes. 2009. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Routledge.

Gass, S. M., & L. Selinker. 2008. *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (3rd edition). New York, NY: Routledge.

Van Patten, B. & Williams, J. 2015. *Theories in Second Language Acquisition: An Introduction* (2nd edition). Routledge.

White, L. (2003). *Second Language Acquisition and Universal Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Doughty, C., and M. H. Long (eds.). 2005. *The Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Tentative Course Schedule

This course mainly covers the following aspects of SLA research:

Chapter 1 introduction

Chapter 2 linguistic perspectives of SLA: learner language

2.1 Cross-linguistic influence

2.2 Development of learner language

2.3 Universal Grammar and learner language

Chapter 3 psycholinguistic perspectives of SLA

3.1 language and brain

3.2 cognition and SLA

3.3 Second language processing

Chapter 4 social dimensions of SLA

Chapter 5 individual differences and SLA

授课 周次	授课内容
Week 1 & 2	第二语言习得绪论
Week 3 & 4	中介语(第一部分): 跨语言影响/母语影响
Week 5 & 6 & 7	中介语(第二部分): 中介语发展过程
Week 8 & 9 & 10 & 11	二语习得研究的语言学视角
Week 12 & 13	二语习得的心理语言学视角
Week 14 & 15	二语习得的社会学视角
Week 16 & 17	二语习得的个体因素: 动机
Week 18	课程总结、回顾

Course Requirements and Grading

As a student, you will be expected to do the readings before each class meeting, to be fully prepared for class discussion, and to attend all class meetings.

I welcome email communication to deal promptly with any questions or queries that may arise as you work on the course. All assignments should be submitted to me both electronically and in hard copy.

Here is an overview of the requirements and how grading works:

Requirement	Specifics	Total grade
Attendance&	Perfect attendance is expected; <i>I reserve the right to lower grade if any absence without any good reason occurs.</i>	10%
preparation & discussion	Come to class prepared to discuss the readings.	10%
Presentation & Reading journals	Submit at least 3 summaries for our readings.	30%
Final Exam/term paper	More details will be announced as the course goes.	50%
TOTAL		100%

Presentation: For this assignment, students will collaborate in small groups or work independently to lead class discussion of a reading. In preparing your presentation, you should:

- Read the chapter and/or articles.
- Prepare a PPT that summarizes and critiques the theory described in the reading, and/or (if empirical studies of SLA are reported), describe and critique the methods used in the studies and their results. The length of your presentation depends on the length of the reading and complexity of the issue, but should be no more than 30 minutes.

Course Grading

Scores	Description	More Detailed Interpretation
90-100	Excellent	You have not only mastered the course material but have also demonstrated exceptional critical thinking, attention to detail, or originality, as appropriately assessed in the context of the discipline. Assessment criteria have been clearly achieved across all categories.
80-89	Good	You have demonstrated very good understanding of the material by producing work that is essentially accurate, complete, and clear. Assessment criteria have been nearly achieved in all categories, or have been fully achieved in many categories. There is room for improvement, particularly in terms of detail/originality.
70-79	Fair	You have demonstrated some understanding of the course material, but often produced work characterized by lapses in accuracy, detail, or clarity. Assessment criteria have been partially achieved across many categories. There is only partial evidence of sustained or fully articulated critical thinking.
60-69	Passing, but Below Average	You have demonstrated only the most basic understanding of the course material. There are multiple lapses in accuracy, detail, and clarity. Assessment criteria have either been only partially achieved in only a minority of categories. The work presents minimal evidence of engagement or completion.
0-59	Failure	You have not demonstrated satisfactory understanding of the course material. Assessment criteria have not been achieved in any substantive way. The work presents no evidence of any critical thinking. The student appears to have plagiarized and/or engaged in some other form of academic dishonesty.

“What is critical thinking?”

Critical thinking involves working with ideas in ways that transcend simple knowledge or comprehension. Critical thinking involves being able to:

1. **apply** knowledge to new situations,
2. **analyze** data so that you understand its constituents (and how they work together),
3. **synthesize** material from multiple sources to create a new sense of why it's meaningful or useful, and
4. **evaluate** information so that you can offer well-informed, fully defensible opinions on important matters.

Important Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

Since so much of class time will be dedicated to class discussion on theories that may be unfamiliar to you, it is critical to your understanding of the material that you participate at every class meeting. Optimal participation means:

- attending each class in its entirety;
- maintaining a physical and mental presence throughout the period, with no distractions;
- completing assignments and readings before the class meets;
- handing assignments in at the beginning of class on the due dates;
- productively contributing to discussions.

Documentation and Language Style for Written Work

For all written work, students should use a consistent, professionally accepted style of documentation and language use (e.g., APA style, LSA style).

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism (copying from other students or sources without an acknowledgment) is not tolerated. Should a case of plagiarism be established, strict regulations will be applied and these include failing this course. Penalties will also apply for making your work available to other students.

Some Tips for Success in this Course

Expect to put in a lot of time and effort to understand the reading. Especially at first most students find it dense and overwhelming. Don't get behind even if you feel frustrated. Reviewing readings after class, in addition to reading them before class, is often helpful.

Work hard to understand difficult concepts or keep track of complex research findings. If you still have questions, ask. In addition to class time, you can see me during my office hours, make an appointment to see me at another time, or write me an e-mail with a question.

Expect to work hard. SLA doesn't come easy to anyone; the subject matter is complex, studies can be complicated, and there often seem to be contradictory results. But it's a fascinating subject!