

Language Acquisition
AN4011MA/AN5103OMA
Fall 2020

August 28, 2020

Course Description

This course is an exploration of a variety of empirical and theoretical issues in language acquisition research, where we focus on second and third language acquisition. Through readings and in-class discussions, students develop a knowledge base that they will be able to use if they wish to conduct research in this area or in their teaching careers in elementary and secondary education. Some of the questions that we address throughout the semester are as follows: (i) What are the basic similarities and differences between L1 and L2 learning?, (ii) Do L2 learners have access to Universal Grammar?, (iii) What is the role of instruction in second language learning?, (iv) Is there a critical period beyond which full grammatical competence is unobtainable?

In addition to these, we also discuss the acquisition of words by second language learners and we will read about how the knowledge of one's native language and that of a second language can affect the acquisition of a third language. More specifically, we will look into the syntax-semantics interface in SLA by discussing the acquisition of alternating verbs and psych verbs in languages such as English and Mandarin Chinese and we will also discuss the initial findings of an ongoing research project in the Department of English Linguistics on various transfer effects in third language acquisition once we have looked into some recent acquisition models in this new field of inquiry.

Practice

Handouts for most classes will be posted in UD's e-learning platform. Students will be informed of the availability of new class material via email.

Grading

The final grade will be based on a mid-term test (40%) and an end-term test (60%). Retake opportunities will not be available for these two tests.

The grading scale in this course will be as follows:

91% - 100% - 5
81% - 90% - 4
71% - 80% - 3
61% - 70% - 2
0% - 60% - 1

Serious grammatical errors will also be taken into account in the calculation of the final grade on any written work.

Attendance

No more than three absences are allowed, illness included. Students arriving late for class will be marked as absent.

Weekly Syllabus

Week #	Class content	Reading assignments
Week 1 Sept. 10	Introducing Second Language Acquisition	
Week 2 Sept. 17.	Foundations of Second Language Acquisition 1	Saville-Troike (2012) pp. 1-16
Week 3 Sept. 24	Foundations of Second Language Acquisition 2	Saville-Troike (2012) pp. 16-30
Week 4 Oct. 1	The Linguistics of Second Language Acquisition	Saville-Troike (2012) pp. 33-52
Week 5 Oct. 8	Mid-Term Test	
Week 6 Oct. 15	Learnability and the Lexicon 1	Juffs (1996)
Week 7 Oct. 22	Learnability and the Lexicon 2	Juffs (1996)
Week 8 Oct. 29	What should teachers know about the L2 acquisition of (select) syntactic structures? Guest lecture by Dr. Beatrix Burghardt (Indiana University, USA)	
Week 9 Nov. 5	Consultation week - No class	
Week 10 Nov. 12	Third Language Acquisition 1: Rothman's Typological Proximity Model	Rothman (2011)
Week 11 Nov. 19	Third Language Acquisition 2: Slabakova's Scalpel Model	Slabakova (2017)

Week 12 Nov. 26	Testing Slabakova's (2017) Scalpel Model 1	
Week 13 Dec. 3	Testing Slabakova's (2017) Scalpel Model 2	
Week 14 Dec. 10	End-Term Test	

References

- Juffs, Alan. (1996). Semantics-syntax correspondences in second language acquisition. *Second Language Research*, 12, 177-221.
- Rothman, Jason. (2011). L3 syntactic transfer selectivity and typological determinacy: The typological primacy model. *Second Language Research*, 27, 107–127.
- Saville-Troike, Muriel. (2012). *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Slabakova, Roumyana. (2017). The scalpel model of third language acquisition. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 21, 651–665.

Place and Time

Room 106, Thursday 10.00 – 11.40 am

Contact

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Office hours: Wednesday 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Thursday 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Under the current regulations, the course is planned to be a face-to-face, classroom-based course. However, if due to the pandemic we have to switch to remote teaching, please be prepared to use the University of Debrecen E-Learning system at elearning.unideb.hu.

In case of such a switch, the grading policy may be subject to change. You will be notified of these changes by the instructor if needed.

It is our shared responsibility to observe effective hygiene rules and follow the relevant government, university and faculty regulations regarding the pandemic. If you become ill or experience any symptoms, please stay home to protect others from infection.