

LLL300 Second Language Acquisition

1st and 2nd quarters, Junior

Instructor	Ivan Lombardi
Style of Class	Lecture
Number of Credits	2
Day and Period	To be advised

Course Description

This course will cover the basic principles and topics in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Students will be prompted to investigate how additional languages are learned after the mother tongue(s), which factors influence language acquisition and how, and the ways in which SLA research informs and influences language teaching practices. Moreover, they will engage in the critical evaluation of some myths surrounding bilingualism and language learning.

Course Objectives

Students will:

1. acquire a solid knowledge of key notions and findings in the field of SLA;
2. become familiar with research in SLA and its research methods;
3. tackle and debunk a number of myths associated to language acquisition and learning;
4. reflect on their history as successful learners of one or more languages;
5. develop a personally relevant understanding of language learning processes.

Prerequisites

LLL 210 Introduction to Linguistics.

Class Materials

Study materials will be distributed in class at the beginning of each quarter.

Course Methods

The course is set up as a workshop-style course, and thus student active participation is a core requirement. Each week the instructor will facilitate the introduction to a new topic and help students relate the content of the required readings to their personal experience as successful learners of a second language. Students are expected to come to class prepared to share their views on the assigned readings and collaborate with their peers to generate a deeper understanding of the weekly topics.

Evaluation/Assessment

Attendance and participation are cornerstones of the course, as students will engage in peer teaching and peer learning every week. Starting from Week 2, small groups of students will be chosen to act as weekly facilitators. Facilitating groups will work in advance to prepare a set of *Study Questions* for their peers to answer in class, and they will also be in charge of group discussion for one class meeting. Every student is required to be in a facilitating group at least once for each quarter. Study Questions will be evaluated by the instructor. Short exam will take place at the end of each quarter.

Grading

30%	Quarter exam
25%	Group facilitation work
25%	Answers to Study Questions
20%	Attendance and participation

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction and Course Methods

Orientation, discussion of class methods (group facilitation work and study questions), and initial reflection on students' personal history of language acquisition/learning.

Week 2: What is Second Language Acquisition?

A theoretical introduction to the field of SLA and its object of enquiry, with a brief history of the development of the research in the field and an overview of the main findings that now serve as keystones for language education programs in a variety of settings.

Week 3: Language Acquisition in Early Childhood

The workings of first language acquisition in children through its stages of development, from infancy to pre-school and school years.

Week 4: Linguistic Factors Influencing Language Acquisition

An introduction to the notion of universal grammar and typological universals as inherently linguistic factors that influence the acquisition of languages.

Week 5: Non-Linguistic Factors Influencing Language Acquisition

An overview of non-linguistic (i.e. cognitive, psychological, and sociocultural) factors that influence the acquisition of languages.

Week 6: Individual Differences in Language Acquisition

As every person is unique, so is every instance of language acquisition: discussion of individual differences and their study in SLA, critique of popular ideas related to language learning, and students' reflection on their personal language learning preferences.

Week 7: The Notion of Interlanguage

Rise and development of the notion of interlanguage and its key role in understanding and describing language acquisition.

Week 8: Quarter Exam

Written or oral exam on the content of the first quarter.

Week 9: One Mind, Many Languages

An overview of the many forms that bilingualism and plurilingualism can take, with a focus on how knowing and using more than one language influences the structure of the brain, thought processes, relationships with other cultures, and learning.

Week 10: Learning Vocabulary in a Second Language

A discussion of how vocabulary is learned when tackling a second language, followed by a critical evaluation of some myths surrounding vocabulary acquisition.

Week 11: Learning Grammar in a Second Language

A discussion of how grammar is approached when learning a second language, followed by a critical evaluation of some myths surrounding grammar teaching and learning.

Week 12: Learning Pronunciation in a Second Language

A discussion of how the different components of pronunciation are learnt when acquiring a second language, followed by a critical evaluation of some myths surrounding the production and understanding of sounds and sound patterns in a second language.

Week 13: Learning How to Write in a Second Language

An introduction to text production within and across languages, with a discussion and critical evaluation of myths surrounding writing in a second language and what it entails.

Week 14: From SLA to Language Teaching

How does research in SLA inform language teaching in formal settings? An overview of the transition from SLA theory to teaching and learning in the second language classroom.

Week 15: The Goals of Language Teaching and Learning

A final reflection on individual students' language learning journeys, and a discussion of their language-related objectives, backed up by reflections on the nature of goals in language learning and the perceived possible extent of their realization.

Week 16: Quarter Exam

Written or oral exam on the content of the second quarter.

Preparation and Follow-up

- Preparation: Read the relevant portions of the reference materials (about one hour)
- Follow-up: Review the content of the lecture and note any points you are not sure of (about one hour)