# LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

# Course Syllabus

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| Title of the course | **Language Acquisition** |
| Title of the Academic Programme  | Comparative Literature and Linguistics |
| Type of the course  | Elective |
| Prerequisites | There are no formal prerequisites for this course. Students should have fluent English |
| ECTS workload | 4 |
| Total indicative study hours | Directed Study | Self-directed study  | Total |
| 46 | 106 | 152 |
| Course Overview | The ability to acquire a language is a quintessential human property: all normal humans learn a language, and no animal does. How and why language is acquired is a central question every theory of cognition has tried to address. What are the stages children go through when they learn their first language? Are the stages the same for all languages? Does learning a language require special kinds of linguistic input or specific cognitive skills? Is learning a second language different from learning a first one? In this course, we will look at the way language is acquired and used by children acquiring their first language and adults learning a second language in various social and linguistic contexts. We will discuss some of the central issues addressed by the discipline and survey the various methodological approaches to collecting acquisition data. Among theoretical issues, we will touch upon the problem of negative evidence, the Poverty of the Stimulus argument, the Critical Period hypothesis, and abnormal language acquisition. We will discuss social and cultural variation in child-directed speech, and the role of non-linguistic cues in language learning. We will discuss similarities and differences between first and second language acquisition and touch upon various socio-linguistic factors, backgrounds and attitudes that influence first and second language acquisition including such cases as acquisition of minority languages or language acquisition in multilingual and heritage speakers.On the practical side, we will discuss how a child's and a second language learner’s knowledge about language can be assessed and how experiments are set up to address questions about language acquisition. We will survey the resources available through the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES) and explore some patterns in the acquisition of central semantic concepts, focusing our attention on early use of words for number and color.  We will aim at a collaborative study of the ways number and color concepts are acquired, comprising work by individual students. Students will also complete a short field work project on second language acquisition resulting in a class presentation. Overall, the course will serve as an introduction to some central issues in language acquisition, including topics from sociolinguistics and studies on bilingualism, language variation and disorders, developmental psychology, and cognitive science, and will provide students with hands-on experience in using the CHILDES database, collecting and analyzing language data. |
| Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) | Upon completion of this course, students will be able to collect and analyze language data; students will demonstrate knowledge of relevant theory and research in regards to the theory of language acquisition; will be able to use CHILDES language exchange system and CLAN software. |
| Content and Structure of the Course |
| **№** | **Topic / Course Chapter** | **Total** | **Directed Study** | **Self-directed Study** |
| **Lectures** | **Tutorials** |
| 1 | Syllabus, methods, materials | 4 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 2 | Initial research, bibliography | 4 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 3 | Formulating the thesis | 4 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 4 | Outlining the argument | 4 | 2 | 2 | 12 |
| 5 | Writing the introduction | 4 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 6 | Structuring an individual section, paragraph transitions | 4 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 7 | Incorporating close readings | 4 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 8 | Incorporating citations, footnotes | 4 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 9 | The theoretical “zoom-out” | 4 | 2 | 2 | 20 |
| 10 | Building on the work of others | 4 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 11 | Revising the overall structure | 4 | 2 | 2 | 20 |
| 12 | Writing the conclusion | 4 | 2 | 2 | 20 |
| **Total study hours** | 46 | 22 | 24 | 152 |
| Teaching and Learning Methods | Lectures, seminars, presentations, groupwork, essay writing and revision. |
| Indicative Assessment Methods and Strategy  | * **25% Attendance, preparedness, and participation** – students are expected to attend all lectures and seminars;
* **25%**  **First assignment** – an analysis of child-adult dialogues from CHILDES online corpus with CLAN software;
* **25%** **Second assignment** – collection and analysis of SLA data;
* **25% Final essay**
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| Readings / Indicative Learning Resources | Mandatory  Arnon, I., and Clark, E. V. *Experience, Variation and Generalization: Learning a First Language (Trends in Language Acquisition Research).* Benjamins, 2011. *ProQuest*Jordens, P., and Lalleman, J. *Investigating Second Language Acquisition*. De Gruyter, 1996.  *ProQuest*Kroll, J. F, and A. M. B. de Groot (eds.) *Handbook of Bilingualism: Psycholinguistic Approaches*. Oxford University Press, 2005. *ProQuest*AdditionalDe Angelis, G.  *Third or Additional Language Acquisition*. Channel View,  2007. *ProQuest*Gabryś-Barker, D. *Morphosyntactic Issues in Second Language Acquisition*. Channel View, 2008. *ProQuest* Hoff, E., and Shatz, M. *Blackwell Handbook of Language Development*. Wiley, 2007. *ProQuest*  |
| Course Instructor | Kira Bayda |