

California State University—Long Beach
Linguistics 329: Language Acquisition
(Spr. 2014)

Dr. Joseph Galasso

E-mail: joseph.galasso@csun.edu

Home page: <http://www.csun.edu/~galasso>

Office: FO2-221 (TBA)

Tel: (562) 985-5015

Course Description:

This course serves as a general introduction to the study of language acquisition. Principles of first and second language acquisition will be examined in light of such linguistic theory. We will focus on current theoretical notions of language acquisition while paying particular attention to how such notions might become relevant for institutional learning. The development of Pedagogies reflects theoretical considerations. Students through their subject matter (course work & field work) will be made aware of aspects and issues pertaining to variation among people and diversity of California society, including socio-linguistic factors, ethnic backgrounds, and attitudes related to gender.

Course Objectives:

Students enrolled in this course will gain "Explicit" knowledge of language based on linguistic description and analysis so that they may be better equipped to handle general linguistic problems faced by language students in the classroom. Students will demonstrate basic knowledge concerning theories of language *Structure and Communication* through analysis of natural speech. Students will acquire the fundamentals behind different Acquisition Theories & Approaches which espouse either an (i) *Acquisition approach* (=L1) or (ii) *Learning Strategy Approach* (=L2). Students will review some basics of IPA transcription.

Lecture Topics:

- General Linguistic Theory
- Nature of Language: Universals & Variation.
- Studies in Phonology, Morphology, Syntax & Semantics
- Theories of First and Second Language Acquisition
- Teaching Methodology—practical application of the theoretical material to general language problems faced in the classroom
- L1 Interferences in L2 learning and psychological factors in L2 language learning
- Error analysis
- Bilingualism, Sociolinguistics, Language Variation & Disorders

Learning Outcomes—Students will:

- Understand in detail what it means to know a human language.
- Understand the questions linguists ask as well as their theoretical findings regarding the nature of language acquisition.
- Collect and analyze language data.

Course Requirements:

Attend class meetings; read assigned material; participate in discussions; complete assignments and exams (above). Written work will be marked in terms of clarity, explicitness, and accuracy relevant to course topics. Research for the class will be carried out using current available technologies: viz., computer word processing, data-bank and internet research. (Ethics of internet research, plagiarism and copyright infringement are discussed).

Assignments:

- Readings
- Intro Exam, Mid-term & Final: three in-class exams—one after each of the three main lectures on relevant lecture topics
- One summary/literature Paper (2,500 words/3-4 pages single space) on a topic related in some way to Language Development
- Two Field-Work / Data-collection Projects with Abstract (500w) on **First and Second Language Acquisition** (diary/recording). Both parts must include a Data section and an Analysis section.

Course Requirements:

Attend class meetings; read assigned material; participate in discussions; complete assignments and exams (above). Written work will be marked in terms of clarity, explicitness, and accuracy relevant to course topics. Research for the class will be carried out using current available technologies: viz., computer word processing, data-bank and internet research. (Ethics of internet research, plagiarism and copyright infringement are discussed).

Grading:

- 3 Exams (in conclusion of each lecture) (20% each => 60%)
 - Summary Paper (based on L1 or L2 field-work data collection) (10%)
 - Two Field-work / Data-collection Projects (15% each => 30%)
 - E.g., Spontaneous Speech samples of an L1 and L2 subject
 - Grammatical analyses (Non-IPA),
 - Phonological analyses (IPA)
 - Sociolinguistic observations
 - (Specifics of field-work will be discussed in class)
 - Attendance
- 5=A (outstanding), 4=A/B, 3=B/C, 2=C/D, 1=F (fail)

Required Texts:

(i) Hoff, E. (2009) *Language Development* (4ed) Cengage Learning.

Withdrawal Policy: Withdrawals during the final three weeks of instruction are not permitted except in cases such as accident or serious illness. See the *Schedule of Classes* for withdrawal information prior to the final three weeks.

California State University—Long Beach
Linguistics 329:
Language Acquisition
Lecture Schedule
Joseph Galasso

Required Texts:

(i) Hoff, E. (2009) *Language Development* (4ed) Cengage Learning.

Weeks 1-3

Introduction: *Chapters 1-2* A Brief outline of language philosophy: Nativism (Chomsky) vs. Environmental Conditioning/Behaviourism (Skinner), Linguistic Perspectives, What is language and the brain-to-language corollary? Aspects of language and evolution: The biological basis of language.

⇒ **Intro. Exam**

Weeks 5-8

Lecture I

Sounds: *Chapter 4*

- Phonology and the English Sound System
 - IPA Transcription
 - Teaching Pronunciation
 - Phonological Processing & Development
 - L1 vs. L2 Phonological Interferences
 - Category Perception
 - ‘U-shape’ learning
 - Morphology and Phonology: assimilation / allomorph
 - Functional Tense/Agreement/Aspect
 - Morphemes (Bound, Free): Rules for Verbs & Nouns
- Chapter 4*

Weeks 9-10

Words:

Knowing a Language: *Chapters 2, 5*

- Language Universals—Biological Bases of Language
 - Describing a Universal Language
 - Lexical vs. Functional Categories in Language & Early Lexical Development: Semantic vs. Syntactic
 - Word Mapping
- First Words
 - Extensions, Word Spurt
 - Development of Rule-based segmentation (Inflection)
 - Morphology

⇒ **Mid-term Exam**

Lecture II

Weeks: 12-14

First Language Acquisition: *Chapters 2, 5, 6 & 9*

- Principles and Parameters Theory: Nativism & Environmentalism
 - Review of Skinner vs. Chomsky
 - Lexical vs. Functional Categories Revisited
- Child First Language Acquisition
 - Syntactic development
- Theories of First Language Acquisition
- Applying Theory to the Data
- Error analysis

Weeks: 14+

Second Language Learning, Teaching & Bilingualism: *Chapters 6 & 8*

(Hoff selected readings)

- Theory & Methods
 - (L2) Second Language "Learning"
 - What is the logical problem of foreign language learning?*
Bley-Vroman
- L2 Interferences
 - Transfer of the "Pro-drop" Parameter.
- Bilingualism, Pidgins & Creoles
- Code-switching

Communicative Disorders (readings): *(Chapter 10)*

- Specific Language Impairment (SLI, Williams/Asperger's)

⇒ **Final Exam**