

SLS 650: SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

MW 11:00-12:15, Moore Hall 202

Instructor: Lourdes Ortega

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Office hours: W 3:00-5:00 or by appointment

(please use sign-up sheet on my office door or e-mail to schedule appointment first)

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Note: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; modifications are likely to be necessary and will be implemented as a result of students' needs and classroom life.

Course Description

SLS 650 introduces students to the field of second language acquisition (SLA), which as a discipline focuses on the many problems associated to three general questions:

- *How do humans learn additional languages after they have learned their first?*
- *What factors contribute to the variability observed in rates and outcomes of second language learning?*
- *What does it take to attain advanced language and literacy competencies in a language other than the mother tongue?*

In addressing these overriding questions, the field of SLA investigates a number of topics, which I view in three groupings:

- (i) Universal features of the L2 learner and the L2 learning process that determine the nature and route of acquisition (e.g., age and critical periods; cross-linguistic influences, interlanguage variability vs. systematicity, developmental stages and sequences; environmental triggers of acquisition; cognitive contributions);
- (ii) Individual influences related to differential rate of acquisition and ultimate success in an L2 (e.g., aptitude, motivation, and other cognitive);
- (iii) Social dimensions that influence L2 learning (e.g., social identity, power asymmetries, class and gender, macro socio-political and socio-cultural context).

Throughout the semester, we will refer to these three areas as *the universal, the individual, and the social in L2 acquisition*. We will explore each area, but the emphasis will be on the universal in L2 acquisition. As we deal with the various topics, we will always look at the implications of SLA findings for L2 teaching. A range of SLA epistemologies and theories will be examined.

Learning Objectives

- To develop an expert and personally relevant understanding of second language learning;
- To become familiar with theories, methods, and findings in the field of SLA;
- To develop your ability to read SLA research reports meaningfully;
- To support you through the process of conducting and reporting on a research project that explores an SLA topic of your choice.

Methods of Instruction

The course will be conducted via informal lectures by the instructor and via student contributions:

- in whole-class and small group discussion, and
- through our electronic forum, the class email list (sls650-1@hawaii.edu).

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

Instructional Materials

Reading packet:

A set of journal articles and book chapters will be made available to students for purchase from *Professional Image*, 2633 S. King St. (close to King/University intersection). Call to check availability (phone: 973-6599).

Library SLA resources:

You should also consult specialized research journals and SLA references early in the process of developing your research project.

Course Requirements and Grading

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. Please discuss with me openly and in advance any problems with class preparation or attendance that you may encounter during the semester and we'll try to find a solution.

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 both electronically and in hard copy.

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

<u>Requirement</u>	<u>Specifics</u>	<u>Grade breakdown</u>	<u>Total grade</u>
Attendance & preparation	Come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Perfect attendance is expected; <i>I reserve the right to lower grade if you incur more than two absences.</i>		
Research paper	Due week 3: Research Bibliography Due week 6: Research Proposal Due week 12: Interim Draft Due Friday 5/11, 5:00pm: Final Paper	15% 15% 15% 30%	75%
Facilitate class discussion of one reading	Organize and facilitate discussion of one reading (choose one session weeks 8 through 10)		20%
Email commentary	On past week's class discussion (each student should post once during semester)		5%
TOTAL			100%

1. RESEARCH PAPER IN FOUR INSTALLMENTS: Develop a research bibliography and write a research proposal, to be reworked and expanded into an interim draft, which will be further developed into a final research paper.

Feedback plus grade-throughout option: Each of the four submissions will be evaluated with a letter grade (15%+15%+15%+30%).

Feedback throughout and final-only grade option: You have the option to ask to be graded only at the end of the semester on the final paper. In that case, I will give you feedback without a grade on each installment, and the grade you get on your final paper will weigh 70% towards your course grade.

For both options: Rather than writing each submission from scratch, you should always rewrite and expand on previous installments using the feedback that you receive.

All research carried out in HELP or ELI needs to be compliant with their research conduct policies:

- ELI: read <http://www.hawaii.edu/eli/research/index.html> and contact the director, Kenton Harsch < kenton@hawaii.edu >
- HELP: contact the director, Steve Jacques < jacques@hawaii.edu >

If your research involves human subjects (e.g., students –including your own!— or teachers –including your friends and colleagues!) and you think you may wish to present or publish that research later on, you will need to undergo a review with the UH Human Subjects Committee and Institutional Research Board's (IRB) in order to attain the status "Exempt":

- Read: http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/cat_exem.htm

The fulfillment of the requirement of each submission can range in grade, as follows:

A+ (100-96) Outstanding quality. The content coverage, research skills, and academic writing capabilities demonstrated in the paper are thorough, mature, and sophisticated.

- A (95-94) Excellent quality. The paper shows excellence in at least two or three areas: content, research skills, academic writing ability.
- A- (93-90) Fair-only quality. The paper shows competent research skills, good development of ideas, and at least good writing skills. It is, however, towards the low side of quality given what is expected of graduate-level work.
- B+ (89-85) The paper is below what is expected of graduate work. It shows only incipient research skills and/or minimally appropriate writing skills.

2. FACILITATE CLASS DISCUSSION OF ONE READING: Share responsibility for facilitating class discussion of an assigned reading for ONE class session (20%)

Students will collaborate in groups of 2 or 3 and lead class discussion of the assigned reading for ONE CLASS SESSION, during weeks 8 through 10. The responsibility of the discussion leaders is to prepare questions and/or activities that facilitate effective group discussion of the reading in class.

4. COMMENTARY OF PREVIOUS WEEK'S DISCUSSION ON THE EMAIL

CLASS LIST: Assume responsibility to post a commentary about the previous week's class discussion on the electronic class list (ONCE in the semester) (5%).

In your message, you need not only to summarize but also to reflect on what seem to be interesting insights and conundrums derived from the class discussion that past week. The purpose is to keep a public record of what transpires in class each week and to help place class discussions within the context of the entire course. You should post your commentary by Sunday noon. This is an all-or-nothing requirement: If you post a minimum of once a semester, you will receive credit for this requirement.

Course Expectations

-Your grade in the course will be a combination of criterion-referenced and individual-referenced assessment. I will be looking at your semester-long progress regarding research skills, adept academic writing, and development of discipline-specific knowledge (the individual-referenced part of the assessment), and I will evaluate the extent to which you have reached the learning objectives stated in this syllabus (the criterion-referenced part of the assessment). I will not compare the quality of your performance to that of other students in the class (i.e., I do not give grades by spreading student performances on a curve).

- What I am looking for in your performance is clear evidence of intellectual commitment (i.e., engaged curiosity) and academic effort (i.e., hard work) during the semester, and evidence of professional growth. If you are an MA student, this may mean a changed perspective on L2 teaching, based on what SLA tells us our students can and cannot do when learning an L2; if you are an Advanced Graduate Certificate or doctoral student, that may mean growth in your capacity to contribute original and useful research on the learning and teaching of second languages.

-I encourage you to talk to me regularly (either email or face-to-face) to get feedback on your progress in the course and to gain a sense for how what you are doing in 650 relates to other courses and to your long-term goals as a teacher and/or a researcher.

-The deadlines in our course exist to help you stay focused and improve your learning processes. If you have reasonable reasons for asking for an extension on a deadline, please immediately discuss it with me so we can negotiate a satisfactory solution.

SLS 650: Weekly Readings

(Subject to modifications as needed)

Note: * = all students must read the article
= students must choose one among so-designated articles to read

Week 1— Introduction to the course and the field

*Ortega, L. (in preparation). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Chapter 1.
London/New York: Arnold.

Week 2— Age and critical periods

*Ortega, L. (in preparation). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Chapter 2.
London/New York: Arnold.

Week 3— Crosslinguistic influence

*Ortega, L. (in preparation). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Chapter 3.
London/New York: Arnold.

→ *Research bibliography assignment due Monday January 22nd*

Week 4— Empirical studies I

*Schmidt, R. (1983). Interaction, acculturation, and the acquisition of communicative competence. In N. Wolfson & E. Judd (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language acquisition* (pp. 137-174). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

*Doughty, C., & Varela, E. (1998). Communicative focus on form. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp. 114-138). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 5—Empirical studies II

*Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1994). Reverse-order reports and the acquisition of tense: Beyond the principle of chronological order. *Language Learning*, 44, 243-282.

*Spada, N., & Lightbown, P. (1999). Instruction, first language influence, and developmental readiness in second language acquisition. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83, 1-22.

Week 6—IRB & ethics

- *Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second language research: Methodology and design*, Chapter 2. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

→ **Research proposal assignment due Wednesday February 14th**

Week 7— Environment I

- *Foster, P., & Ohta, A. S. (2005). Negotiation for meaning and peer assistance in second language classrooms. *Applied Linguistics*, 26, 402–430.

Week 8— Environment II

- *Bigelow, M., delMas, R., Hansen, K., & Tarone, E. (2006). Literacy and oral recasts in sla. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40, 665-689.
- *Lyster, R., & Mori, H. (2006). Interactional feedback and instructional counterbalance. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 28, 321-341.

Week 9— The social in SLA

- *Peirce, B. N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 9-31.
- *Toohey, K. (2001). Disputes in child L2 learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35, 257-278.

Week 10—Identity & agency

- *Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2001). Changing perspectives on good language learners. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35, 307-322.
- *Norton, B. (2006). Identity: Second language. In K. Brown (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics, volume 5* (2nd ed., pp. 502-507). Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

Week 11—Vygotskian SLA

- *Lantolf, J., & Thorne, S. (2006). Sociocultural theory and second language learning. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (pp. 197-220). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Week 12— Theories in SLA

- *Ortega, L. (2006). Second language learning explained? SLA across nine contemporary theories. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (pp. 221-246). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

→ **Interim draft assignment due Wednesday April 4th**

Week ☺— Current themes: Technology & L2 learning

- *Smith, B. (2005). The relationship between negotiated interaction, learner uptake, and lexical acquisition in task-based computer-mediated communication. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39, 33-58.

*Lam, W. S. E. (2004). Second language socialization in a bilingual chat room: Global and local considerations. *Language Learning and Technology*, 8(3), 44-65.

Week 14— Current themes: Individual differences

*Chen, J. F., Warden, C. A., & Chang, H. T. (2005). Motivators that do not motivate: The case of Chinese EFL learners and the influence of culture on motivation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39, 609-633.

*Gan, Z., Humphreys, G., & Hamp-Lyons, L. (2004). Understanding successful and unsuccessful EFL students in Chinese universities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 88, 229-244.

Week 15—Current themes: Pragmatics & pronunciation

*Rose, K. R. (2005). On the effects of instruction in second language pragmatics. *System*, 33, 385-399.

*Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2005). Second language accent and pronunciation teaching: A research-based approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39, 379-397.

Week 16— Student presentations

→ Final paper due Friday May 11 by 5:00pm (electronic submission, plus hard copy to be left in my box)

SLS 650: Second Language Acquisition (Tentative Course Schedule)

	Topics	Readings and assignments
Week 1 January 8 January 10	Introduction to the course & field	*Ortega (in preparation) Chapter 1
Week 2 [January 15 MLKJ] January 17	Age & CPH	*Ortega (in preparation) Chapter 2
Week 3 January 22 January 24	Crosslinguistic influence	Research Bibliography due Monday 22nd *Ortega (in preparation) Chapter 3
Week 4 January 29 January 31	Empirical studies I	*Schmidt (1983) *Doughty & Varela (1998)
Week 5 February 5 February 7	Empirical studies II	*Bardovi-Harlig (1994) *Spada & Lightbown (1999)
Week 6 February 12 February 14	IRB & ethics	*Mackey & Gass (2005) Chapter 2 Research Proposal due Wednesday 14th
Week 7 [February 19 President's] February 21	Environment I	*Foster & Ohta (2005)
Week 8 February 26 February 28	Environment II	Discussion leaders 1: *Bigelow et al. (2006) Discussion leaders 2: *Lyster & Mori (2006)
Week 9 March 5 March 7	The social in SLA	Discussion leaders 3: *Peirce (1995) Discussion leaders 4: *Toohey (2001)
Week 10 March 12 March 14	Identity & agency	Discussion leaders 5: *Norton & Toohey (2001) Discussion leaders 6: *Norton (2006)
Week 11 March 19 March 21	Vygotskian SLA	*Lantolf & Thorne (2006)
March 26-30 Spring break		
Week 12 April 2 April 4	Theories in SLA	Ortega (2006) Interim draft due Wednesday 4th
Week ☺ April 9 April 11 Lourdes in New Zealand	Current themes: Technology & L2 learning	*Smith (2005) *Lam (2004)
Week 14 April 16 April 18 Lourdes in Spain	Current themes: Individual differences	*Chen et al. (2005) *Gan et al. (2004)
Week 15 April 23 still in Spain April 25	Current themes: Pragmatics & Pronunciation	#Rose (2005) #Derwing & Munro (2005)
Week 16 April 30 May 2	Presentation of students' papers	Final paper due May Friday 11th by 5:00pm, email submission (plus hard copy to be delivered in my box)