SLS 650: SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

MW 1:30-2:45, MOORE HALL 207
Instructor: Lourdes Ortega
Contact information: Moore Hall 585, lortega@hawaii.edu
Office hours: Wednesday 3:00-4:50 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 overarching 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; role of the environment and environmental triggers of acquisition; cognitive contributions; interlanguage variability vs. systematicity and developmental stages and sequences);

(ii) Individual influences related to differential rate of acquisition and ultimate success in an L2 (e.g., aptitude, motivation, and affect);

(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 group work and student-led facilitation of topics. 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. For communication as a class beyond class time, we will use the sls650-1@lists.hawaii.edu email class list and the Laulima class website.

Instructional Materials


*Reading packet:* Available online in the Laulima class website.

*Library SLA resources:* You should also consult specialized research journals and SLA references early in the process of developing your research project (the ones below are all accessible online through our Hamilton Library in the link “E-Resources & Databases” under Research Tools at http://library.manoa.hawaii.edu/):

- **Main journals that publish SLA research** in alphabetical order:
  - Applied Linguistics
  - The Canadian Modern Language Review
  - International Journal of Applied Linguistics
  - International Review of Applied Linguistics
  - Language Learning
  - Language Learning & Technology (open access online: http://llt.msu.edu/)
  - Language Teaching Research
  - The Modern Language Journal
  - Second Language Research
  - Studies in Second Language Acquisition
  - System
  - TESOL Quarterly
- **Two applied linguistics journals are devoted to in-depth reviews of research areas:**
  - Annual Review of Applied Linguistics
  - Language Teaching
Please see also the sections on “Annotated suggestions for further reading” at the end of each chapter in USLA.

### 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 rise as you work on the course. All assignments should be submitted to me both electronically and in hard copy.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Specifics</th>
<th>Grade breakdown</th>
<th>Total grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; preparation</td>
<td>Come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Perfect attendance is expected; I reserve the right to lower grade if you incur more than two absences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper in four installments</td>
<td>Due week 5, Sept 21: Research Bibliography</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Due week 8, Oct 12: Research Proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Due week 14, Nov 23: Interim Draft</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Due 12/16 Friday, 5:00pm: Final Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate class discussion for one session</td>
<td>Organize and facilitate discussion of a reading between week 8 and 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly class commentary on e-class list</td>
<td>On past week’s class discussion (each student should post once during semester)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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1. **RESEARCH PAPER IN FOUR INSTALLMENTS** (65%): 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 (10%+10%+15%+30%), in addition to the feedback I will provide to you on the content, writing, etc.

*Feedback-only throughout with final 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 65% 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.
Please submit each installment both electronically and in hard copy.

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 (a) develop your SP from this project, or (b) present and/or (c) publish this 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.” In practice this means that you will need to submit the Declaration of Exemption Form, which can be found at:


In addition, all research carried out in HELP or ELI needs to be compliant with their research conduct policies:

- ELI: Read carefully the links under “Research in the ELI” at http://www.hawaii.edu/eli/ and follow the instructions there
- HELP: Read carefully the links under “Research Policy” at HELP http://www.hawaii.edu/eslhelp/research.html and follow the instructions there

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 qualities demonstrated in the paper are thorough, mature, and sophisticated.

A (95-94) Excellent quality. The paper shows excellence in at least two of three areas: content, research skills, academic writing ability.

A- (93-90) Fair quality. The paper shows competent research skills, good development of ideas, and satisfactory 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 one reading for ONE class session (30%)

For this assignment, students will collaborate in groups of 2 or 3 and lead class discussion of a reading for ONE CLASS SESSION, some time during weeks 8 through 12. The responsibility of the discussion leaders is to prepare activities that facilitate effective group discussion of the reading in class.

3. 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 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 on
the class list 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 your 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 a doctoral student, this 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.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings and assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;August 22 &amp; 24</td>
<td>Intro to course</td>
<td>M: Preview of course&lt;br&gt;W: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 1</td>
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<td><strong>Week 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;August 29 &amp; 31</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>M: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 2&lt;br&gt;W: Ioup et al. (1994) &amp; Levis’s review of Muñoz (2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;[September 5, Labor Day]&lt;br&gt;September 7</td>
<td>Crosslinguistic influences</td>
<td>W: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 3 &amp; Munro &amp; Derwing (2011)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4</strong>&lt;br&gt;September 12 &amp; 14</td>
<td>The linguistic environment I</td>
<td>M: Rast (2010)&lt;br&gt;W: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 5</strong>&lt;br&gt;September 19 &amp; 21</td>
<td>No readings</td>
<td>M: Research tips for SLS 650 project from Lourdes&lt;br&gt;W: <em>Research Bibliography</em> due in class for peer review today</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 6</strong>&lt;br&gt;September 26 &amp; 28</td>
<td>The linguistic environment II</td>
<td>M: Schmidt (1983)&lt;br&gt;W: Housen et al. (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 7</strong>&lt;br&gt;October 3 &amp; 5</td>
<td>Cognition I&lt;br&gt;Cognition II</td>
<td>M: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 5, sections 5.1-5.8&lt;br&gt;W: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 5, sections 5.9-5.18</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 8</strong>&lt;br&gt;October 10 &amp; 12</td>
<td>No readings</td>
<td>M: Applying for IRB and other research ethics issues&lt;br&gt;W: <em>Research Proposal</em> due in class for peer review today</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 9</strong>&lt;br&gt;[October 17]&lt;br&gt;&amp; October 19</td>
<td>Learner language development I</td>
<td>M: <em>No class, Lourdes returning from SLRF 2011 in Iowa</em>&lt;br&gt;W: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 6, sections 6.1-6.10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 12</strong>&lt;br&gt;November 7 &amp; 9</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>M: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 8&lt;br&gt;W: <em>Group facilitation 3</em> – Kormos et al. (forthcoming) &amp; Sparks et al. (2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 13</strong>&lt;br&gt;November 14 &amp; 16</td>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>M: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 9&lt;br&gt;W: <em>Group facilitation 4</em> – Dewaele (2011) &amp; Garrett &amp; Young (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 14</strong>&lt;br&gt;[November 21]&lt;br&gt;&amp; November 23</td>
<td>No readings</td>
<td>M: <em>No class, Lourdes returning from TBLT 2011 in Auckland</em>&lt;br&gt;W: <em>Interim draft</em> due today in class for peer review &amp; to Lourdes today (before Thanksgiving) or Monday 28 (after)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 15</strong>&lt;br&gt;November 28 &amp; 30</td>
<td>The social in SLA</td>
<td>M: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 10, sections 10.1-10.10&lt;br&gt;W: <em>USLA</em> Chapter 10, sections 10.11-10.22</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 16</strong>&lt;br&gt;December 5 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Sharing of students’ final projects (presentations or posters)</td>
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**Final installment of 650 paper is due Friday December 16 by 5:00pm** (pls email me your submission plus put hard copy in my box)
Contents of SLS 650 Reading Packet, fall 2011


Sources to prepare yourselves for IRB clearance:
