

**SLS 750: SEMINAR IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
CHILDES & Learner Language**

MW 1:30-2:45, MOORE 207

Instructor: Lourdes Ortega

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(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

The goal of this 750 seminar is to learn to conduct research on learner language drawing on existing second language corpora and exploiting CHILDES as a resource for the analysis of second language development.

CHILDES (MacWhinney, 2000; <http://chilDES.psy.cmu.edu/>) can help address language development questions from a variety of theoretical perspectives and offers analytical tools to study a wide range of developmental areas, including phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, narrative, early literacy, and discourse. CHILDES is widely used for the analysis of child language development but its enormous possibilities for the analysis of linguistic development by second language learners have not been sufficiently explored by the SLA community.

Pre-requisite for this course: SLS 650 or consent of the instructor

Learning Objectives

The goal is for participants to explore theoretically cutting-edge questions (and uses of CHILDES that match such questions) in the initial weeks of the semester with a view to identifying a specific project and study of interest, and to develop a research project, according to their background (in teaching and research) and their desired area of specialization. Students may want to explore writing or speaking; lexical, morphosyntactic, or phonological development; interaction or universal grammar or conversation analysis or genre analysis; classroom-based IL needs analysis; task-based IL variation; measurement of IL development, and so on.

Evaluation will be based on a series of activities and assignments that support the development of a final term paper reporting a data-based (pilot) study of some aspect of learner language. Projects that focus on the analysis of already existing L2 corpora as well as collaborative research projects are encouraged.

Methods of Instruction

Seminar participants will design and conduct a study that applies CHILDES tools to an existing L2 corpus in order to investigate some question about second language development. Projects will be encouraged in English as well as other second languages and on questions derived from different SLA theoretical approaches, such as functional theories of interlanguage, generative SLA, and Conversation Analysis for SLA.

The seminar will be conducted through a combination of student-led discussions of assigned readings, hands-on data analyses, informal lectures, and regular progress reports on participants' research projects.

Instructional Materials

The CHILDES software and manual (both of which can be downloaded from the CHILDES website at no cost: <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/>), and a reading packet to be built by all seminar participants during the first weeks of the semester:

Reading packet:

I will send the first few readings electronically. After that, 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).

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>		
Assembling reading packet (4)	E-mail to class on weeks 2 & 4		15%
Bibliographical search	Oral report due week 3	5%	
Theoretical framework	Oral report due week 7	15%	
Final Research paper	Due Tuesday May 11 th , 5:00pm	30%	50%
Other	Take responsibility for some activity that benefits the rest of seminar participants, as needed (e.g., facilitate a reading, lead a hands-on activity)		20%
Email commentaries (3)	On past week's class discussion (each student should post THREE times during semester)		15%
TOTAL			100%

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

1. ASSEMBLING READING PACKET (15%)

Each student will choose **four articles** on CHILDES and learner language, read them, and submit an evaluation of their quality and relevance for our reading packet (I will distribute the evaluation guidelines in class; we will do two articles on week 2 and two more articles on week 4). Based on your pooled evaluations, we will then assemble the reading packet for the articles to be read in the second half of the semester.

2. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SEARCH (5%)

As a first step in identifying a good topic and developing a good plan for a study, you will need to do in-depth library and Internet searches around ideas you may have for your project. You will be asked to present orally on what you found on week 3.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK (15%)

As a second step in your development of a cutting-edge research project, you will need to choose a theoretical framework (a theory, a coherent set of research problems and

methods) from within which you will formulate your research plan. You will be asked to present orally on what you found on week 7 (and encouraged to draft your thoughts in writing as well, but that is not required).

4. FINAL RESEARCH PAPER (30%)

A special goal for this seminar is for each student or team to produce a study that is submitted for publication after the semester ends. The model for the eventual completion and publication of the research projects produced in this seminar will be Sokolov, J. L., & Snow, C. E. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of research in language development using CHILDES*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

5. OTHER (20%)

Because of the nature of a seminar, there will be several needs where students (in groups or individually) take responsibility for some activity that benefits the rest of seminar participants. We will determine these needs as we proceed with the semester. For example, you may need to facilitate a reading, to lead a hands-on activity to show a particular use of CHILDES, or to produce an annotated catalogue of computer learner corpora and tools (e.g., taking <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~carolc/SLA/webclc.htm> or Rule [2004] as an initial model).

6. EMAIL COMMENTARY OF PREVIOUS WEEK'S DISCUSSION (15%)

You will be asked to post a commentary about the previous week's class discussion on the electronic class list three times in the semester. 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. This commentary should not be just a summary of what we did or just disconnected notes. *You should reflect* on what seem to be interesting insights and conundrums derived from the class discussion that past week. You should post your commentary by the end of Sunday.

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 presentation skills, and development of discipline-specific knowledge about CHILDES and learner language (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).

-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 750: Weekly Readings

(Subject to modifications as needed)

Week 1— Introduction to the course and to CHILDES

Myles, F. (2005). Review article: Interlanguage corpora and second language acquisition research. *Second Language Research*, 21, 373–391.

Week 2— What counts as computer learner corpora (CLC)? What is computer-aided analysis of learner language good for?

→ *Assembling reading packet, email first two articles from the above list (choose one from group A and one from group B)*

A. General overviews of CHILDES and corpus linguistics:

- Rutherford, W., & Thomas, M. (2001). The child language data exchange system in research on second language acquisition. *Second Language Research*, 17, 195-212.
- Rule, S. (2004). French interlanguage oral corpora: Recent developments. *French Language Studies*, 14, 343–356.
- Granger, S. (2002). A bird's-eye view of learner corpus research. In S. Granger, J. Hung & S. Petch-Tyson (Eds.), *Computer learner corpora, second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 3-33). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Galloway, I. (2005). Review article: Computer learner corpora and their pedagogical application. *TESOL Quarterly*, 333-339. [reviews Eli Hinkel's quantitative work with L2 written texts]
- Reder, S., Harris, K., & Setzler, K. (2003). The multimedia adult ESL learner corpus. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(3), 546-557.
- Keck, C. M. (2004). Review article: Corpus linguistics and language teaching research: Bridging the gap. *Language Teaching Research*, 8, 83-109.

B. Sample L2 studies conducted with the aid of CHILDES or some other computer tool

- Myles, F., Mitchell, R., & Hooper, J. (1999). Interrogative chunks in French L2: A basis for creative construction? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 21, 49-80.
- Oshita, H. (2000). What is happened may not be what appears to be happening: A corpus study of 'passive' unaccusatives in L2 English. *Second Language Research*, 16, 293-324.
- Housen, A. 2002: A corpus-based study of the L2-acquisition of the English verb system. In Granger, S., Hung, J., & Petch-Tyson, S. (Eds.). *Computer learner corpora, second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 77-116). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Belz, J. A. (2004). Learner corpus analysis and the development of foreign language proficiency. *System*, 32, 577–591. [German]
- Cobb, T. (2003). Analyzing late interlanguage with learner corpora: Québec replications of three European studies. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 59, 393-424.
- Murphy, T. (2001). The emergence of texture: An analysis of the functions of the nominal demonstratives in an English interlanguage corpus. *Language Learning & Technology*, 5(3), 152-173.

Week 3— What kind of research project can we do for this course?

→ *Oral report on bibliographical search*

- Hu, Q. (1994). A study of some common features of mothers' vocabularies. In J. L. Sokolov & C. E. Snow (Eds.), *Handbook of research in language development using childe*s (pp. 110-131). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Week 4— Developing a theoretical framework, exploring the capabilities of CHILDES I

→ *Assembling reading packet, email another two articles of your own choice*

Week 5— Developing a theoretical framework, exploring the capabilities of CHILDES II

Hands on activities in the lab, based on:

Thomas, M. (1994). Young children's hypotheses about English reflexives. In J. L. Sokolov & C. E. Snow (Eds.), *Handbook of research in language development using childe*s (pp. 254-285). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Iwashita, N. (2006). Syntactic complexity measures and their relation to oral proficiency in Japanese as a foreign language. *Language Assessment Quarterly* 3(2), 151–169.

Week 6— Developing a theoretical framework, exploring the capabilities of CHILDES III

No readings, review of past readings & hands on activities in the lab

Weeks 7 — Developing a theoretical framework, exploring the capabilities of CHILDES III

→ *Oral report on theoretical framework*

No readings, review of past readings & hands on activities in the lab

Weeks 8 through week 12 — Readings to be assembled based on students' recommendations; topics and lab hands-on exercises based on students' projects

Week 13 through 15 — TBN

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 750: Second Language Acquisition (Tentative Course Schedule)

	Topics	Readings and assignments
Week 1 January 8 January 10	Introduction to the course & CHILDES	*Myles (2005)
Week 2 [January 15 MLKJ] January 17	CLC, what is it (good for)?	<i>Assembling reading packet (2 readings from list)</i>
Week 3 January 22 January 24	Research project for this course?	Hu (1994) <i>Oral report on bibliographical search</i>
Week 4 January 29 January 31	Theoretical framework & CHILDES I	<i>Assembling reading packet (2 readings of your choice)</i>
Week 5 February 5 February 7	Theoretical framework & CHILDES II	*Thomas (1994), *Iwashita (2006) & lab hands-on exercises
Week 6 February 12 February 14	Theoretical framework & CHILDES III	lab hands-on exercises
Week 7 [February 19 President's] February 21	Theoretical framework & CHILDES III	<i>Oral report on theoretical framework</i>
Week 8 February 26 February 28		Topics, Readings, & Hands-on lab exercises based on students' projects
Week 9 March 5 March 7		Topics, Readings, & Hands-on lab exercises based on students' projects
Week 10 March 12 March 14		Topics, Readings, & Hands-on lab exercises based on students' projects
Week 11 March 19 March 21		Topics, Readings, & Hands-on lab exercises based on students' projects
March 26-30 Spring break		
Week 12 April 2 April 4		Topics, Readings, & Hands-on lab exercises based on students' projects
Week ☺ April 9 April 11 Lourdes in New Zealand	TBN	
Week 14 April 16 April 18 Lourdes in Spain	TBN	
Week 15 April 23 still in Spain April 25	TBN	
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)

APPENDIX A:
Some suggestions of studies using computer learner corpora

- Aijmer, K. 2002: Modality in advanced Swedish learners' written interlanguage. In Granger, S., Hung, J., & Petch-Tyson, S. (Eds.). *Computer learner corpora, second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 55-76). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Altenberg, B. 2002: Using bilingual corpus evidence in learner corpus research. In Granger, S., Hung, J., & Petch-Tyson, S. (Eds.). *Computer learner corpora, second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 37-54). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Altenberg, B. and Granger, S. (2001): The grammatical and lexical patterning of *make* in native and non-native student writing, *Applied Linguistics* 22: 173-194.
- Connor, U., Precht, K., & Upton, T. 2002: Business English: Learner data from Belgium, Finland and the U.S. In Granger, S., Hung, J., & Petch-Tyson, S. (Eds.). *Computer learner corpora, second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 175-194). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Flowerdew, L. (1998): Integrating expert and interlanguage computer corpora findings on causality: discoveries for teachers and students, *English for Specific Purposes* 17: 329-345.
- Granger, S. 1998 (Ed.): *Learner English on computer*. Longman: New York.
- Granger, S. 2002: A bird's-eye view of learner corpus research. In Granger, S., Hung, J., & Petch-Tyson, S. (Eds.). *Computer learner corpora, second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 3-33). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Granger, S., Dagneaux, E. and Meunier, F. (2002): *The International Corpus of Learner English. Handbook and CD-ROM*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses Universitaires de Louvain. Available from <http://www.i6doc.com>
- Granger, S., Hung, J., & Petch-Tyson, S. (2002). *Computer learner corpora, second language acquisition, and foreign language teaching*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Housen, A. 2002: A corpus-based study of the L2-acquisition of the English verb system. In Granger, S., Hung, J., & Petch-Tyson, S. (Eds.). *Computer learner corpora, second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 77-116). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Nesselhauf, N. (2003): The use of collocations by advanced learners of English and some implications for teaching, *Applied Linguistics* 24: 223-242.
- Tono, Y. 2000: A computer learner corpus based analysis of the acquisition order of English grammatical morphemes. In Burnard, L. & McEnery, T. (Eds.). *Rethinking language pedagogy from a corpus perspective* (pp. 123-132). New York: Peter Lang.

APPENDIX B:
Readings chosen through the assembling packet assignment

- Durán, P., Malvern, D., Richards, B., & Chipere, G. (2004). Developmental trends in lexical diversity. *Applied Linguistics*, 25, 220-242.
- Hellerman, J. (2006). Classroom interactive practices for developing L2 literacy: A microethnographic study of two beginning adult learners of English. *Applied Linguistics*, 27, 377-404.
- Hinkel, E. (2003). Simplicity without elegance: Features of sentences in L1 and L2 academic texts. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37, 275-301.
- Keck, C. M., & Biber, D. (2004). Modal use in spoken and written university registers: A corpus-based study. In R. Facchinetti & F. Palmer (Eds.), *English modality in perspective: Genre analysis and contrastive studies* (pp. 3-26). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Nesselhauf, N. (2003). The use of collocations by advanced learners of English and some implications for teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, 24, 223-242.
- Ortega, L. (2003). Syntactic complexity measures and their relationship to L2 proficiency: A research synthesis of college-level L2 writing. *Applied Linguistics*, 24, 492-518.
- Rimmer, W. (2006). Measuring grammatical complexity: The Gordian knot. *Language Testing*, 23, 497-519.
- Schmitt, N. (1998). Tracking the incremental acquisition of second language vocabulary: A longitudinal study. *Language Learning*, 48, 281-317.
- Schmitt, N., & Zimmerman, C. B. (2002). Derivative forms: What do learners know? *TESOL Quarterly*, 36, 145-171.
- Shaw, P., & Liu, E. T.-K. (1998). What develops in the development of second-language writing? *Applied Linguistics*, 19, 225-254.
- Tomasello, M., & Stahl, D. (2004). Sampling children's spontaneous speech: How much is enough? *Journal of Child Language*, 31, 101-121.
- Vold, E. T. (2006). Epistemic modality markers in research articles: A cross-linguistic and cross-disciplinary study. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 16, 61-87.
- Xiao, R., & McEnery, T. (2006). Collocation, semantic prosody, and near synonymy: A cross-linguistic perspective. *Applied Linguistics*, 27, 103-129.