

SLS 650: SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

MW 9:30-10:45, MOORE 109

Instructor: Lourdes Ortega

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Office hours: Mondays 12:30-3:30 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@hawaii.edu email class list.

Instructional Materials

Textbook: Ortega, L. (2009). *Understanding second language acquisition*. London: Hodder Arnold. ISBN-13: 978-0340905593 [*USLA* in this syllabus, for short]. It can be purchased at the UH Bookstore.

Reading packet: 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:

- Main journals that publish SLA research, in alphabetical order (with information about access through our Hamilton Library):
 - Applied Linguistics* (online access)
 - The Canadian Modern Language Review* (print-only access)
 - International Journal of Applied Linguistics* (Interlibrary loan availability only)
 - International Review of Applied Linguistics* (print access & partial electronic access)
 - Language Learning* (online access)
 - Language Learning & Technology* (free online access: <http://llt.msu.edu/>)
 - Language Teaching Research* (Interlibrary loan availability only)
 - The Modern Language Journal* (online access)
 - Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (online access)
 - System* (online access)
 - TESOL Quarterly* (online access)
- Two applied linguistics journals are devoted to in-depth reviews of research areas:
 - Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* (print-only access)
 - Language Teaching* (print access & partial online access)

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 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 in four installments	Due week 4: Research Bibliography	10%	
	Due week 8: Research Proposal	10%	
	Due week 13: Interim Draft	15%	
	Due 5/12, 5:00pm: Final Paper	30%	65%
Facilitate class discussion for one session	Organize and facilitate discussion of a reading between week 7 and 14		30%
Weekly class commentary on e-class list	On past week's class discussion (each student should post once during semester)		5%
TOTAL			100%

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:

- http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/hta_form.htm

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

- ELI: first read carefully the links under “Research in the ELI” at <http://www.hawaii.edu/eli/> and then contact the director, Kenton Harsch, at < kenton@hawaii.edu >
- HELP: contact the director, Joel Weaver, at < joelw@hawaii.edu >

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 through, 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 7 through 14. 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 blog 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.

SLS 650: Second Language Acquisition (Tentative Course Schedule)

	Topics	Readings and assignments
Week 1 January 12 January 14	Intro to SLA	M: Preview of course W: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 1
Week 2 January 19 January 21	Age I	M: No class, Martin Luther King Jr. W: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 2
Week 3 January 26 January 28	Age II	M: Ioup et al. (1994) W: Muñoz (2008)
Week 4 February 2 February 4	No readings <i>SLA project installment 1</i>	M: In-class: Tips on 650 research project W: Research Bibliography due Wednesday February 4
Week 5 February 9 February 11	Crosslinguistic influences	M: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 3 W: Brown & Gullberg (2008)
Week 6 February 16 February 18	The linguistic environment I	M: No class, President's Day W: Schmidt (1983)
Week 7 February 23 February 25	The linguistic environment II	M: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 4 W: Group facilitation 1 -- Eckerth (2009)
Week 8 March 2 March 4	No readings <i>SLA project installment 2</i>	M: Research Proposal due Monday March 2 W: In-class: More research project tips
Week 9 March 9 March 11	Cognition	M: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 5 W: Group facilitation 2 -- Conklin & Schmitt (2008)
Week 10 March 16 March 18	Learner language development	M: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 6 W: Group facilitation 3 -- Bardovi-Harlig (1994)
Spring Break March 23-27 [Lourdes at AAAL & TESOL]		
Week 11 March 30 April 1	Aptitude	M: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 7 W: Group facilitation 4 -- Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam (2008)
Week 12 April 6 April 8	Motivation	M: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 8 W: Group facilitation 5 -- Guilloteaux & Dörnyei (2008)
Week ☺ April 13 April 15	No readings <i>SLA project installment 3</i>	M: In-class: Research writing tips W: Interim draft due Wednesday April 15
Week 14 April 20 April 22	Affect	M: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 9 W: Group facilitation 6 -- Yan & Horwitz (2008)
Week 15 April 27 April 29	The social in SLA	M: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 10 (Vygostkian, CA, SFL approaches) W: <i>USLA</i> Chapter 10 (Socialization, Identity, technology)
Week 16 May 4 May 6	Presentation of students' projects	
Final installment of 650 paper is due May 12 (Tuesday) by 5:00pm (pls email submission plus put hard copy to be delivered in my box)		

Contents of SLS 650 Reading Packet, spring 650

- Abrahamsson, N., & Hyltenstam, K. (2008). The robustness of aptitude effects in near-native second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 30, 481–509.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1994). Reverse-order reports and the acquisition of tense: Beyond the principle of chronological order. *Language Learning*, 44, 243-282.
- Brown, A., & Gullberg, M. (2008). Bidirectional crosslinguistic influence in L1-L2 encoding of manner in speech and gesture: A study of Japanese speakers of English. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 30, 225–251.
- Conklin, K., & Schmitt, N. (2008). Formulaic sequences: Are they processed more quickly than nonformulaic language by native and nonnative speakers? *Applied Linguistics*, 29, 72-89.
- Guilloteaux, M. J., & Dörnyei, Z. (2008). Motivating language learners: A classroom-oriented investigation of the effects of motivational strategies on student motivation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 42, 55-77.
- Eckerth, J. (2009). Negotiated interaction in the L2 classroom. *Language Teaching*, 42, 109-130.
- Ioup, G., Boustagoui, E., Tigi, M., & Moselle, M. (1994). Reexamining the Critical Period Hypothesis: A case of successful adult SLA in a naturalistic environment. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 16, 73-98.
- Muñoz, C. (2008). Symmetries and asymmetries of age effects in naturalistic and instructed L2 learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 29, 578–596.
- 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.
- Yan, J. X., & Horwitz, E. K. (2008). Learners' perceptions of how anxiety interacts with personal and instructional factors to influence their achievement in English: A qualitative analysis of EFL learners in China. *Language Learning*, 58, 151–183.