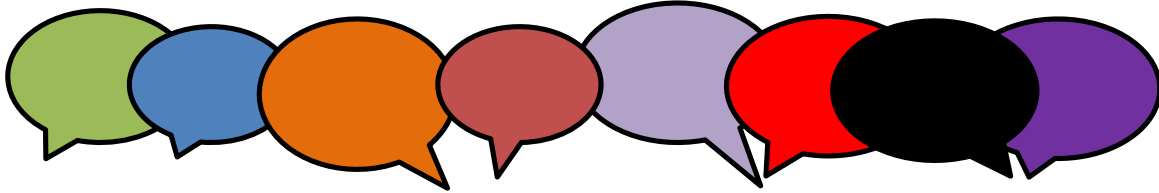


The University of Western Ontario
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

SP2956A: Language Acquisition in Bilingual Contexts



Meets: Fall 2017, Tuesday: 1.30-3.30pm, Thursday: 1.30-2.30pm

Location: TBA

Instructor: Adriana Soto-Corominas
AHB 3R04

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Office Hours: Tuesday: 4-6pm

Pre-requisites: N/A

Antirrequisites: Psychology 3140F

Course Description¹

This course introduces students to bilingual language acquisition with a focus on morphology and syntax within a generative framework. It examines the main issues in child and adult second language acquisition in depth, while it introduces other topics related to bilingual language acquisition, such as code-mixing and language education. This course combines theory (an introduction of the major tenets and theoretical debates) with practice (analysis, evaluation and design of a research project) with the objective of giving students a general, yet comprehensive, outlook of bilingual language acquisition.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe and discuss the main bilingual language acquisition terms and theories
- Analyze and discuss research studies in an informal and formal manner
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of previous (and future) studies
- Formulate research questions to address in a potential research study in the field of bilingual language acquisition
- Design and present a research study on a relevant topic of bilingual language acquisition
- Employ knowledge of bilingual language acquisition theories and previous research to hypothesize possible results of a research study

Course Materials

¹ This course will be taught in English.

This course does not require a textbook. Class content will be given in the form of PowerPoint presentations that, after class, will be available on OWL. Scanned copies of (or links to) the course compulsory and recommended readings will be posted on OWL at the beginning of each unit.

Evaluation (for more details, see section “Assessment” below)

Active participation in class:		30%
In-class discussions	(10%)	
Jigsaw reading:	(10%)	
Article presentation and reading guides	(10%)	
Midterm test:		25%
Final paper:		45%
Proposal	(5%)	
Project presentation	(10%)	
Final design	(30%)	

(Tentative) Course Calendar

Week 1	Unit	Topic	For next class...
09/07	0. Introduction to the course	○ Introduction to the course	
Week 2	Unit	Topic	For next class...
09/12	1. What is bilingualism? Who is a bilingual?	○ Societal and individual bilingualism	Review key concepts from today’s class
09/14		○ Types of bilingual language acquisition	
Week 3	Unit	Topic	For next class...
09/19	2. External vs. Internal factors. What is more important?	○ What qualifies as these factors?	Read your assigned article and prepare for the jigsaw puzzle
09/21		○ Jigsaw puzzle	Read Meisel (2001)
Week 4	Unit	Topic	For next class...
09/26	3. One system or two?	○ Perception ○ Lexicon	Read Paradis (2001)
09/28		○ Phonetics ○ Syntax	○ OWL: submit forum entry on jigsaw topics ○ Read Paradis and Genesee (1996)
Week 5	Unit	Topic	For next class...
10/03	3. One system or two?	○ Morphosyntax ○ The role of dominance	Bring any remaining questions about unit
10/05		○ Degrees of separation between the two systems ○ Taking stock	Hand in research project proposal
Week 6	Unit	Topic	For next class...

FALL READING WEEK			
Week 7	Unit	Topic	For next class...
10/17	4. 2L1 vs. cL2 vs. aL2	o 2L1 vs cL2	Read assigned article and ask for clarifications
10/19		o 2L1/cL2 vs. aL2	
Week 8	Unit	Topic	For next class...
10/24	4. 2L1 vs. cL2 vs. aL2	o aL2: ultimate attainment	
10/26	Midterm		Read excerpts from Benmamoun, Montrul and Polinsky (2013)
Week 9	Unit	Topic	For next class...
10/31	5. Heritage speakers	o Who is a heritage speaker?	Read Oh et al. (2013)
11/02		o Characterizing HSs in detail	Read "Language Change" (on OWL)
Week 10	Unit	Topic	For next class...
11/07	6. Language contact... and language change?	o Transfer and language change	Read your assigned article and prepare for the jigsaw
11/09		o Jigsaw puzzle o Final thoughts	
Week 11	Unit	Topic	For next class...
11/14	7. Bilingualism and linguistic history: pidgins, creoles	o Characterizing pidgins and creoles	o Read Holm (2000) o Complete Holm's reading guide
11/16		o Links between PCs and SLA	o Read Velupillai (2015) o Complete Velupillai's reading guide
Week 12	Unit	Topic	For next class...
11/21	8. Mixed languages	o What are mixed languages? o Students' related research project presentations	Watch assigned Youtube video
11/23	9. Codeswitching and bilingualism	o Why do infants mix their languages? o Students' related research project presentations	
Week 13	Unit	Topic	For next class...
11/28	10. Bilingual education	o Types of bilingual education o Students' related research project presentations	Read Berthoud and Lüdi (2011)
11/30	11. Language policies and legislation in bilingual contexts	o Effects of language policies o Students' related research project presentations	
Week 14	Unit	Topic	For next class...
12/05		o Students' presentations which did not fit in any of the	Post-it parade: which questions about bilingualism are still

		previous topics	unanswered?
12/07		o Review session – wrap-up	

Academic Offenses

Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the *Western Academic Calendar*). Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's **verbatim** or **paraphrased** text in one's own written work without immediate reference. Verbatim text must be surrounded by quotation marks or indented if it is longer than four lines. A reference must follow right after borrowed material (usually the author's name and page number). Without immediate reference to borrowed material, a list of sources at the end of a written assignment does not protect a writer against a possible charge of plagiarism. This also applies to work facilitated or written for students by third parties. The University of Western Ontario uses a plagiarism- checking site called Turnitin.com.

Missed Assignments

Students are responsible for handing in the assignments on the due date. If, for extenuating circumstances, you miss one assignment, you need to seek academic accommodation (see Absenteeism section below). Otherwise, a grade equivalent to 0 will count towards the final assessment of the course.

Absenteeism

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. **Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department**, please refer to Accommodation for Medical Illness here <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>.

Students are allowed to miss classes without penalty for legitimate reasons (medical issues, family emergencies etc.). Documentation for legitimately missed classes is required at the Dean's Office for Academic Accommodation. Students who miss classes or parts of classes are responsible for the material they have missed. Students who miss classes with no legitimate reason will get a zero in participation grade that day.

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is **absent too frequently** from class (lectures and / or homework days), will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of Registration.” (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/attendance.pdf>)

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices are acceptable in class as long as they are used for class purposes (i.e. taking notes, asking questions). If any extenuating circumstances arise that require you to answer a call/messages, I kindly ask you to step out of the class to avoid distracting your peers.

Required Readings²

All readings that are not available online through Western library will be uploaded to OWL at the beginning of each unit.

- Benmamoun, E., Montrul, S., & Polinsky, M. (2013). Heritage languages and their speakers: Opportunities and challenges for linguistics. *Theoretical Linguistics*, 39(3), 129-181. doi:10.1515/tl-2013-0009
- Berthoud, A-C & Lüdi, G. (2011). Language policy and planning. *The SAGE handbook of sociolinguistics*. Sage Publications.
- Chondrogianni, V., & Marinis, T. (2011). Differential effects of internal and external factors on the development of vocabulary, tense morphology and morpho-syntax in successive bilingual children. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 1(3), 318-345.
- Dede, K. (1999). An ablative postposition in the Xining dialect. *Language Variation and Change*, 11(1), 1-17. doi:10.1017/S0954394599111013
- Ezeizabarrena, M. J. (2012). The (in)consistent ergative marking in early Basque: L1 vs. child L2. *Lingua*, 122(3), 303-317.
- Gathercole, V. C. M., & Thomas, E. M. (2005). Minority language survival: Input factors influencing the acquisition of Welsh. In *Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism* (pp. 852-874). Somerville: Cascadilla Press.
- Golberg, H., Paradis, J., & Crago, M. (2008). Lexical acquisition over time in minority first language children learning English as a second language. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 29(01), 41-65.
- Holm, J. (2000). Chapter 1: Introduction. *An introduction to pidgins and creoles*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ionin, T., Zubizarreta, M. L., & Philippov, V. (2009). Acquisition of article semantics by child and adult L2-English learners. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 12(03), 337-361.
- Meisel, J. M. (2001). The simultaneous acquisition of two first languages. In *Trends in bilingual acquisition*, Cenoz, J. and Genesee, F (eds.). 1, 11. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Oh, J. S., Jun, S. A., Knightly, L. M., & Au, T. K. F. (2003). Holding on to childhood language memory. *Cognition*, 86(3), B53-B64.
- Paradis, J. (2001). Do bilingual two-year-olds have separate phonological systems?. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 5(1), 19-38.

² Students will not be required to read all these readings. More details will be given in class.

- Perpiñán, S. (2016). Catalan-Spanish bilingualism continuum. The expression of non-personal Catalan clitics in the adult grammar of early bilinguals. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 6(3).
- Schlyter, S., & Thomas, A. (2012). L1 or L2 Acquisition? Finiteness in child second language learners (cL2), compared to adult L2 learners (aL2) and young bilingual children. *Comparative perspectives to language acquisition: A tribute to Clive Perdue*, 282-302.
- Silva-Corvalán, C. (2008). The limits of convergence in language contact. *Journal of Language Contact*, 2(1), 213-224.
- Unsworth, S. (2004). Child L1, child L2 and adult L2 acquisition: Differences and similarities. In *Proceedings of the Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development* (Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 633-644).
- Velupillai, V. (2015). Chapter 3: Mixed languages. *Pidgins, creoles and mixed languages: An introduction*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company

Assessment

Participation

Participation in this course makes up for a big part of the final grade. Please, read this section carefully to understand what is considered good participation in this course.

In-class discussion / reflection: This course places a lot of importance on student reflection, interaction, and discussion. Most lessons have organized discussion pieces built in on them – most of them ask for your opinion or for you to discuss the content that has been presented, so don't worry about "not knowing". While the instructor will not call on individual students, to make sure you get a good grade in this component, you need to take active part in such discussions.

Jigsaw readings: In the course we have 2 jigsaw readings. That is, different students will read different articles and, in class, they will present them to their peers. Therefore, your failing to do the readings will be detrimental to your peers. For this reason, if you fail to complete any of the jigsaw readings, you will automatically lose 10% of the course grade (that is, one third of the participation grade). Similarly, if you miss the class where you are supposed to present your article without proper accommodation, it will also result in your losing 10% of the class.

In-class presentations: On one occasion you will have to present, in a group, a research article to the rest of the class. If you miss the class where you are supposed to present your article without proper accommodation, it will result in your losing 5% of the class.

Reading guides: On two occasions you will need to read two articles and submit a reading guide with a few questions about them. If you fail to submit one of these reading guides will result in your losing 5% of the course grade.

Final project

For this course, you can choose to create an original experimental study (with no data collection involved) or carry out a literature review about an issue / theory / phenomenon related to bilingual language acquisition. Both types of projects have to be related to the class topics discussed in Units 8 to 11. See below a description of each unit with some open research questions to spark your curiosity. If none of these topics is of your interest, get in touch with the instructor before Week 3.

If you choose to design an original experimental study, you are expected to investigate one or two research questions by doing background research and fully developing an experimental methodology (including a characterization of participants and tests). However, it is not expected that students in this course collect data using their experimental design.

If you choose to carry out a literature review, you are expected to thoroughly survey between 10 and 15 academic sources (e.g. articles, books, dissertations, or proceedings) relevant to a particular issue related to bilingual language acquisition. This “thorough survey” involves a description, summary, and evaluation of each particular work, together with a comparison between works and final overarching conclusions.

Project proposal (5%): This proposal is to be submitted on 1st. In less than 250 words, you need to explain what topic you want to research, why you are interested in this topic and what preliminary research questions you have. Before reading week, you will receive feedback from the instructor regarding a) your research questions, and b) references you should consult for your project.

Project presentation (10%): The one-day units of this course (between March 14th – April 4th) are designed to integrate your project presentations. In this presentation you will present the project you are working on to the rest of the class. The project presentations will always be carried out on the day of the lesson the project is related to. That is, if you are research language policy, your project presentation will take place on March 30th. The presentation should be between 15 and 20 minutes and it has to include a background of the phenomenon/phenomena you are investigating, research questions, a theoretical background, and your methodology.

After your presentation, you will receive oral feedback from your peers and instructor and, within 24 hours, you will receive written feedback from your supervisor. All feedback is meant to strengthen your project, so make sure take it into account before your project submission.

Project submission (30%): All projects have to be submitted on May 25th taking into account the feedback you received on your presentation. Whether you choose to create an original study or to carry out a literature review, both should conform to the APA style guidelines. If you choose to create your own study, make sure

you include all supporting materials (test instruments, stimuli, etc.) You can think of this final project as one of the many research articles or literature reviews we'll read this year, as containing a theoretical background, research questions, hypotheses, and a methodology.

Topics for research

Mixed Languages

Mixed languages (such as Michif or Media Lengua) arise through the fusion of usually two parent languages in situations of language contact. This fusion, which is far from being random, intertwines (normally) the lexicon of one of the source languages and the grammar of the other. While these languages are interesting by themselves as a case of study, there is also a lot of research to do to fully understand their acquisition.

Some questions to think about:

- As we will discuss, mixed languages can undergo language change while one of the source languages remains intact. Do children acquiring these mixed languages ever transfer the changed features back to the source language?
- Do 2L1 children who acquire a mixed language and who are dominant in one of the parent languages show a different pattern of acquisition with respect to children who are dominant in the other parent language?
- How is the creation of a mixed language negotiated?

Bilinguals and code-mixing

Adult bilinguals often code-switch and infants sometimes code-mix. While code-mixing was taken (some decades ago) as proof of bilingual children's inability to differentiate their two languages, it is thought of today as a smart strategy from their part. Code-switching in adults has been (and it still is) heavily researched, but infants' code-mixing still holds a lot of question marks.

Some questions to think about:

- How does the amount of code-mixing correlate with language dominance over time?
- Do 2L1 and cL2 children use code-mixing for the same purposes and to a similar extent?

Language Education

In a monolingual country, bilingual education is often not discussed. In a bilingual country, or in a country with a large proportion of bilinguals, the situation gets tricky. Should students be educated in both languages? Do all languages in a country deserve to be taught? Our unit on language education highlights the

importance of bilingual education and describes the several shapes that bilingual education takes around the world. A lot of research has to be done in terms of the benefits and long-term impact that each type of bilingual education has.

Some questions to think about:

- Is there an advantage for cL2 acquirers to begin education in their L1?
- For young heritage speakers, is the bilingual approach or the immersion approach more successful for ultimate attainment in both languages?
- Is there an advantage in terms of acquisition for learners who are biliterate as compared to learners who are bilingual but monoliterate?
- Do cL2 acquirers who are exposed to the L2 through immersion programs only (Ontario) share similarities with cL2 acquirers whose L2 is the dominant language in the community (Quebec)?

Language planning and policy

Language planning and policy is one of the aspects of bilingualism that affects bilinguals more directly: which languages will be allowed at public spaces? What languages can you use when addressing the government of your country? Which languages deserved to be called *official*? Oftentimes language policies are passed and language planning is made without consulting linguists. Perhaps because of this, there is still a lot of research to be done in how language planning and policy affect language acquisition.

Some questions to think about:

- Can schools be effective agents of language maintenance of endangered languages?
- When the government of a country benefits the spread and acquisition of global languages (e.g. English, Spanish), how does that relate to the acquisition of the minority languages of that country?
- Do covert language policies affect bilingual children language choice? To what extent?