

Child Language Acquisition

Professor: Victoria Mateu [vɪk' tɔ.ɪ.ə mə.' te.u]

Email: victoria.e.mateu@gmail.com

Physical Office: Rolfe 5330

Virtual Office: <https://ucla.zoom.us/my/victoriamateu>

Office hours (OH): Tuesday 2:30PM - 4:30PM or by appointment

Course Description

This course is concerned with the question of how children acquire their native language. After laying the theoretical framework, the course explores how children gain competence in different aspects of the language – the sound system (phonetics and phonology), word meaning (lexical semantics), word formation (morphology); and sentence structure (syntax) – on their journey towards adult competence. Beyond general theory, which transcends any one language, there will be a focus on Spanish (and other Romance languages) and English.

The course primarily considers monolingual and typical language development, but also examines “nontypical” circumstances such as acquisition beyond the “critical period”, bilingual and child L2 development, and language disorders.

Lectures

Lectures are held on **Monday and Wednesday, 2:00PM - 3:50PM** in **Public Affairs Building Room 2250**

Course Materials

Handouts, assignments, and any extra readings will be posted on the course website:

<https://ccl.e.ucla.edu/course/view/21F-SPAN160-1>

- Required book:
 - *How Children Learn Language* by William O'Grady.

Course Requirements:

All students are expected to do the assigned readings (before or after lecture), attend all lectures, participate in class, and return the assigned work by the due dates and times.

- **Exams:** There are 2 timed *non-cumulative* exams that cover material from lectures and readings.
Exam dates: #1: Wednesday, October 20 (Week 4) – Timed, closed book
#2: Monday, November 22 (Week 9) – Timed, open book

- **Homeworks:**
 - (i) Each assignment (5 total) will be worth 5% of your final grade.
 - (ii) Assignments must be completed through Gradescope (accessible through CCLE).
 - Your Gradescope login is your university email, and your password can be changed: https://www.gradescope.com/reset_password
 - Class code: GEJBKE
 - (iii) Late assignments will not be accepted except for legitimate reasons (e.g., sickness, injury, loss of relative), in which case an extension may be given if asked *in advance*. Evidence of your excuse may be requested.
 - (iv) While I encourage you to discuss class material with one another, you must *do your homework on your own*. This will help you gauge how well you understand the lectures and readings, and also prepare you for the exams. If I suspect you have copied an assignment from anywhere, you will receive a zero for that assignment and you may be reported to the Dean of Student Affairs.
- **Project:** In groups of 2-3 you will choose a topic related to Spanish child language acquisition and you will conduct a small pilot study with either a real child (below the age of 7) or using corpus data (e.g., CHILDES).
 - i) Groups will have to discuss their research question and study design with me (in person or by email) *before the end of week 8*. More details will be provided throughout the quarter.
 - ii) During Week 10 you will give a 10min presentation of your research.
 - iii) The project (8-12 pages double space) must be submitted to me, via email, by Wednesday 12/8 at 12pm. One submission per group.
 - Possible topics (among others):
 - Phonological substitutions, reductions, omissions
 - Frequency effects in phonological acquisition (across two languages)
 - Acquisition of some inflectional or derivational morpheme (e.g., past, gender, diminutive)
 - Overgeneralization of inflectional morphology (e.g., *ponido* → *puesto*)
 - Acquisition of some grammatical element, e.g., articles, prepositions, copulas *ser/estar*
 - Acquisition of some syntactic construction, e.g., *wh*-questions, passives, word order with different verb types
 - Monolingual vs. bilingual development (delay, acceleration, transfer)
 - Typical vs. atypical development (delayed, abnormal)
- **Attendance and Participation:** Attendance *and* participation in lecture constitute 5% of your final grade. If you have a legitimate reason to miss class (e.g., not cleared to come to campus due to COVID-19 quarantine orders, exposure, overlapping symptoms, etc.), please, let me know *in advance*. If you have to miss >15% of all classes, you must contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825 1501.
- **Laptops and other electronic devices:** You may bring a laptop/tablet to class, but please **do not** engage in non-class related activities during lectures. It is distracting to the students sitting next to you or behind you (and we can tell!).

- **Extra credit:** You may earn up to 3% of extra credit by participating in Linguistic experiments (if you qualify) or by completing the alternative assignments available here: <https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/spanport-linguistics?section=2>
 - Each 30min-long experiment/ alternative assignment = +1%
 - Each 60min-long experiment = +2%

Final Grade:

Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Homework	25%
Term paper	25%
Presentation	5%
Participation	5%

COVID-19 Policies

Campus policies may be modified. For current information visit: covid-19.ucla.edu.

At present, each of us:

- Must wear an [approved mask](#) that fully covers our nose and mouth for the duration of class, office hours, or other course-related activity, regardless of vaccination status.
 - Disposable masks are freely available at the Wooden Center.
 - Appropriate masks include *two-ply* woven fabric masks, surgical masks, non-woven KN95 masks, and N95 respirators.
 - For those that have a disability-related reason not to wear a mask, you can contact the [Center for Accessible Education](#) (CAE) to obtain an approved accommodation and any appropriate alternative mitigation measures to be sent to instructors.
- Must be fully vaccinated or have submitted an exception request. Unvaccinated students with pending or approved exceptions must comply with [twice-weekly testing](#).
- Is required to complete [daily symptom checks prior to coming to campus](#), regardless of vaccination status, and must stay home if you are not cleared by the symptom survey and/or are advised by the Exposure Management Team to quarantine or isolate.
- Will refrain from eating in the classroom, except for those with approved accommodations. If you need to drink, please do so quickly and then put on your mask. If you need to eat something *for medical reasons*, please do so quickly and then put on your mask.

I will do my best to support students who are complying with the requirement to stay home. Contact me *in advance* if you need to stay home, and we will make alternative arrangements for you.

Be advised that refusal to comply with current campus directives related to COVID-19 mitigation may result in dismissal from the classroom and referral to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any questions or concerns about UCLA's COVID-19 protocol, go to <https://covid-19.ucla.edu/information-for-students/>; Thank you for your cooperation!

Students with Special Needs

Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the [Center for Accessible Education](#) (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255 within the first two weeks of the term, as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations.

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Class syllabus:

NB: Dates and coverage are subject to change. | *Mandatory readings

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	M 9/27	Introduction: Basic issues and questions <i>Readings: *O'Grady (2005): Ch. 1 & 7</i>	
	W 9/29	Phonetics: Early speech perception speech <i>Readings: *O'Grady (2005): Ch. 2, Sections 1-2; Eimas (1985)</i>	
2	M 10/4	Phonology: Acquiring the sound system <i>Readings: *O'Grady (2005): Ch. 6, Sections 3-4, Acevedo (1993)</i>	Assignment 1 (Intro + Phonetics) due 10/6 by 2pm.
	W 10/6	Phonology: Cont'd	
3	M 10/11	Word Learning <i>Readings: *O'Grady (2005): Ch. 3; Naigles (1990)</i>	Assignment 2 (Phonology) due 10/13 by 2pm.
	W 10/13	Morphology: Learning morphological rules <i>Readings: Pérez Pereira (1988); Shuler et al. (2021)</i>	
4	M 10/18	Discussion and Review	
	W 10/20	Exam 1 - Closed book	
5	M 10/25	Syntax: The early stages <i>Readings: *O'Grady (2005): Ch. 4; Rizzi (1993); Shi (2013)</i>	
	W 10/27	Syntax: The later stages <i>Readings: *O'Grady (2005): Ch. 5; Friedmann et al. (2009)</i>	
6	M 11/1	Bilingualism <i>Readings: *Paradis & Genesee (1996)</i>	Assignment 3 (Syntax I) due 11/3 by 2pm.
	W 11/3	Child L2 Acquisition <i>Readings: Zdobenko & Paradis (2011)</i>	
7	M 11/8	Lab 1: Corpus Analysis: CHILDES and CLAN	Assignment 4 (Biling and Child L2) due 11/10 by 2pm.
	W 11/10	Lab 2: Experimental methodologies; How to write an academic paper	
8	M 11/15	Language in atypical populations <i>Readings: *Stromswold (2000: 913-925); Bishop et al. (2006)</i>	Assignment 5 (Research Methods) due 11/19 by 2pm.
	W 11/17	Discussion and Review	
9	M 11/22	Exam 2 - Open book	
	W 11/24	NO CLASS - Early Thanksgiving	
10	M 11/29	Presentations	
	W 12/1	Presentations	
Finals	W 12/8	Project due at 12:00pm	