

## First Language Acquisition of Spanish

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**Office hours:** Wednesday 1:00PM - 3:00PM (PST) or by appointment

### Course Description:

This course is designed to *introduce* you to current acquisition theory and empirical studies (naturalistic and experimental) of Spanish (and Romance)-speaking children's grammatical development. We will investigate the more widely studied areas of (morpho-)syntactic development such as agreement, explicit and null arguments, verb structure, A- and A'-movement, as well as some issues in semantic/pragmatic development. We will explore these topics within the context of more general questions about language development such as the role of (innate) grammatical principles, input frequency and learning, as well as various performance-related and methodological issues. Although the focus will be on typically developing monolingual Spanish-speaking children, we will also examine bilingual development in relation to some of these topics.

There are no prerequisites for this course other than basic knowledge of Spanish. No previous exposure to first language acquisition literature is assumed. However, Spanish 204B (Spanish Syntax) or equivalent is strongly recommended.

### Class:

Classes are held on **Monday, 3:00PM - 5:50PM (PST) in Rolfe 3134.**

### Course Materials:

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

<https://bruinlearn.ucla.edu/courses/79240>

- Required book:
  - *The Acquisition of Spanish* by Silvina Montrul

### Course Requirements:

All students are expected to do the assigned readings *before* lecture, attend all seminars, participate in class, present papers, and submit a final project.

- **Attendance and Participation (10%):**

This is a discussion-based seminar, which means that **attendance** and **active participation** are essential. This will require carefully reading and absorbing the assigned readings ahead of time and being prepared to discuss your opinions and questions about those readings.

You are entitled to miss one class without any explanation or documentation. After this, you must provide a legitimate excuse. Travel for conferences or to otherwise represent the university are always excused. If you are unable to attend physically for some legitimate reason (e.g., not being cleared to come to campus), a Zoom link will be provided so you can attend and participate virtually.

- **Paper presentations (30%):**

Each student will **present three papers** to the class. You are expected to coordinate with me to find a topic and paper to present at least 2 weeks in advance. Presentations should be approximately 20 minutes long, accompanied by handouts or slides.

- **Final Paper (60%):**

Students will choose a morphosyntactic feature of interest, design an experiment or corpus study, and submit a research proposal at the end of the quarter. The final paper will have four components:

- i) The **proposal** for the topic you would like to explore is due Week 7, February 17 (Thursday) by noon. Students will submit a two-page proposal of the overarching goal of their research project and provide a roadmap to achieve that goal.
- ii) A **draft** of the paper is due Week 9, March 3 (Thursday) by noon. The paper draft is required but will *not* be graded.
- iii) The **presentation** is a summary of your paper with a handout or ppt and will take place the last day of class, March 7. Presentations will be about 20 minutes long with 10 minutes afterwards for discussion and questions.
- iv) The **final paper** is due on Finals Week (Wednesday March 16). The final paper will be an improved and extended version of your draft –it should be 12-16 pages long double-spaced. It must have a *novel* component to it, i.e. a construction or feature that has not been examined before (from a particular lens), or a proposal that offers substantial methodological improvements, and it must be theoretically motivated. The paper should have the following format:
  1. Introduction
    - 1.1. Theoretical background
    - 1.2. Previous research
    - 1.3. Research questions and predictions
  2. Methods
    - 2.1. Participants
    - 2.2. Materials and Procedure
    - 2.3. Coding and analysis
  3. Summary (discuss merits and broader impacts)

**Final grade breakdown:**

Participation	10%
Paper presentations	30%
Proposal	10%
Project presentation	10%
Final Project	40%

## COVID-19 Policies

Campus policies may be modified. For current information visit: [covid-19.ucla.edu](https://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.

### Class syllabus:

NB: Dates and coverage are subject to change.

\*Mandatory book readings. See references for additional mandatory readings. Reading lists will be updated as the quarter progresses.

Week	Date	Topic	Deadlines
1	1/3	<b>First Language Acquisition: Big questions</b> <i>Readings: Montrul - Chapter 1, Sections 1-4, 6</i>	
2	1/10	<b>Noun and Verb Morphology</b> <i>Readings: Montrul - Chapters 2-3</i>	
3	1/17	<b>NO CLASS - Martin Luther King Jr. Day</b>	
4	1/24	<b>Subjects</b> <i>Readings: Montrul - Chapter 4, Sections on Subjects</i>	
5	1/31	<b>Objects</b> <i>Readings: Montrul - Chapter 4, Sections on Objects (except 2.2.2.)</i>	
6	2/7	<b>A-movement: Unaccusatives, Passives, and Raising</b> <i>Readings: Montrul - Chapter 6</i>	
7	2/14	<b>A'-movement: Wh-questions and Relative Clauses</b> <i>Readings: Montrul - Chapter 5</i>	Proposal due (10%)
8	2/21	<b>NO CLASS - Presidents' Day</b>	
9	2/28	<b>Pragmatics</b> <i>Readings: Montrul - Chapter 4, Section 2.2.2.</i>	Draft due
10	3/7	<b>Presentations</b>	Presentation due (10%)
Finals	3/16		Paper due (40%)

## References

### Week 1: Introduction

Becker, M., & Deen, K. U. (2020). *Language Acquisition and Development: A generative introduction*. MIT Press. Chapters 1-2.

\*Montrul, S. (2004). The acquisition of Spanish: Morphosyntactic development in monolingual and bilingual L1 acquisition and adult L2 acquisition (Vol. 37). John Benjamins Publishing. Chapter 1, Sections 1-4, 6.

Roeper, T., & Pérez-Leroux, A. T. (2011). Simplicity and complexity in child language and its explanation. *Infancia y Aprendizaje*, 34(3), 263-280.

Shi, R., Legrand, C., & Brandenberger, A. (2020). Toddlers track hierarchical structure dependence. *Language Acquisition*, 27(4), 397-409.

Yang, C. (2004). Universal Grammar, statistics or both?. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 8(10), 451-456.

\*Yang, C. (2013). Ontogeny and phylogeny of language. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 110(16), 6324-6327.

## Week 2: Noun and Verb morphology

- Bel, A. (2002). Early verbs in the acquisition of tense features in Spanish and Catalan. In *The Acquisition of Spanish Morphosyntax. The L1/L2 Connection*, A. T. Pérez-Leroux and J. Liceras (eds), 1–34. Dordrecht: Kluwer
- \*Dracos, M., Requena, P., & Miller, K. (2019). Acquisition of mood selection in Spanish-speaking children. *Language Acquisition*, 26(1), 106-118.
- Liceras, J. M., Fuertes, R. F., & de la Fuente, A. A. (2012). Overt subjects and copula omission in the Spanish and the English grammar of English–Spanish bilinguals: On the locus and directionality of interlinguistic influence. *First Language*, 32(1-2), 88-115.
- \*Montrul, S. (2004). The acquisition of Spanish: Morphosyntactic development in monolingual and bilingual L1 acquisition and adult L2 acquisition (Vol. 37). John Benjamins Publishing. Chapters 2-3.
- Montrul, S., & Potowski, K. (2007). Command of gender agreement in school-age Spanish-English bilingual children. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 11(3), 301-328.
- Pérez-Leroux, A. T. (1998). The acquisition of mood selection in Spanish relative clauses. *Journal of Child Language*, 25(3), 585-604.
- Pérez-Pereira, M. (1989). The acquisition of morphemes: Some evidence from Spanish. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 18(3), 289-312.
- \*Pérez-Pereira, M. (1991). The acquisition of gender: What Spanish children tell us. *Journal of Child Language*, 18(3), 571-590.
- Pratt, A., & Grinstead, J. (2007). Optional infinitives in child Spanish. In *Proceedings of the 2nd Conference on Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition North America (GALANA)* (pp. 351-362).
- Torrens, V. (2020). *The acquisition of tense and agreement*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

## Week 4: Subjects

- Bel, A. (2003). The syntax of subjects in the acquisition of Spanish and Catalan. *Probus* 15, 1-26.
- Forsythe, H., Greeson, D. & Schmitt, C. (2020). How preschoolers acquire the null-overt contrast in Mexican Spanish: Evidence from production. In J. Colomina-Almiñana & S. Sessarego (eds), *Patterns in Spanish: Structure, Context and Development*, vol. 1. John Benjamins.
- Grinstead, J. (2004). Subjects and interface delay in child Spanish and Catalan. *Language*, 40-72.
- Grinstead, J., & Spinner, P. (2009). The clausal left periphery in child Spanish and German. *Probus* 21, 51-81.
- \*Lorusso, P., Caprin, C., & Guasti, M. T. (2005). Overt subject distribution in early Italian children. In *A supplement to the proceedings of the 29th annual Boston university conference on language development*.
- \*Montrul, S. (2004). The acquisition of Spanish: Morphosyntactic development in monolingual and bilingual L1 acquisition and adult L2 acquisition (Vol. 37). John Benjamins Publishing. Chapter 4, Sections 1-1.1.3; 2-2.1; 3.
- \*Pearl, L., & Forsythe, H. (under review). Inaccurate representations, inaccurate deployment, or both? Using computational cognitive modeling to investigate the development of pronoun interpretation in Spanish. *Language*. Sections 1-2.
- Sorace, A., Serratrice, L., Filiaci, F., & Baldo, M. (2009). Discourse conditions on subject pronoun realization: Testing the linguistic intuitions of older bilingual children. *Lingua*, 119, 460–477.
- Villa-García, J., & Suárez-Palma, I. (2016). Early null and overt subjects in the Spanish of simultaneous English-Spanish bilinguals and Crosslinguistic Influence. *Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada/Spanish Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 29(2), 350-395.

## Week 5: Objects

- Grüter, T. (2006). Developmental accounts of object clitics and null objects: A review of the literature. In *Object clitics and Null Objects in the Acquisition of French*. McGill Ph.D dissertation. Chap. 4.
- \*Grüter, T. (2007). Investigating object drop in child French and English: A truth value judgment task. In *Proceedings of the 2nd Conference on Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition North America (GALANA), Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project*, 102-113.
- \*Gavarró, A., V. Torrens, & K. Wexler. 2010. Object clitic omission: Two language types. *Language Acquisition* 17:192-219.
- Mateu, V. E. (2015). Object clitic omission in child Spanish: Evaluating representational and processing accounts. *Language Acquisition*, 22(3), 240-284.
- \*Montrul, S. (2004). The acquisition of Spanish: Morphosyntactic development in monolingual and bilingual L1 acquisition and adult L2 acquisition (Vol. 37). John Benjamins Publishing. Chapter 4, Sections 1.2.; 2.2.
- Pérez-Leroux, A. T., Cuza, A., & Thomas, D. (2011). Clitic placement in Spanish-English bilingual children. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 14(2), 221-232.
- Requena, P. E. (2015). Direct object clitic placement preferences in Argentine child Spanish. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Penn State, State College
- Shin, N. L., Requena, P. E., & Kemp, A. (2017). Bilingual and monolingual children's patterns of syntactic variation: Variable clitic placement in Spanish. In *Language development and disorders in Spanish-speaking children* (pp. 63-88). Springer, Cham.
- Torrens, V. (2020). *The acquisition of tense and agreement*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

## Week 6: A-movement: Unaccusatives, Passives, and Raising

- \*Mateu, V. E. (2020). Intervention effects in the acquisition of raising: Evidence from English and Spanish. *Language Acquisition*, 27(1), 1-34.
- \*Montrul, S. (2004). The acquisition of Spanish: Morphosyntactic development in monolingual and bilingual L1 acquisition and adult L2 acquisition (Vol. 37). John Benjamins Publishing. Chapter 6.
- \*Oliva, J., & Wexler, K. (2018). The acquisition of Spanish passives: The comparison between subject experiencer versus actional verbs and direct aspectual semantic evidence for the adjectival interpretation. *On the Acquisition of the Syntax of Romance*, 57-89.
- Pierce, A. E. (1992). The acquisition of passives in Spanish and the question of A-chain maturation. *Language Acquisition*, 2(1), 55-81.
- Shin, N. L. (2021). Acquiring constraints on variable morphosyntax: Subject-verb~ verb-subject order in child Spanish. In *The Routledge Handbook of Variationist Approaches to Spanish* (pp. 425-436). Routledge.
- Snyder, W., & Hyams, N. (2015). Minimality effects in children's passives. *Structures, strategies and beyond: Studies in honor of Adriana Belletti*, 343-368.
- Snyder, W., Hyams, N., & Crisma, P. (1995). Romance auxiliary selection with reflexive clitics: Evidence for early knowledge of unaccusativity. In *Proceedings of the 26th annual child language research forum* (pp. 127-136). Stanford: Centre for the Study of Language and Information.

## Week 7: A'-movement: Wh-questions and Relative Clauses

- Adani, F., Van der Lely, H. K., Forgiarini, M., & Guasti, M. T. (2010). Grammatical feature dissimilarities make relative clauses easier: A comprehension study with Italian children. *Lingua*, 120(9), 2148-2166.

- \*Belletti, A., Friedmann, N., Brunato, D., & Rizzi, L. (2012). Does gender make a difference? Comparing the effect of gender on children's comprehension of relative clauses in Hebrew and Italian. *Lingua*, 122(10), 1053-1069.
- Hsin, L. (2012). Accelerated acquisition in Spanish-English bilinguals: The structural transfer hypothesis. In *Proceedings of the 29th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics* (pp. 108-116). Somerville: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Friedmann, N. A. Belletti, & L. Rizzi. (2009). Relativized relatives: Types of intervention in the acquisition of A-bar dependencies. *Lingua* 119, 67-88.
- \*Mateu, V. (submitted). On the acquisition of Spanish psych predicates: When intervention makes 'subject' extraction harder.
- \*Montrul, S. (2004). The acquisition of Spanish: Morphosyntactic development in monolingual and bilingual L1 acquisition and adult L2 acquisition (Vol. 37). John Benjamins Publishing. Chapter 5.
- Rizzi, L. (2018). Intervention effects in grammar and language acquisition. *Probus*, 30(2), 339-367.

### Week 9: Pragmatics

- \*Baauw, S., & Cuetos, F. (2003). The interpretation of pronouns in Spanish language acquisition and breakdown: Evidence for the " Principle B Delay" as a non-unitary phenomenon. *Language acquisition*, 11(4), 219-275.
- Chien, Y. C., & Wexler, K. (1990). Children's knowledge of locality conditions in binding as evidence for the modularity of syntax and pragmatics. *Language acquisition*, 1(3), 225-295.
- Grinstead, J., Padilla-Reyes, R., & Flores-Avalos, B. (2019). Inhibition, General Lexical Development and the Quantity Implicature in Child Spanish. Poster presented at the *44th Boston University Conference on Language Development* (BUCLD 44).
- Hamann, C. (2011). Binding and coreference: Views from child language. In *Handbook of generative approaches to language acquisition* (pp. 247-290). Springer, Dordrecht.
- \*Mateu, V. E., & Hyams, N. (2016). One is the loneliest number: The Acquisition of Spanish Indefinite 'un'. In *6th Conference on Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition North America (GALANA 2015)* (pp. 73-80). Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- \*Montrul, S. (2004). The acquisition of Spanish: Morphosyntactic development in monolingual and bilingual L1 acquisition and adult L2 acquisition (Vol. 37). John Benjamins Publishing. Chapter 4, Sections 2.2.2.
- Syrett, K., Lingwall, A., Perez-Cortes, S., Austin, J., Sánchez, L., Baker, H., Germak, C. & Arias-Amaya, A. (2017). Differences between Spanish monolingual and Spanish-English bilingual children in their calculation of entailment-based scalar implicatures. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics*, 2(1).