

LT5436: LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

Effective Term

Semester A 2026/27

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Language Acquisition and Development

Subject Code

LT - Linguistics and Translation

Course Number

5436

Academic Unit

Linguistics and Translation (LT)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course explores the biological and environmental foundations of human language development, focusing on how children acquire the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic systems of their first language (L1). It critically examines major theoretical frameworks and evaluates the evidence supporting them. The course also addresses individual differences, the role of input and interaction, and the continuity between early child language and adult competence. Students will learn to analyze child language data using standard metrics and interpret experimental findings in developmental psycholinguistics.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if DEC-A1 app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Explain and contrast major theoretical models of language acquisition.		x	x	x
2	Analyze child language data (e.g., transcripts, error patterns) to identify developmental stages and mechanisms.		x	x	x
3	Evaluate empirical evidence regarding the role of input, cognitive maturation, and social interaction in language learning.		x	x	x
4	Formulate research-informed arguments on key debates.		x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Reading	Students will read academic books and journal articles on acquisition theories, developmental milestones, and research methods.	1, 2, 3, 4	3 hours
2	Lecture	Students will attend lectures introducing key concepts in phonological, lexical, and grammatical development, as well as theoretical debates.	1, 2, 3, 4	3 hours

3	Class activities	Students will participate in activities involving the analysis of child speech transcripts, calculation of developmental metrics, and discussion of experimental designs.	1, 2, 3, 4	3 hours
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Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Data analysis assignment	1, 2, 3, 4	30	Students can use GenAI tools to brainstorm, gather information, solve problems, format references, and edit language. Students should give proper acknowledgment to all the content from GenAI tools that they incorporated into the assignment and keep a journal of their GenAI conversations. Students should not present texts generated or translated by GenAI tools as their own original work.	Yes

2	Critical research paper	1, 2, 3, 4	30	Students can use GenAI tools to brainstorm, gather information, solve problems, format references, and edit language. Students should give proper acknowledgment to all the content from GenAI tools that they incorporated into the assignment and keep a journal of their GenAI conversations. Students should not present texts generated or translated by GenAI tools as their own original work.	Yes
3	End-of-term test	1, 2, 3, 4	40	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Data analysis assignment

Criterion

Demonstrate the ability to analyze child language samples, apply appropriate developmental metrics (e.g., MLU, error analysis), and interpret findings in relation to developmental stages.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Demonstrate strong evidence of capacity to analyze data accurately; superior application of developmental metrics; and evidence of excellent understanding of how data relates to acquisition stages.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Demonstrate good evidence of capacity to analyze data; correct application of main developmental metrics; and evidence of good understanding of developmental stages.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Demonstrate some evidence of analytical ability; adequate application of basic metrics; and partial understanding of the relationship between data and developmental stages.

Marginal (D)

Demonstrate limited evidence of analytical ability; minimal or incorrect application of metrics; and only basic awareness of developmental patterns.

Failure (F)

Demonstrate inadequate ability to analyze data; failure to apply metrics; or show substantial inaccuracies in interpreting developmental stages.

Assessment Task

Critical research paper

Criterion

Demonstrate the ability to synthesize theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence on a specific topic in language acquisition, formulating a coherent and well-supported argument.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Demonstrate strong evidence of capacity to synthesize theories and findings; present arguments with clarity and depth; show excellent understanding of acquisition mechanisms; and communicate ideas effectively.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Demonstrate good integration of theories and evidence; present coherent arguments; show good understanding of acquisition mechanisms; and communicate clearly.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Demonstrate some integration of theoretical and empirical material; provide basic but limited argumentation; and show adequate understanding of acquisition concepts.

Marginal (D)

Demonstrate limited integration of materials; weak or unclear argumentation; and minimal understanding of acquisition mechanisms.

Failure (F)

Demonstrate no coherent integration of material; fail to communicate a clear argument; or show substantial misunderstanding of core concepts.

Assessment Task

End-of-term test

Criterion

Demonstrate understanding of key theories, milestones, and experimental findings in language acquisition and development.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Demonstrate strong evidence of knowledge regarding acquisition theories and milestones; superior grasp of experimental findings; and ability to apply concepts to new examples.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Demonstrate good evidence of knowledge regarding acquisition theories; solid grasp of main developmental milestones; and ability to recall key findings

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Demonstrate adequate evidence of knowledge; basic understanding of theories and milestones; and some ability to recall findings.

Marginal (D)

Demonstrate limited knowledge; minimal understanding of theories; and weak recall of developmental facts.

Failure (F)

Demonstrate inadequate knowledge; failure to identify key theories or milestones; and substantial misconceptions.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Language acquisition theories; nature vs. nurture; poverty of the stimulus; critical period hypothesis; pre-linguistic communication; phonological development; lexical acquisition; morphosyntactic development; mean length of utterance; individual differences; input and child-directed speech; bilingual acquisition; atypical development; research methods.

Reading List**Compulsory Readings**

Title	
1	Lecture notes/slides/readings for the course.
2	Clark, E. V., & Casillas, M. (2015). First language acquisition. In <i>The Routledge handbook of linguistics</i> (pp. 311-328). Routledge.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	O' grady, W. (2005). <i>How children learn language</i> . Cambridge University Press.
2	Ambridge, B., & Lieven, E. V. (2011). <i>Child language acquisition: Contrasting theoretical approaches</i> . Cambridge University Press.