

Course Language Acquisition and Bilingualism (31378)

Master Program: Màster en Lingüística Teòrica i Aplicada

Year: 2014-15

Trimestre: 1

Number of ECTS credits: 5

Hores de dedicació de l'estudiant: 125

Tipus d'assignatura: Especialització

Professor/s: Carmen Pérez Vidal

Language used: English

1. Course presentation

This graduate course is designed with the purpose of providing a general overview of both the field of Language Acquisition and that of Bilingualism. It will deal with key issues and both internal and external factors in child and adult language acquisition of one or more than one language (L1, L2, 2L1s, 2L1, L3, L3+), in a variety of multilingual contexts. Apart from the conditions imposed by the language systems internally, there are individual factors which affect linguistic development (variables such as age, attitude, motivation, cognitive style, aptitude, etc.); moreover there are external factors that additionally influence language knowledge (input conditions, learning contexts, etc.). The main goal of the course is to gain an understanding of the nature of language acquisition processes and factors and to relate them to general learning theories identifying cognitive, social and linguistic variations.

2. Objectives

The objective of this course is for the students to gain a general understanding of the main issues of interest in the field SLA research, and the different theoretical approaches which can be adopted to examine them. Students will also be acquainted with the research methods and tools conventionally used to empirically analyze learners' linguistic productions and relate them to their stage of language development, proficiency level and the acquisition of communicative skills.

3. Syllabus

Week 1

Course presentation

Mapping out the field of Second Language Acquisition research (SLA)

Research Paradigms in L1 and L2 research

The inter-language model

Reading: G & S Chapters 1, 3, 4

Week 2

Inter-language in context: Input and interaction

Reading: G & S Chapters 9,10

Week 3

SLA and linguistics: Processing approaches to SLA

Reading: G & S Chapters 5, 6,7, 8

Week 4

Individual differences: Biological and psychological constraints

Reading: G & S: Chapter 12

Week 5

Individual differences: Psychosocial constraints

Reading: G & S: Chapter 12

Week 6 **Language acquisition in instructional learning contexts I**

Reading: G & S: Chapters Chapters 11, 14

Week 7 **Language acquisition in instructional learning contexts II**

Reading: G & S: Chapters Chapters 11, 14

Week 8 **Research methods: measuring SLA**

Dealing with empirical data (experimental and survey studies)

Reading: G & S Chapter 2, 13

Week 9 **Bilingualism: Bilingual First and Second Language Acquisition**

Reading: DH Chapters 1,2,3,4, 5, 6

Week 10 **Closing session**

4. Assessment

Students are expected to write a 4-6 page detailed design of an empirical research study. There is no need to carry it out; what is expected is the capacity to; (a) choose and justify a timely area of inquiry and identify a phenomenon to analyze; (b) present the theoretical background to the study; (c) establish research questions and hypotheses; (d) develop an adequate methodological design, that is identify the sample, propose the instruments for data collection and describe a model of analysis; and (e) conclude with your own ideas.

5. Methods and activities

In-class theoretical work will include discussion of the assigned chapter read previously to the class followed by a presentation from your instructor. In-class practical work will focus on one research article, previously assigned for intensive reading, and a discussion of the experimental and survey research study reported in the article. Special attention will be paid to specialized academic writing.

6. References

Gass, S. & L. Selinker (2009) *Second Language Acquisition. An Introductory Course*, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 2nd edition. [G & S]

(Alternatively: Larsen-Freeman, D. & Long, M. 1991. *An introduction to second language acquisition research*. New York: Longman.)

De Houwer, A. (2009) *An introduction to Bilingual Development*. Bristol/Buffalo/Toronto: Multilingual Matters. [DH]