

Introduction to Language Acquisition (語言習得概論)

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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the field of child language acquisition. Accordingly, the central question that we will discuss is how human beings acquire languages. In doing so, we will discuss how children acquire the sounds, words and grammar of their native language and what role biological and environmental factors play in this process. By taking this course the students will gain an understanding of normal language development and basic acquisition facts.

Required Reading

Readings from the following books will be provided in class.

Becker, Misha, and Deen, Kamil Ud. (2020) *Language Acquisition and Development: A Generative Introduction*. MIT Press.

Crain, S., and Lillo-Martin, D. (1999) *An Introduction to Linguistic Theory and Language Acquisition*. Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Lust, Barbara. (2006) *Child Language: Acquisition and Growth*. Cambridge University Press.

Rowland, C. (2014) *Understanding Child Language Acquisition*. Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group).

Clark, E. V. (2003) *First Language Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.

Gleason, J. B. (2001) *The Development of Language*. Allyn & Bacon.

Requirements

1. Exams (40%): One mid-term and one final exam
2. Group Project (30%)
3. Attendance, Participation and Weekly Reading Report (30%)

Tentative Schedule

1. Introduction
Knowledge in the absence of experience & stages of language acquisition (Crain & Lillo-Martin 1999, Ch. 2-3)
The growth of language (Lust 2006, Ch. 1)

2. Why language does not have to be taught & dispelling a common-sense account (Crain & Lillo-Martin 1999, Ch. 4-5)
What is acquired? (Lust 2006, Ch. 2)
3. The logical problem of language acquisition & the modularity hypothesis (Crain & Lillo-Martin 1999, Ch. 6-7)
What is the problem of language acquisition? (Lust 2006, Ch. 3)
4. The nature of nurture (Lust 2006, Ch. 6)
The search for language universals (Rowland 2014, Ch. 9)
5. Brain and language development (Lust 2006, Ch. 5)
6. Mid-Term Exam
How can we tell what children know? Methods for the study of language acquisition (Lust 2006, Ch. 7)
7. Early speech perception (Becker & Deen, ch. 3)
8. Speech production and phonological development (Becker & Deen, ch. 4)
9. Word learning (Becker & Deen, ch. 5)
10. The acquisition of morphology (Becker & Deen, ch. 6)
11. Syntactic development I (Becker & Deen, ch. 7)
12. Syntactic development II (Becker & Deen, ch. 7)
13. Acquiring more than one language (Becker & Deen, ch. 9)
14. Language acquisition under non-typical circumstances (Becker & Deen, ch. 8)
15. Final Exam and Discussion
16. Group project oral presentation (written report due)