Second Language Acquisition

This course is a linguistic exploration into adult second language acquisition. We begin with a brief overview of child first language development and attempt to understand a version of Plato’s Problem --how is it that language learners know so much about their language given so little? But adult language development is not as successful. Here we are faced with a version of Orwell’s Problem --how is it that most adult learners seem to know so little about an L2 when exposed to so much?

We will focus on four major issues in adult second language acquisition: 1) the effect of age on acquisition; 2) the availability of Universal Grammar to adult learners; 3) the sources of variation in language attainment; and 4) modularity and language learning.

Requirements: classroom participation 20%
homeworks 10%
weekly page 30%
prospectus+paper 40%

Students are expected read, discuss, and question all assigned readings. You are encouraged to speak out in class, and send comments and queries via e-mail. There will be 5 one-page responses to the reading assignments and class discussions. These will be due weekly and must be no longer than one double-spaced typewritten page (bibliographic entries are extra). These pages should be creative rather than mere summaries of the material. The page should reflect what the current readings/class discussion mean to you. You may write about implications: pedagogical, linguistic-theoretical, or research. You may not add in more than 1 page in any given week. E-mail submissions will be accepted as MS Word attachments. There will be numerous short homework assignments that deal with real L2 data. Students can work together on the solutions. A final paper of approximately 10 double-spaced typed pages in length is required. The paper can be on any theoretical topic. A prospectus for this paper is also required. This will be a description of a focused topic for the final paper and a short list of tentative bibliographic sources. The entire prospectus will not exceed one page. You will give an informal 3-minute oral report on the progress of your paper on 3 May.

Texts:
1. Compiled sets of the required readings.

**calendar:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>no class</td>
<td>8 march</td>
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<tr>
<td>prospectus due</td>
<td>5 april</td>
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<td>no weekly pages will be accepted after</td>
<td>19 april</td>
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<tr>
<td>paper due</td>
<td>10 may</td>
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**SYLLABUS**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>26 January</strong></td>
<td>Introduction to the field</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G &amp; S ch. 1, 4</td>
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<td><strong>26 January</strong></td>
<td>How kids do it: first language acquisition</td>
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<td>G &amp; S ch. 1, 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A. phonology</td>
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<td>B. morphology</td>
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<td>C. syntax</td>
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<td>D. caretaker speech</td>
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<td><strong>2 February</strong></td>
<td>Regarding the L2 data</td>
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<td>Errors</td>
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<td><strong>2 February</strong></td>
<td>Elicitation, Collection, Analysis</td>
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<td><strong>9 February</strong></td>
<td>The role of the native language in SLA</td>
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<td><strong>16 February</strong></td>
<td>Second Language Phonology</td>
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<td>Leather, 1999</td>
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<td><strong>23 February</strong></td>
<td>The Critical Period Controversy: phonology</td>
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<td>Flege, 1987; Patkowski, 1990; Dekeyser, 2000</td>
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<td><strong>1 March</strong></td>
<td>Critical period: what is native competence?</td>
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<td><strong>1 March</strong></td>
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<td><strong>15 March</strong></td>
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<td>G &amp; S ch. 6; Eckman, et. al 1988; Croteau, 1995</td>
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<td>relative clauses</td>
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22 march
Universal Grammar in L2
   do adults still have it?
   yes / no
G & S ch. 7
   Felix, 1991; Schachter, 1991

29 march
Is Language Learning unique?
O’Grady, 1999; Schwartz , 1999

5 april
Contextual variation in L₂
   Linguistic contexts
   Socio-linguistic contexts
G & S ch. 9

12 april
Sources of variation: non-linguistic
   why do some learners do better?
G & S ch. 12

19 april
Modular SLA Models:
   Krashen’s monitor
   anti-Krashen
G & S ch. 8;
   Gregg 1984; Percival 1984;
   Felix 1985; (re-read Newport)

26 april
Input, output and interaction in SLA
G & S ch. 10

3 may
The perfect language learner
Reports on Papers

10 may
   papers due by 5:00 pm in robinson a-418
READINGS


Additional Textbook Readings


