

**LINGUISTICS 790: SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**  
**T 5:30-8:00**  
**HUMANITIES CLASSROOM BUILDING 302**

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION: Mila Tasseva  
Office: Humanities Office Building 315  
Office hours: M-F 10:00-11:00 AM  
Phone: 777-1837 (o)  
206-5683 (cell)  
e-mail: tassevak@mailbox.sc.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course provides an introduction to second language acquisition (SLA) theory and research. The course topics are divided into three different areas of SLA: 1) theoretical approaches to first and second language learning, 2) the external variables that affect SLA, and 3) the internal factors that affect SLA. We begin with descriptive approaches to SLA, and move toward more explanatory approaches, focusing on current theories of SLA. The overall objective of the course is to help students better understand the relationships between SLA theory, research and pedagogy as well as key terms and concepts in SLA.

Specifically, by the end of the course, students are expected to address questions on topics such as:

- 1) variables influencing SLA: social, cognitive, linguistic etc.
- 2) current theories/approaches to the study of SLA
- 3) the relationship between SLA theory and pedagogy both in ESL (K-12) and EFL contexts.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

VanPatten, Bill and Jessica Williams (2007). *Theories in Second Language Acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ.: Erlbaum.  
(*TSLA*)

Additional readings to be posted on Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

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| 1) Class participation and discussion: | 15% |
| 2) Theory critiques (3 @ 3-5pp):       | 30% |
| 3) Article presentations:              | 15% |
| 4) Research proposal(10-15pp):         | 40% |
| (presentation 20% and manuscript 20%)  |     |

**Participation and Discussion:**

To facilitate the reading and class discussion, students are required to submit at least one discussion question or comment prior to each lecture, based on the readings for that lecture. These must be received before **12:00 p.m. on the day of the lecture**. Active participation in the class discussion, which will help you better understand topics/issues, is encouraged. Needless to say, all attendance rules of the University of South Carolina apply to this class too.

**Theory Critiques:**

An important part of what we do as researchers is the development of the theoretical tools we use. But before we get there we need to understand the current theories and be able to see what kinds of data will support or revoke a particular approach. Very often the same empirical evidence can be used to support different theoretical approaches. We need to learn how to sift through the evidence so we can find the grain that is most

useful for our purposes. One way to learn how to do that is to look at the same set of data through the lens of different theories. For the Theory Critiques you will have to find published articles, present the theoretical approach of the authors, the methodology and the data, and propose a different theoretical solution or different methodology to get answers to the particular question. More on that later. Each of the 3 Theory Critiques will be 3-5 pages long. Penalties will be enforced for going over the page limits.

### Article Presentations

Each one of you will have to present two articles from the list of reading for this course. You can choose among all articles listed on the syllabus (no TSLA chapters!). Since those are preparing you for future professional presentations, you are required to provide visual aids for your audience (a handout and/or a PowerPoint/Keynote presentation).

### Research Proposal

The biggest outcome of this class, besides learning the different theories in our field, is that you will start laying out the building blocks of your research. The class is an introduction to the field and I will not require that you conduct a fully fledged study (although if you want to, you are very welcome to do so). However, no matter if your orientation is theoretical or practical by the end of the course you should be able to develop your own research proposal. I encourage you to start thinking about your research proposal right away. In week 8 we will discuss all research questions in class. In the following weeks you will be working on finding a research method that you think will produce a straight answer to your question. In the last week of classes you will present your research question and your proposed research design in class. Again, you will need some visual aids (handout and/or PowerPoint/Keynote presentation). The last step of this process is the written research proposal. This should take the form of an article publication. The length of the paper should be approximately 10-15 pages, typed, double-spaced. **Due: TBA at 5 PM.**

### GRADING SCALE

The summaries, presentations, projects and the final proposal will be graded on the following scale:

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-
97-100%	93-96%	90-92%	87-89%	83-86%	80-82%	77-79%	73-76%	70-72%
etc.								

A = excellent, extraordinary, exceptional, exemplary

C+ = not graduate level

B+ = very good, commendable, admirable, praiseworthy

C = unsatisfactory

B = good, acceptable, adequate, passable, ok

### \*\*\* SLA RELATED JOURNALS:

- Applied Linguistics
- Applied Psycholinguistics
- Language Learning
- Second Language Research
- Studies in Second Language Acquisition
- TESOL Quarterly

### READINGS (POSTED ON BLACKBOARD):

- Abrahamsson, N., & Hyltenstam, K. (2008). The Robustness of Aptitude Effects in Near-Native Second Language Acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 30(04), 481-509.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1999). Exploring the interlanguage of interlanguage pragmatics: a research agenda for acquisitional pragmatics. *Language Learning* 49:4, 677-713.

- Bley-Vroman, R. (1989). What is the logical problem of second language learning? In Gass, S & J. Schachter (eds.) *Linguistic Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition*.
- Carroll, S. E. (1999). Putting 'input' in its proper place. *Second Language Research*, 15(4), 337-388.
- Clahsen, H. & Felser, C. (2006). Grammatical processing in language learners. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 27, 3-42.
- DeKeyser, R. M. (1997). Beyond Explicit Rule Learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 19(02), 195-221.
- DeKeyser, R. M. (2000). The Robustness of Critical Period Effects in Second Language Acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 22(04), 499-533.
- Ellis, N. C. (2005). At the Interface: Dynamic Interactions of Explicit and Implicit Language Knowledge. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 27(02), 305-352.
- Flege, J. E., Yeni-Komshian, G. H., & Liu, S. (1999). Age Constraints on Second-Language Acquisition, *Journal of Memory and Language*, 41(1), 78-104.
- Gass, S and Alvarez-Torres, M. S. (2005). Attention when? An investigation of the ordering effect of input and interaction. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 27, 1-31.
- Grüter, T & Conradie, S. (2006). Investigating the L2 initial state: Additional evidence from the production and comprehension of Afrikaans-speaking learners of German. In Slabakova, R., Montrul, S. and Prévost, P. (eds.) *Inquiries in Linguistic Development – In Honor of Lydia White..* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hawkins, R., & Hattori, H. (2006). Interpretation of English multiple wh-questions by Japanese speakers: a missing uninterpretable feature account. *Second Language Research*, 22(3), 269-301.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2006). Sociocultural Theory and L2: State of the Art. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 2006, 28, 1, Mar, 67-109.
- Montrul, S. (2006). On the Bilingual Competence of Spanish Heritage Speakers: Syntax, Lexical-Semantics and Processing. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 10(1), 37-69.
- Pavlenko, A. (2002) Poststructuralist approaches to the study of social factors in second language learning and use. In Cook, V. (ed.) *Portraits of the L2 user*, 275-302. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Polinsky, M. (2007). Reaching the End Point and Stopping Midway: Different Scenarios in the Acquisition of Russian. *Russian Linguistics*, 31(2), 157-199.
- Rothman, J. (2009). Pragmatic deficits with syntactic consequences?: L2 pronominal subjects and the syntax-pragmatics interface. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41(5), 951-973.
- Slabakova, R. (2009). L2 Fundamentals. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 31(Special Issue 02), 155-173.
- Slabakova, R. (2003). Semantic evidence for functional categories in interlanguage grammars. *Second Language Research* 19.1: 42-75.
- Sorace, A. (2005) Selective optionality in language development. Syntax and Variation. In Cornips, L. and Corrigan, K.P. (eds.) *Reconciling the Biological and the Social*, 55-80. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Sunderman, G., & Kroll, J. F. (2006). First Language Activation during Second Language Lexical Processing: An Investigation of Lexical Form, Meaning, and Grammatical Class. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 28(3), 387-422.
- VanPatten, B. (2000). Thirty Years of Input (or Intake, the Neglected Sibling). In Swierzbis, B., Morris, F., Anderson, M. E., Klee, C. A., & Tarone, E. (eds.) *Social and cognitive factors in Second Language Acquisition: Selected proceedings of the 1999 Second Language Research Forum*, Somerville, MA: Cascadilla, 2000, pp 287-311.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR READINGS/DISCUSSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

(Note: The full list of readings which are not chapters in TSLA is given at the end of the syllabus)

Week 1	January 12	Introduction and background - route and rate - the first L2 theory - acquisition vs. learning	TSLA ch 1
Week 2	January 19	Input, Interaction and Output	TSLA ch 10 Gass and Alvarez-Torres (2005)
Week 3	January 26	Input Processing Theory	TSLA ch 7 VanPatten, B. (2000) Carroll (1999)
Week 4	February 2	Skill Acquisition Theory	TSLA ch 6 DeKeyser (1997) Ellis (2005)
Week 5	February 9	Generative SLA: - Fundamental difference	TSLA ch 3 Bley-Vroman (1989) Slabakova (2009)
Week 6	February 16	Generative SLA: - interfaces	Slabakova (2003) Rothman (2009)
Week 7	February 23	Generative SLA: - initial and final state	Grüter & Conradie (2006) Hawkins & Hattori (2006)  <b>Theory Critique #1 due</b>
Week 8	March 2	<b>Research question presentations</b>	
Week 9	March 9	<b>No class – Spring Break</b>	
Week 10	March 16	L2 processing	Sunderman & Kroll (2006) Clahsen & Felser (2006)
Week 11	March 23	Socio-cultural theory:	TSLA ch 11 Lantolf (2006)  <b>Theory Critique #2 due</b>
Week 12	March 30	SLA and sociolinguistics/pragmatics Language policies and politics	Bardovi-Harlig (1999) Pavlenko (2002)
Week 13	April 6	Internal factors: Critical Period Hypothesis	Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam (2008) DeKeyser (2000) Flege, Komshian & Liu (1999)
Week 14	April 13	L1/L2 Attrition and Maintenance	Sorace, A. (2005) Montrul (2006) Polinsky (2007)  <b>Theory Critique #3 due</b>
Week 15	April 20	<b>Research presentations</b>	
	TBA, 5:00 PM	<b>Research Proposal due</b>	