

# CAS LX 542: Second Language Acquisition

Fall 2015

MWF 3–4, Location TBA

**Instructor:** Charles Chang

**Office Hours:** TBA

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**Course Website:** TBA

**Course Description:** Although children acquire language seemingly effortlessly, adults show lower, and more variable, levels of success with acquiring a second language (L2). What are the reasons for this disparity between children and adults? What are the sources of variation among ostensibly similar adult learners of the same native language (L1) background? And how do these factors bear on linguistic theory and educational practice? This course will address these questions by providing an overview of findings from the interdisciplinary field of second language acquisition (SLA). It will survey data from many different L1-L2 pairs and cover a range of theoretical perspectives on L2 attainment, including those from generative, functional, and applied linguistics. Among the learner-internal and -external variables to be examined as factors influencing acquisition are language-universal variables (such as markedness), demographic variables (such as age and gender), experiential variables (such as L1 knowledge), cognitive variables (such as working memory), social and affective variables (such as motivation and identity), and environmental variables (such as language input). The course will consider how principles of L2 acquisition can be applied to L3 (third language) acquisition, and a recurring theme will be the implications of SLA research for foreign language pedagogy.

## Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be familiar with the diversity of factors related to the process and outcomes of second language acquisition.
2. Students will be able to see and describe patterns in acquisition data and to use a theory to explain those patterns.
3. Students will be able to generate and evaluate predictions of a theory and to synthesize different approaches to the same question.

**Prerequisites:** CAS LX 250 Introduction to Linguistics or equivalent, or instructor approval.

**Requirements:** background reading, in-class exercises, homework assignments, midterm examination, final examination.

**Grading:**

40%	homework assignments	[best 4 non-zero scores of 5]
15%	midterm examination	
35%	final examination	
10%	participation	

Grade components will be weighted according to the above percentages to calculate a final grade out of 100, which will correspond to a grade for the course as follows:

<i>Course Grade Scale</i>	$\geq 93.00$	= A	78.00–79.99	= C+
	90.00–92.99	= A–	73.00–77.99	= C
	88.00–89.99	= B+	70.00–72.99	= C–
	83.00–87.99	= B	60.00–69.99	= D
	80.00–82.99	= B–	< 60.00	= F

**Required Textbook:** Ortega, Lourdes. (2008). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. [ISBN-10: 034090559X, ISBN-13: 978-0340905593]

N.B. We will cover nearly all of the material in this book, as well as additional material in other readings (including chapters from Jennifer Amaro, Suzanne Flynn, and Jason Rothman’s 2012 book, *Third Language Acquisition in Adulthood*).

### Expectations for Students:

*Background Reading:* Classes will refer to concepts described in the reading, so it will be most helpful to you to complete the assigned reading *before* coming to class. Class is meant to supplement the reading, and assignments or exams may draw upon data or examples in the reading not explicitly discussed in class. Any required readings beyond the required textbook will be provided via the library’s electronic course reserves or the course website. Please see the Copyright Notice below regarding reading and other course materials.

*Homework Assignments:* Assignments will typically consist of a mix of data analysis and interpretation in light of SLA theories discussed in class. They will require answers written in complete sentences; in writing up your responses, keep in mind that these are exercises in applying knowledge. Also, because possible responses to assigned questions may be discussed in class on the day that the homework is due, **homework must be turned in—typed, in hard copy—at the beginning of class (i.e., by 3:00, not 3:30), and late homework cannot be accepted.** Since you are typing up your homework, remember to *save* it in case it ends up getting misplaced! Your lowest non-zero homework grade will be dropped (i.e., zeros are counted, so you should attempt all assignments).

*Examinations:* There will be two sit-down exams. The midterm exam will be given in the eighth week of classes during the regularly scheduled time for this course. The final exam will be given during the regularly scheduled exam time for this course (TBA), and it will be comprehensive. Make-up exams are given at the discretion of the instructor only in exceptional circumstances (e.g., medical emergency, religious obligation). In the case of a known conflict such as a religious holiday, please provide the instructor with written notice of the conflict well in advance.

*Participation:* Active and constructive participation in class is expected, and will be factored into course grades. Given that you cannot participate in class if you are absent, chronic absence from class will affect your final grade. If you find yourself suffering from illness, please (a) go to the

doctor, and then (b) alert the instructor.

**Copyright Notice:** All class materials are copyrighted and may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from the instructor.

**Academic Integrity and Support:** You are responsible for understanding and complying with the BU Academic Conduct Code in this course (to review the Academic Conduct Code, please see <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>). Graduate students, take note of the GRS Academic Conduct Code: <http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/graduate/forms-policies-procedures/academic-discipline-procedures/>. It is assumed, unless you indicate otherwise, that your work in this course is your own. **Work found to be the product of academic dishonesty can receive no credit, and such misconduct must be reported to the university.** If you are experiencing difficulties in keeping up with the academic demands of this course, please consider contacting your academic advisor (or CAS's Office of Academic Advising: 100 Bay State Rd., Room 401, [casadv@bu.edu](mailto:casadv@bu.edu), 617-353-2400).

**Collaboration Policy:** Although you are welcome to brainstorm about the homework with your classmates in a study group, **your written work should be entirely your own.** That is to say, regardless of whether or not you participate in a study group, you are expected to **write up your responses separately (and to explicitly acknowledge any and all collaboration and/or sources consulted)**, in accordance with the Academic Conduct Code. This policy should be unambiguous, but just to prevent any misunderstanding, writing up your responses separately does not include:

1. writing up your responses during a study group meeting
2. writing up your responses after a study group meeting while talking back and forth remotely to one or more of your collaborators (over the phone, via text, via IM, etc.)
3. writing up your responses while consulting a collaborator's write-up "for reference"
4. effectively drafting a joint write-up during a study group meeting and then later individually "fleshing out" that joint write-up

Writing up your work separately does not mean using separate computers. It means putting your thoughts into words on your own—that is, without simultaneous discussion with your collaborators, without later discussion with your collaborators, without consultation of minutes taken during a study group meeting that are so detailed they basically constitute a joint write-up. In short, at the time you produce the written work you hand in, you should not be in the physical or virtual presence of any collaborators and should have nothing other than a computer, your homework sheet, and your textbook plus any class notes. Note that if you elect to collaborate on homework and do not feel confident that you can distinguish between jotting down a few notes and creating a joint write-up, you are advised to refrain from taking any written notes during a study group meeting and just pay close attention to your group's discussion. Any collaboration should help you to think, not to write. Please see the instructor if you have any questions.

**Arrangements for Students with Disabilities:** If you require course material in an alternative format or need special accommodations due to a disability, please contact the instructor and the Office of Disability Services (<http://www.bu.edu/disability/>) as soon as possible.

**Communication:** Announcements regarding class cancellation, room change, and other timely news will be communicated via Blackboard to the email address you are registered with (so make sure you are able to receive email messages from Blackboard!). In addition, you are very welcome to come with any questions to the instructor's office hours, including a weekly online "office" hour (in a chat room on Blackboard), and you may also make an appointment outside of these times if you cannot make it to office hours.

**A Note on Technology:** Students are encouraged to bring their personal computers or tablets to class, but are expected to use any technology respectfully—that is, *for the sole purpose of aiding in the learning of course material while not distracting fellow students*. Although it is tempting when you have a computer to multitask and, e.g., switch between Word, Facebook, and email, note that this is very likely to be detrimental not only to your own learning, but also to the learning of those around you (for more, see Sana et al., 2013, "Laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers," *Computers & Education*, 62, 24–31; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2012.10.003>). Consequently, the instructor reserves the right to ban the use of computers in class if they become a hindrance. You will never need your cell phone for note-taking, so please silence it and put it away during class.

**Schedule (with Due Dates)**

DATES	TOPIC & READING	WORK DUE
09/02–09/04	Introduction to SLA Reading: Ortega, Chapter 1	
09/09–09/11	Age effects and critical periods Reading: Ortega, Chapter 2	
09/14–09/18	Transfer and crosslinguistic influence Reading: Ortega, Chapter 3	Homework 1 due 09/18
09/21–09/25	Input and interaction Reading: Ortega, Chapter 4	
09/28–10/02	Cognitive variables Reading: Ortega, Chapter 5	Homework 2 due 10/02
10/05–10/09	Interlanguage and development Reading: Ortega, Chapter 6	
10/13–10/16	Aptitude Reading: Ortega, Chapter 7	
10/19–10/23	Aptitude (cont.) + review Reading: —	MIDTERM EXAM on 10/23
10/26–10/30	Motivation Reading: Ortega, Chapter 8	
11/02–11/06	Affective factors Reading: Ortega, Chapter 9	Homework 3 due 11/06
11/09–11/13	Social dimensions Reading: Ortega, Chapter 10.1–10.12	
11/16–11/20	Social dimensions (cont.) Reading: Ortega, Chapter 10.13–10.22	Homework 4 due 11/20
11/23	Issues in L3 acquisition Reading: Cenoz, Amaro et al. (2012)	
11/30–12/04	Issues in L3 acquisition (cont.) Reading: Berkes & Flynn (2012)	Homework 5 due 12/04
12/07–12/09	Flex week + wrapping up Reading: Wrembel (2012)	
12/11–12/14	STUDY PERIOD	
12/15–12/19	EXAM PERIOD	FINAL EXAM: details TBA