Week 1: March 4 - Introductions
Introductions to the course, to the materials, assignments, and everything else.
In this the first week of the class we introduce the theme of second language learning. We will discuss the brief history of SLA as a separate field of study and the approaches taken in SLA. As a means of showing how SLA often works, we will go over ‘Milestones in Motor and Language Development’ From Language Files 8, pp. 278-280 and see how we can interpret the data presented there.
Talk about initial reactions to the winter reading book (Brown & Larson-Hall, 2012).
Homework: Read the required articles and answer the focus questions.
Finish the Winter Reading Project.

Week 2: March 11 – Native and Non-Native Speakers
Winter reading project due
We start our exploration of SLA themes by addressing the issue of the native speaker. The concept of the idealized native speaker has had a profound effect on SLA research and indeed thought and feelings about language development and use. Despite this there is no functioning working definition of a native speaker. It, therefore, seems that this is a central issue that will color our exploration of other areas of concern as we move through this course.
Readings:
Additional readings (optional):
Homework: Read the required articles and answer the focus questions.

Week 3: March 18 – L1 versus L2 learning: Innateness
This week we explore the idea of innateness as being one of the chief differences between L1 and L2 learning. The idea of innateness is closely tied into the concept of Universal Grammar (UG). In our discussion we will, therefore, look first at the different proposals regarding possible access to UG in subsequent language learning. We will also look briefly at modern proposals regarding UG and its possible role in L2 learning. This centers around a discussion of Chomsky’s proposed differences between i-language and e-language. Finally, we question the idea of innateness for language in general.
Readings:


Additional readings (optional):


**Homework:** Read the required articles and answer the focus questions.

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**Week 4; March 25 – L1 versus L2 learning: Age effects**

This week we go over the issue of age related issues in second language learning. Age issues are often thought to be limited to the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), but, as recent research has shown, the CPH is largely disproven in its strong form. Age effects are an undeniable variable, but they are both positive and negative and like almost everything else we find in our exploration of the phenomenon of language learning highly variable. The variable of age is being included in this course not just because it is an important issue worldwide but because there is a large amount of misunderstanding about age effects in large part because people have taken the CPH at face value and not read more up to date treatments of the issue.

**Readings:**


**Additional readings (optional):**


**Homework:** Read the required articles and answer the focus questions.

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**Week 5; April 1 – L1 versus L2 learning: Transfer**

We start our exploration of issues in second language learning by exploring the controversies
surrounding the differences and similarities between first and second, what I like to term subsequent, language learning. This week we look specifically at the idea of transfer. We will examine the early studies focusing on negative transfer, but will focus out attention on the more recent studies of positive transfer. The basic idea is that subsequent language learning is fundamentally different from first language learning in that there is a wealth of knowledge already in place that can and should be transferred. This means, in theory, that learning and additional language should be easier than the first one. It also means that we cannot and should not teach a second language without consideration of the other language(s) a learner has.

Readings:

Additional readings (optional):

**Homework:** Read the required articles and answer the focus questions.

**Week 6: April 8 – Memory systems (types)**
This week we go over the different types of memory system and their effects on the second language learning process. The basic idea is that the different types of memory function differently, even though they affect each other as shall be addressed in the following week. Each one has its own functions (purposes) and ways of working. It, therefore, behooves language teachers to develop a basic understanding of these different systems and how they work in general and in relation to language so we can help our students learn better.

Readings:

Additional readings (optional):

**Homework:** Read the required articles and answer the focus questions.
Week 7: April 15 – Memory systems (processes)

This week we continue with the issue of memory in second language learning. We week we focus on the processes of memory and how they are involved in the second language learning process. Encoding memories is not just something that happens in the way the teacher would like. There are many different stages and aspects related to the encoding of memories and each of them plays an important role in the entire process. It is, therefore, important for language teachers to develop ideas about these processes. After all, for something to be learned it needs to be stored in memory in one way or another. How something is stored can make all the difference.

Readings:

Additional readings (optional):

Homework: Read the required articles and answer the focus questions.

Week 8: April 22 – Complexity

This week, as we close our discussion on SLA and language in general, we look at one of the newer issues, namely that of complexity. Also called a dynamic systems approach, the idea of complexity is as the name would imply. In the complexity view language development is not a linear process that under the right conditions moves steadfastly forward. Rather language learning is a highly complex process that is affected by any number of different variables both internal and external.

Readings:

Homework: Prepare for the midterm.

Week 9: April 22

Reading Week

This is your chance to catch up on missed work and to prepare for the mid-term project. Use this time well.
**Week 10: May 6 – Personality**

Midterm project due

This week we look at the issue of personality in language learning. Personality is a complex construct composed of many different aspects and with many different variables. In second language learning personality factors have been linked to success or failure. Such aspects as anxiety, degree of introversion and learning styles can have a large effect on how our students perform in the class.

Readings:


Additional readings (optional):


**Homework:** Read the required articles and answer the focus questions.

**Week 11: May 13 - Motivation**

Continuing our discussion from the previous week, we review some of the basic theories and practices related to motivation. Many people consider motivation the key factor in getting learners to succeed in the language, but research has shown that motivation is a rather difficult concept to pin down.

Readings:


Additional readings (optional):


**Homework:** Read the required articles and answer the focus questions.

**Week 12: May 20 – Metacognition/Strategies**

This week we take a look at the idea of Metacognition in second language learning. We use the term metacognition here as a blanket term to encompass a wide rage of reported phenomenon from awareness to strategies use. Many theorists believe that there is a strong link between awareness and success in SLA and particularly in more formal foreign language learning situations. We discuss awareness as both from the receptive and productive sides.
Readings:

Additional readings (optional):

**Week 13; May 27 - Input**
This week we go over the idea of input and question whether comprehensible input is enough. Certainly input is a necessary aspect of learning anything and especially language, but the question is whether input (even good input) is enough. This leads to the further question of what type and how much input is necessary.

Readings:

Additional readings (optional):

**Week 14; June 3 – Output/Interaction**
This week we take a rather quick look at the issue of output in general and interaction. Within the field of SLA this has been one of the biggest issues of the last few years and is having a large impact on teaching approaches to second and especially foreign languages.

Readings:
Week 15: June 10 - Variability
This week we return to the issue of differences between L1 and L2 learning and address the issue of variability. In this case we are looking in variability in the forms that people produce rather than the processes of learning. This is an important issue in SLA because it ties in with the issue of ultimate achievement/development in SLA. The idea is that all speakers of a language (even native speakers) vary their language but the issue for non-native speakers in the SLA tradition is whether this variation is planned or not. Further, the issue of systematicity in variation is of concern in SLA.

Readings:

Additional readings (optional):

✓ Final Project: The final project will be a continuation of the midterm project. Please do not forget to do it and hand it in at the symposium on June 18.