

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages
Term 2, 2024-2025

Course Title: LING6920 Topics in Language Acquisition

Description:

This course introduces and explores some theoretical and empirical issues in child language acquisition across linguistically diverse bilingual and multilingual contexts. We will compare the language development in monolingual, bilingual and heritage children. A strong emphasis is placed on the interface between theoretical analysis of linguistic phenomena and central research questions in language acquisition. Students are required to conduct a research project using the CHILDES database.

Content, highlighting fundamental concepts

Topics	Key concepts
Theoretical issues in child language acquisition	Formal and functional explanations, nativist and usage-based approaches, domain-general and domain-specific issues
Methods and methodological issues in child language acquisition	Longitudinal corpus-based studies and experimental methods, statistical learning
Issues in bilingual language acquisition Case studies of bilingual children	Development of bilingualism in early childhood, language differentiation, cross-linguistic influence, input ambiguity, vulnerable domains
Heritage language acquisition	Heritage speakers compared with baseline speakers; Similarities and differences in heritage/first/second language acquisition
Development of grammatical constructions: null objects/right-dislocation/verb particle constructions/relative clauses	object omission/right dislocation/verb particle constructions/relative clauses will be examined in bilingual children
Assessment of narratives	How narratives are assessed by tools developed for multilingual children

Learning outcomes:

- develop a good grasp of the theoretical and empirical issues that arise in monolingual and bilingual child language acquisition
- identify and address research questions, taking an interdisciplinary perspective on the field of child language acquisition
- appreciate the important relationship between linguistic theory and acquisition research and the centrality of language acquisition in relation to other areas of linguistics
- develop the ability to conduct a small-scale research project on a topic in child language acquisition by using the CHILDES database and programmes
- raise students' awareness of the complexity of language acquisition and deepen their appreciation of children's acquisition of one or more languages
- develop ability to learn, discuss with peers and benefit from peer support

- **Learning activities** (via zoom if face-to-face meetings are not feasible)
- lecture
- use of multimedia materials e.g. audio and video clips
- CHILDES workshops
- Student presentations
- discussion of articles
- projects

Assessment scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Participation in discussion and presentation of assigned articles	Participation in class (responding to questions about weekly readings and contributing to discussion) and presentations based on assigned articles	40%
A language acquisition project that conducts a systematic study of a topic of interest in monolingual/bilingual/heritage contexts	Term project (written)	50%
	Term project presentation (oral)	10%

Learning resources for students

Language acquisition:

Ambridge, B. and E. Lieven. 2011. *Child Language Acquisition: Contrasting Theoretical Approaches*. Cambridge University Press.

Clark, E. 2009. *First Language Acquisition* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511806698

Guasti, T. 2016. 2nd edition. *Language Acquisition: The Growth of Grammar*. MIT Press.

Russell, J. 2004. *What is language development? Rationalist, Empiricist and Pragmatist approaches to the acquisition of syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bilingual and heritage language acquisition:

Blom, E., L. Cornips and J. Schaeffer. 2017. (eds). *Crosslinguistic Influence in Bilingualism* John Benjamins.

De Houwer, A. 2009. *Bilingual First Language Acquisition*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Grüter, T. and J. Paradis. (eds.) 2014. *Input and Experience in Bilingual Development*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Miller, D., F. Bayram, J. Rothman, J. and L. Serratrice. 2018. (eds.) *Bilingual cognition and language: the state of the science across its subfields*. John Benjamins.

Paradis, J., F. Genesee and M. Crago. 2021. 3rd ed. *Dual Language Development and Disorders: A Handbook on Bilingualism and Second Language Learning*. Brookes Publishing.

Polinsky, M. 2018. *Heritage Languages and Their Speakers*. Cambridge University Press.

Qi, R. 2011. *Bilingual Acquisition of Mandarin Chinese and English: Chinese children in Australia*. Cambria Press.

Silva-Corvalán, C. 2014. *Bilingual Language Acquisition: Spanish and English in the First Six Years*. Cambridge University Press.

Yip, V. and S. Matthews. 2007. *The Bilingual Child: Language Contact and Early Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Journals in language acquisition and bilingualism:

First Language, Journal of Child Language, Language Acquisition

Bilingualism: Language and Cognition, International Journal of Bilingualism,

Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism

Feedback for evaluation

Students are welcome to give comments and feedback to the instructor by writing to the instructor or talking to her individually.

Grade descriptors:

Grade	Overall Course [LING6920 Topics in Language Acquisition]
A	Demonstration of a thorough and nuanced understanding of theoretical and methodological issues in the language acquisition topics discussed, and a high degree of competency in integrating this knowledge and applying it to the analysis of developmental data across monolingual and bilingual contexts with full understanding key issues, showing 1) outstanding ability to understand and discuss major acquisition issues; 2) outstanding ability to present an assigned topic and write an original term paper.
A-	Demonstration of a thorough understanding of theoretical and methodological issues in the language acquisition topics discussed, and a high degree of competency in integrating this knowledge and applying it to the analysis of developmental data across monolingual and bilingual contexts with only minor weaknesses in understanding key issues, showing 1) excellent ability to understand and discuss major acquisition issues; 2) excellent ability to present an assigned topic and write an original term paper.
B	Demonstration of a good understanding of theoretical and methodological issues in the language acquisition topics discussed, and a degree of competency in integrating this knowledge and applying it to the analysis of developmental data across monolingual and bilingual contexts with some weaknesses in understanding key issues, showing 1) good ability to understand and discuss major acquisition issues; 2) good ability to present an assigned topic and the write a well-organized term paper.
C	Demonstration of an adequate understanding of theoretical and methodological issues in the language acquisition topics discussed, and a degree of competency in integrating this knowledge and applying it to the analysis of developmental data across monolingual and bilingual contexts with some weaknesses in understanding key issues, showing 1) adequate ability to understand and discuss major acquisition issues; 2) adequate ability to present an assigned topic and write a satisfactory term paper.
D	Demonstration of some understanding of theoretical and methodological issues in the language acquisition topics discussed, and limited competency in integrating this knowledge and applying it to the analysis of developmental data across monolingual and bilingual contexts with major weaknesses in understanding a spectrum of topics, showing 1) weak ability to understand and discuss major acquisition issues; 2) weak ability to present an assigned topic and write a satisfactory term paper.
F	Demonstration of minimal understanding of theoretical and methodological issues in the language acquisition topics discussed, with very limited competency in integrating this knowledge and applying it to the analysis of developmental data across monolingual and bilingual contexts, lacking understanding across a spectrum of topics, showing 1) inability to understand and discuss major acquisition issues; 2) inability to present an assigned topic and write a satisfactory term paper.

Course schedule

Class/ week	Topic
Week 1 & Week 2	<p>Issues in child language acquisition: an introduction</p> <p>Guasti, M. T. 2002. Ch.1 Basic concepts.</p> <p>Newmeyer, F. 1998. Ch1.The form-function problem in linguistics, pp.1-21.</p> <p>Newmeyer, F. 2003. Grammar is grammar and usage is usage. <i>Language</i> 79.4.682-707.</p> <p>Evans, N. and S. Levinson. 2009. The myth of language universals: language diversity and its importance for cognitive science. <i>Behavioral and Brain Sciences</i> 32. 429–492.</p> <p>Behrens, H. 2009. Usage-based and emergentist approaches to language acquisition <i>Linguistics</i> 47: 383–411.</p> <p>Eisenbeiß, S. 2009. Generative approaches to language learning. <i>Linguistics</i> 47: 273–310.</p> <p>Zhao, Christina T. C. and P. K. Kuhl. 2016. Musical intervention enhances infants’ neural processing of temporal structure in music and speech. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i> : https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1603984113</p> <p>Kidd E. and R. Garcia. 2022. How diverse is child language acquisition research. <i>First Language</i> 42.6. https://doi.org/10.1177/01427237211066405</p>
Week 3	<p>Input factors in language acquisition and methodological issues</p> <p>Crain, S. and P. Pietroski. 2002. Why language acquisition is a snap. <i>Linguistic Review</i> 19:163-183.</p> <p>Pullum, G. and B. Scholtz. 2002. Empirical assessment of stimulus poverty arguments. <i>Linguistic Review</i> 19: 9-50.</p> <p>MacWhinney, B. 2004. A multiple process solution to the logical problem of language acquisition. <i>Journal of Child Language</i> 31: 883-914.</p> <p>Gathercole, V. C. M., and E. Hoff. 2007. Input and the acquisition of language: Three questions. In E. Hoff & M. Shatz (eds.), <i>The Handbook of Language Development</i>, Blackwell Publishers, pp. 107-127.</p> <p>Yip, V. and S. Matthews. 2007. Ch2. Section 2.2 The logical problem of bilingual acquisition and the poverty of the dual stimulus, pp.30-33.</p> <p>Gilkerson, J. et al. 2017. Mapping the early language environment using all-day recordings and automated analysis. <i>American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology</i> 26.2.1-18 DOI: 10.1044/2016_AJSLP-15-0169</p> <p>Byers-Heinlein, Krista & Tsui, Angeline & Bergmann, Christina & Black, Alexis & Brown, Anna & Carbajal, M. Julia & Durrant, Samantha & Fennell, Christopher & Fievet, Anne-Caroline & Frank, Michael & Gampe, Anja & Gervain, Judit & Gonzalez-Gomez, Nayeli & Hamlin, J Kiley & Havron, Naomi & Hernik, Mikołaj & Kerr, Shila & Killam, Hilary & Klassen, Kelsey & Wermelinger, Stephanie. 2021. A multilab study of bilingual infants: exploring the preference for infant-directed speech. <i>Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science</i>. 4. 251524592097462. https://doi.org/10.1177/2515245920974622</p>

<p>Week 4</p> <p>&</p> <p>Week 5</p>	<p>Issues in bilingual language acquisition</p> <p>Serratrice, L. 2013. Cross-linguistic influence in bilingual development: determinants and mechanisms. <i>Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism</i> 3.3-25.</p> <p>Silva-Corvalán, C. 2014. Ch3. Bilingual development: a linguistic profile of the first six years. pp. 54-119.</p> <p>Yip, V. 2013. Simultaneous Language Acquisition. In F. Grosjean and L. Ping <i>Psycholinguistics of Bilingualism</i>, Wiley-Blackwell.</p> <p>Yip, V. and S. Matthews. 2007. Ch2. Theoretical framework. In <i>The Bilingual Child</i>.</p> <p>Bialystok, E. and J. Werker. 2017. Editorial: The systematic effects of bilingualism on children's development. <i>Developmental Science</i> 20.1. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/desc.12535</p> <p>Ferjan Ramirez, N., Ramirez, R.R., Clarke, M., Taulu, S., Kuhl, P.K. 2016. Speech discrimination in 11-month-old bilingual and monolingual infants: A magnetoencephalography study. <i>Developmental Science</i> http://ilabs.washington.edu/sites/default/files/Ramirez_et_al_2016_DevSci.pdf</p> <p>Mai, Ziyin and Virginia Yip. 2022. Caretaker input and trilingual development of Mandarin, Cantonese and English in early childhood (1;6-2;11). <i>International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism</i>. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2022.2060037</p> <p>Yip, Virginia and Stephen Matthews. 2022. Language diversity and bilingual first language acquisition: A commentary on Kidd and Garcia (2022). <i>First Language</i> 42.6. https://doi.org/10.1177/01427237221097581</p>
<p>Week 6</p> <p>&</p> <p>Week 7</p>	<p>Heritage language acquisition</p> <p>Benmamoun, E., S. Montrul and M. Polinsky. 2013. Heritage languages and their speakers: opportunities and challenges for linguistics. <i>Theoretical Linguistics</i> 39. 129–181.</p> <p>Polinsky, M. 2015. When L1 becomes an L3: Assessing grammatical knowledge in heritage speakers/learners. <i>Bilingualism: Language and Cognition</i> 18:163-178.</p> <p>Kupisch, T. and Rothman, J. 2016. Terminology matters! Why difference is not incompleteness and how early child bilinguals are heritage speakers. <i>International Journal of Bilingualism</i>. ISSN 1756-6878 doi: 10.1177/1367006916654355</p> <p>Mai, Ziyin, Lucy Xia Zhao and Virginia Yip. 2021. The Mandarin ba-construction in school-age heritage speakers and their parents. <i>Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism</i>:</p>

Week 8	<p>https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/lab.18025.mai (pdf)</p> <p>Polinsky, M and Scontras, G. 2019. Understanding heritage languages. <i>Bilingualism: Language and Cognition</i> 23(1), 4-20. DOI: 10.1017/S136672891900024</p> <p>Scontras, G., Z. Fuchs and M. Polinsky. 2015. Heritage language and linguistic theory. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> 6.1545.</p> <p>Null objects and argument structure: bidirectional cross-linguistic influence</p> <p>Yip, V. and S. Matthews. 2007. Ch5. Null objects: dual input and learnability. In <i>The Bilingual Child: Early Development and Language Contact</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Zhou, J., Z. Mai and V. Yip. 2020. Bi-directional cross-linguistic influence in object realization in Cantonese-English bilingual children. <i>Bilingualism: Language and Cognition</i> DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728920000231</p> <p>Graf, E., A. Theakston, E. Lieven, & M. Tomasello. 2014. Subject and object omission in children's early transitive constructions: A discourse-pragmatic approach. <i>Applied Psycholinguistics</i>, 36, 701-727.</p> <p>Ge, H., S. Matthews., L. Cheung and V. Yip. 2017. Bi-directional cross-linguistic influence in Cantonese-English bilingual children: the case of right-dislocation. <i>First Language</i> 37. 3. 231-251. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0142723716687955</p>
Week 9	<p>Acquisition of relative clauses</p> <p>Yip, V. and S. Matthews. 2007. Relative clauses in Cantonese-English bilingual children: typological challenges and processing motivations. <i>Studies in Second Language Acquisition</i> 29. 277-300.</p> <p>Chan, A., S. Chen, S. Matthews and V. Yip. 2017. Comprehension of subject and object relative clauses in a trilingual acquisition context. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01641</p> <p>Chan, A., W. Yang, F. Chang and E. Kidd. 2017. Four-year-old Cantonese-speaking children's on-line processing of relative clauses: A permutation analysis. <i>Journal of Child Language</i> DOI: 10.1017/S0305000917000198</p> <p>Kidd, E., A. Chan and J. Chiu. 2015. Cross-linguistic influence in simultaneous Cantonese-English bilingual children's comprehension of relative clauses. <i>Bilingualism: Language and Cognition</i> 18.438-452.</p> <p>Chen, J. and Y. Shirai. 2014. The acquisition of relative clauses in spontaneous child speech in Mandarin Chinese. <i>Journal of Child Language</i> 20:1-29.</p> <p>Hsu, N., G. Hermon and A. Zukowski. 2009. Young children's production of head-final relative clauses: elicited production data from Chinese children. <i>Journal of East Asian Linguistics</i> 18. 323-360.</p>

Week 10	<p>Assessment of narratives in bilingual children</p> <p>Gagarina, N., D. Klop, S. Kunnari, K. Tantele, T. Välimaa, U. Bohnacker, U., et al. 2019. MAIN: multilingual assessment instrument for narratives. <i>ZAS Pap. Linguist.</i> 63, 1–36. doi: 10.21248/zaspil.63.2019.516</p> <p>Chan, A. K. Cheng et al. 2020. The Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives (MAIN): Adding Cantonese to MAIN. <i>ZAS Papers in Linguistics (ZASPiL)</i>. Berlin: ZAS, 64. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21248/zaspil.64.2020.553</p> <p>Luo, J., W.C. Yang, A. Chan, K. Cheng, R. Kan, and N. Gagarina. 2020. <i>The Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives (MAIN): Adding Mandarin to MAIN</i>. <i>ZAS Papers in Linguistics (ZASPiL)</i>. Berlin: ZAS, 64. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21248/zaspil.64.2020.569</p> <p>Zhou, Jiangling, Ziyin Mai, Qiuyun Cai, Yuqing Liang and Virginia Yip. 2022. Reference production in Mandarin-English bilingual preschoolers: Linguistic, input, and cognitive factors. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.897031</p>
Week 11 &	<p>Code-mixing in bilingual and trilingual children from a translanguaging perspective</p> <p>Quick, A. E., E. Lieven, A. Backus and M. Tomasello. 2018. Constructively combining languages: The use of code-mixing in German-English bilingual child language acquisition. <i>Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism</i>, 8.3. 393-409. https://doi.org/10.1075/lab.8.3</p>
Week 12	<p>Treffers-Daller, J. 2024. Unravelling translanguaging: a critical appraisal. <i>ELT Journal</i>, 78 (1). pp. 64-71. doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccad058</p> <p>Li, W. and O. Garcia. 2022. Not a first language but one repertoire: Translanguaging as a decolonizing project. <i>RELC Journal</i> https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882221092841</p>
Week 13	<p>Wrap-up session and remarks on applications in educational settings</p> <p>Huang, X., D. Zou, G. Cheng, H. Xie. 2021. A systematic review of AR and VR enhanced language learning. <i>Sustainability</i> 2021, 13, 4639. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13094639</p> <p>Roumba, E. and J. Nicolaidou. 2022. Augmented reality books: motivation, attitudes, and behaviors of young readers. <i>International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies (iJIM)</i> 16(16):59-73. DOI: 10.3991/ijim.v16i16.31741</p>
Week 14 & Week 15	<p>Student presentations of term projects</p>

Professor's contact details

Professor/Lecturer/Instructor:	Professor Virginia Yip
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Teaching Venue:	KKL Rm14 (ground floor)
Website:	Yip's website: http://vyip.cbrchk.org/
Other information:	Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre: http://cbrchk.org/

- **A facility for posting course announcements**

All announcements of the course will be circulated and posted by group email.

- **Academic honesty and plagiarism**

“Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. With the final term project, students will be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.”

For the written paper, each student must attach a statement with signed declaration for academic honesty.

- **Use of Generative AI tools**

Students are required to inform the instructor and discuss the use of any generative AI tools and the purpose they serve.