

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages
Second Term, 2025-26

<p>Course Code: BMBL 2004 Title in English: Language Acquisition of Deaf Children Title in Chinese: 聾童語言獲得</p>
<p>Course Description: This course explores deaf children's acquisition of spoken language and signed language either in a monolingual or a bilingual fashion, centering around the following issues: age of language acquisition, language deprivation, language input, critical period, and (bimodal) bilingual acquisition. In the context of Hong Kong, where the dominant societal languages are oral-auditory, a significant portion of time will be devoted to addressing how deaf children acquire the sound segments, tones, vocabulary, morphology, and syntax in Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese. For comparison, the acquisition of signed languages by deaf children in corresponding linguistic domains will also be discussed, with reference to the framework of bimodal bilingualism.</p>

Course Syllabus

Topic	Contents/fundamental concepts
Spoken language development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech perception and production • Grammatical knowledge • Vocabulary and literacy
Sign language development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonological knowledge • Morphological knowledge • Syntactic knowledge • Non-manuals
Critical period	It refers to the period during which children are said to be sensitive to linguistic data for language acquisition. Language acquisition beyond this period displays diverse ultimate attainments.
Impoverished Input	Linguistic data that is supposedly sensitive enough to trigger language acquisition is neither perceived nor processed efficiently. Alternatively, the so-called language data that deaf children are exposed to does not reflect natural language properties.
Sign bilingualism vs bimodal bilingualism	Sign bilingualism refers to a form of education philosophy for the deaf that promotes the use of sign language in education to nurture the 'L1' acquisition of deaf and hard-of-hearing children. Subsequent exposure to spoken language in the education process is taken to be their L2 acquisition. On the other hand, bimodal bilingualism has a much stronger linguistic orientation that promotes early and simultaneous exposure to both sign language and spoken language for deaf children.

Learning outcomes

<p>When they complete this course, Students will achieve a basic understanding of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How deaf children access the grammar of natural languages through the auditory/oral or the visual-spatial modality; 2. The complex situations in which deaf children acquire spoken and sign language. 3. Factors such as the effects of linguistic input and the critical period on deaf children's language acquisition; 4. The acquisition process of sign language and spoken language by deaf children; and 5. Some basic research skills required for investigating deaf children's language acquisition
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Course components (Teaching modes and Learning activities)

Teaching Modes and Learning Activities	
On-site face-to-face	Time
<i>Lectures</i>	16 hours
<i>In-class exercises</i>	4 hours
<i>Paper- presentation-based tutorials</i>	10 hours
<i>Workshops</i>	6 hours
	Total: 36 hours
Out-of-classroom	
<i>Readings</i>	40 hours
<i>Presentation Preparation</i>	4 hours
<i>Final quiz preparation</i>	10 hours
<i>Research report writing</i>	10 hours
	Total: 64 hours
	Total: 100 hours

Learning activities

Lecture (hr) in class	Interactive tutorial (hr) in class	In-class exercises (hr) in class	Workshops (hr) in class	Final quiz preparation (hr) Out class	Reading (hr) Out class	Presentation preparation (hr) Out class	Research report writing (hr) Out class
16	10	4	6	10	40	4	10
M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M

M: Mandatory activity in the course

O: Optional activity

NA: Not applicable

Assessment scheme

Assessment types	Description	Percentage
Class participation	Students are expected to participate in class activities (e.g., in-class exercises) and discussions actively.	20% (Individual/Group) (No AI use)
Paper presentation	<p>Groups of students (typically three students) take turns introducing a selected paper to the class. Each group should identify a partner group to raise questions for each other's paper presentations.</p> <p>Group PPT (32 slides max, including a front slide for the title and a slide for work organization purposes, such as a summary of who is responsible for which slides).</p> <p>Assessment scheme (A) Group PPT (Total: 10%) PPT contents: summary and critical analysis (5%) Organization & presentation (5%) (B) Q and A session (Total: 10%) Answer questions from the partner group and the other audience.</p> <p>Please pass your PPT to your partner group at least 2 days before the presentation to let members of your partner group have enough time to prepare questions. Please upload the PPT to Blackboard after the presentation for sharing with other students.</p>	Total: 20% (Group-performance-based) (Students are allowed to use AI to facilitate their understanding of the paper. But they need to prepare the textual contents of the PPT on their own)

On-site final exam	Answering some multiple-choice questions, True/False questions, short-answer questions, and 1 essay question (300 words max) based on required readings.	40% (Individual) (No AI use)
Research reports	Students will compose two research reports (500 words max each) based on their data analysis of the two workshops arranged for this course.	20% (i.e., 2 x 10%) (Individual) (No AI use)

Feedback for evaluation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are encouraged to give timely comments and feedback directly to the course instructor. • In addition to the University course evaluation, there will also be a midterm evaluation to collect students' opinions.
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Grade Descriptors

A	Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outstanding performance in all learning outcomes; ➤ Competent in theorization, generalization, hypothesization, and reflection upon issues; ➤ Skilled in creating hypotheses and generating proposals to tackle issues with unanticipated extension.
A-	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes; ➤ Skilled in comparing and contrasting arguments, explaining causes, analyzing and relating concepts to general theories; and ➤ Good at applying issues to relevant social contexts and predicting logically related outcomes
B	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, or high performance on some learning outcomes which compensate for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance; ➤ Able to enumerate, describe, list, and clarify concepts and topics; and ➤ Capable of examining a topic from multiple perspectives.
C	Fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Satisfactory performance on a majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses; and ➤ Able to state, recognize, recall, and tell single points of topics of discussion.
D	Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Barely satisfactory performance on quite a number of learning outcomes; and ➤ Barely able to recognize and state arguments in topics of discussion.
F	Fail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unsatisfactory performance on several learning outcomes, or failure to meet the specified assessment requirements; ➤ Missing the points.

* The final grade attained will be adjusted downward for each unexpected absence or tardiness in submitting assignments.

* Students are encouraged to be punctual, and there is a 15-minute allowance beyond which time the attendance is counted as zero.

Course schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Lecture-related readings	Student presentation readings for tutorials
1	7 Jan	Language acquisition in deaf children: An introduction	*Lillo-Martin, D, & Henner, J. (2021). Acquisition of Sign Languages, Annual Review of Applied Linguistics. <i>Annu. Rev. Linguist.</i> 2021. 7:395–	(Extended lecture)

			419,doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-043020-092357 Blamey, P. J. and Sarant, J. 2011. Development of spoken language by deaf children. In Marc Marschark and Patricia Elizabeth Spencer (eds.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Deaf Studies, Language, and Education</i> , Vol 1 (2nd edition). Pp.241-257.	
2	14 Jan	Spoken language: Speech perception and production (1)	*Holt, C. M., Lee, K.Y.S., Dowell, R. C. & Vogel, A. P. (2018). Perception of Cantonese lexical tones by pediatric cochlear implant users. Hall etal (2019). Deaf children need language, not (just) speech. <i>First Language</i> . 39(4) 367-395.	(Extended lecture)
3	21 Jan	Spoken language: Speech perception and production (2)	Li, Y-L., Lin, Y-H., Yang, H-M., Chen, Y-J., Wu, J-L. (2018). Tone production and perception and intelligibility of produced speech in Mandarin-speaking cochlear implanted children.	Zhou, N., Huang, J., Chen, X.W., and Xu, Li. 2013. Relationship between tone perception and production in prelingually deafened children with cochlear implants. <i>Otology & Neurotology</i> 34: 499-506.
4	28 Jan	Spoken language grammatical development: morphology and syntax (1)	*Berent, G.P. (2001). English for deaf students: Assessing and addressing learners' grammar development. In D. Janakova (ed.), <i>International Seminar on Teaching English to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students at Secondary and Tertiary Levels of Education: Proceedings</i> (pp. 124-134). Prague, Czech Republic: Charles University, The Karolinum Press. Berent, G.P. (1996). The acquisition of English syntax by deaf learners. In Ritchie, W., & Bhatia, T. (eds.). <i>Handbook of Second Language Acquisition</i> (pp. 469-506). San Diego: Academic Press. Friedmann, N. & Szterman, R. 2011. The comprehension and production of Wh-questions in deaf and hard-of-hearing children. <i>Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education</i> . 16(2), 212-235.	Cheung, K. K.L., Lau, A. H.Y., Lam, J.H.S., and Lee, K. Y.S. 2014. Cantonese tone production performance of mainstream school children with hearing impairment. <i>International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology</i> . 16(6): 624-636
5	4 Feb	Spoken language grammatical development: morphology and syntax (2)	de Villiers, J., & de Villiers, P. (1994). The central problem of functional categories in the English syntax of oral deaf children. In Tager-Flusberg, H. (ed.), <i>Constraints on Language Acquisition</i> (1 st edition). New	Tang G., et al. (2020). Chinese grammatical development of deaf and hard of hearing children in a sign bilingualism and coenrollment program. <i>American Annals of the Deaf</i> , 167(5), 675-

			<p>York: Psychology Press. (pp.9-47).</p> <p>Sze, Tang, Lau, Lam & Yiu. 2015. The development of discourse referencing in Cantonese of deaf/hard-of-hearing children. <i>Journal of Child Language</i>. 42: 351-393.</p> <p>Lam, S. (2017). Acquisition of Chinese relative clauses by deaf children in Hong Kong. <i>Language and Linguistics</i> 18:1, 72-115.</p>	699.
6	11 Feb	Workshop 1	(Analyzing spoken language data (writings) from deaf children)	<p>(Composing workshop report)</p> <p>(Submit the first workshop report by the end of this week)</p>
7	18 Feb	<i>Chinese New Year</i>	(No class arranged)	
8	25 Feb	Sign phonological acquisition by deaf children (1)	<p>Boyes Braem, P. 1990. Acquisition of the handshape in American Sign Language: A preliminary analysis. In V. Volterra & C.J.Erting (eds.), <i>From gesture to language in hearing and deaf children</i> (pp. 107-127). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer-Verlag.</p> <p>Colin, Kimberly E. et al. (2000). The acquisition of first signs: Place, handshape, and movement. In Charlene, C. et al (eds.), <i>Language Acquisition by Eye</i>. (pp.54-72).</p> <p>Marentette, P.F. (2000). Principles for an emerging phonological system: A case study of early ASL acquisition. In Charlene, C. et al (eds.), <i>Language Acquisition by Eye</i>. (pp.73-90).</p>	Geers et al. (2017). Early sign language exposure and cochlear implantation benefits. <i>Pediatrics</i> . 140(1): e20163489
9	4 Mar	<i>Reading week</i>	(No class arranged)	
10	11 Mar	Sign phonological acquisition by deaf children (2)	<p>Morgan, G. (2006). ‘Children are just lingual’: The development of phonology in British Sign Language (BSL). <i>Lingua</i>, 116, 1507-1523.</p> <p>Holcomb, Leala. (2023). ASL Rhyme, Rhythm, and Phonological Awareness for Deaf Children," <i>Perspectives on Early Childhood Psychology and</i></p>	Holcomb, L., Golos, D., Moses, A., Broadrick, A. (2022). Enriching Deaf Children’s American Sign Language Phonological Awareness: A Quasi-Experimental Study.

			Education: Vol. 5: Iss. 2, Article 3. Brentari, D., Falk, J., & Woldford, G. (2015). The acquisition of prosody in American Sign Language. <i>Language</i> , 91 (3), e144-e168.	
11	18 Mar	Sign Language grammatical development: morphology and syntax (1)	Reilly, J. (2006). How faces come to serve grammar: the development of nonmanual morphology in ASL. Tang, G. et al. (2007). Acquisition of simultaneous constructions by deaf children of Hong Kong Sign Language. In Vermeerbergen et al (eds.), <i>Simultaneity in Signed Languages: Form and Function</i> . Amsterdam, NLD: John Benjamins Publishing Company. (pp. 283-315).	Krebs, J., Roehm, D., Wilbur, R., Malaia, E.A. (2021). Age of acquisition effects has life-long effect on syntactic preferences in sign language users. <i>International Journal of Behavioural Development</i> , 45/4:397 408.
12	25 Mar	Sign Language grammatical development: morphology and syntax (2)	Chen Pichler, D. (2010). Using early ASL word order to shed light on word order variability in sign language. Cheng, Q., & Mayberry, R. (2018). Acquiring a first language in adolescence: the case of basic word order in American Sign Language.	Tang, G., & Li, J. 2018. Acquisition of classifier constructions in HKSL by bimodal bilingual deaf children of hearing parents. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> ,9, article 1148.
13	1 Apr	Bimodal bilingual acquisition	Goodwin, C., and Lillo-Martin, D. 2023. Deaf and hearing American Sign Language-English bilinguals: Typical bilingual language development. Fung, C., & Tang, G. 2016. Code-blending of functional heads in Hong Kong Sign Language and Cantonese: A case study.	(Extended lecture)
14	8 Apr	Workshop 2	(Analyzing signing and speech data from deaf children) (Each student takes along a computer with ELAN installed to the classroom)	(Composing workshop report) (Submit the second workshop report by the end of this week)
15	15 Apr	Final quiz (On-site, paper and pencil)		

Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)

Instructor:	
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Name:	Mandy Tang
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Telephone:	6463 4577 (WhatsApp only)
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Lecture time and venue:	
Lecture Time:	Wednesdays, 9:30 am- 11:15 am
Tutorial time:	Wednesdays, 11:30 am-12:15 pm
Teaching Venue:	LHC 101

Details of the course website

Key point: Information concerning the course is provided in the Blackboard platform hosted by the University.

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 each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the problematic contents.
- For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.
- Students are fully aware that their work may be investigated by AI content detection software to determine originality.
- Students are fully aware of the AI approach(es) adopted in the course. In the case where some AI tools are allowed, students have made proper acknowledgment and citations as suggested by the course teacher.

Assignments without a properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers.

Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g., to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work, but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained before the submission of the piece of work.

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Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

Use of generative AI tools

Guiding principle: Use only with prior permission

Permission is given to students resorting to AI-driven software to facilitate:

- a. reading comprehension of journal papers
- b. grammar checks on writing outputs in research paper writing

Using AI-driven softwares to compose reports and essays is **DISALLOWED**. Specifically,

- a. For the two workshop reports, using AI tools to compose the reports is not allowed. Furthermore, students need to pass their reports to the TA of this course to check the AI writing index first. Only if the AI index is within an acceptable range, the report is eligible to be further submitted to the instructor for grading.
- b. For the paper presentation, students should not ask AI to generate PPTs for them. PPT preparation should be done on their own, based on their understanding and summarization of the paper after carefully reading it.
- c. For both in-class exercises and the final quiz, students should complete these two components of assessment individually and independently. They are not allowed to ask AI to do the exercises in lieu of them.

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