

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

- 1. Course code: LING5201B (MACLA students only)**
- 2. Title in English: Topics in Second Language Acquisition**
- 3. Title in Chinese: 第二語言獲得專題**

**4. Course description**

This course provides students with linguistic, cognitive and psychological perspectives on second language acquisition (SLA) in child and adult learners. It presents an overview of the field of SLA, surveys influential theories and models in the history of SLA research and examines their claims in the light of recent empirical evidence. Research methodology will be illustrated through representative studies and hands-on activities. Students are provided with opportunities to reflect upon their own language learning experiences, relate them to theoretical issues discussed in class, and explore applications of scientific research findings to real-life second language learning and teaching. The main medium of instruction is English, supplemented by Chinese (Putonghua).

**5. Learning outcomes**

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- achieve a basic understanding of how second languages are acquired, and the linguistic, cognitive and psychological factors affecting the acquisition paths and outcomes
- appraise relevant literature of SLA critically
- develop analytical skills for conducting SLA research

**6. Course syllabus**

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Contents/fundamental concepts</b>
Basics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acquisition and learning, naturalistic vs. instructed settings, spoken vs. written modalities</li> <li>• first language (L1), second language (L2), foreign language, interlanguage, target language, child vs. adult L2 acquisition</li> <li>• age of onset, critical/sensitive period, fossilization</li> <li>• developmental sequences, developmental stages, morpheme orders, U-shaped development</li> <li>• initial state, rate of development, ultimate attainment</li> </ul>
Linguistic approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• competence and performance, formal linguistic approaches</li> <li>• types of evidence in the input, input ambiguity</li> <li>• language transfer, cross-linguistic influence, L1 effects</li> <li>• morphological variability, obligatory context, cue weighting, interface properties</li> <li>• L3 acquisition</li> </ul>
Cognitive approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• linguistic representation, access and activation</li> <li>• input frequency and salience, cues in the input</li> <li>• usage-based models, declarative and procedural memory</li> <li>• incidental learning</li> <li>• implicit learning, working memory</li> </ul>
Social aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interaction, corrective feedback, modified input, foreigner talk</li> </ul>
Individual differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• age effect, aptitude, motivation</li> </ul>
SLA research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• online and offline tasks, judgment tasks, production and</li> </ul>

	narration tasks, lexical decision, sound discrimination, reaction times, eye movement, standardized language tests, longitudinal and cross-sectional designs, naturalistic speech samples and controlled experiments
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## 7. Course components:

Teaching Modes and Learning Activities	
On-site face-to-face	Percentage of time
<i>Lectures (hybrid no)</i>	26 hours
<i>Interactive tutorial (hybrid no)</i>	13 hours
Out-of-classroom self-study	
<i>Reading, assignment, group work</i>	39 hours

## 8. Assessment type, percentage and rubrics

Task nature	Description	Weight
1. Class participation	Answer multiple-choice questions on content taught in class via Blackboard; late submissions will not be graded - <i>graded automatically by Blackboard</i>	10%
2. Quiz	Two in-class quizzes testing understanding of key concepts and theories, and their applications to new data and real-world problems - <i>graded by TA based on rubrics provided by teacher; reviewed by teacher</i>	70%
3. Oral presentation	A 5-minute oral presentation analyzing authentic data on a given topic in second language acquisition; students can work individually or form groups (max. 3 students per group) - <i>managed and fact-checked by TA, graded by teacher</i>	20%

N.B. Attendance at lectures and tutorials is required; All questions and instructions in the quizzes and the oral presentation will be presented in English; **MACLA students (LING5201B) can complete the tasks in either Chinese or English.**

## 9. Required and recommended readings:

### *Textbook*

Gass, S. M., Behney, J. and Plonsky, L. (2020) *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course*. Fifth edition. New York, NY: Routledge.

### *Articles:*

Puig-Mayenco, E., González Alonso, J., & Rothman, J. (2020). A systematic review of transfer studies in third language acquisition. *Second Language Research*, 36(1), 31-64.

Tremblay, A. (2021). The past, present, and future of lexical stress in second language speech production and perception. In Wayland, R. (Ed.) *Second Language Speech Learning*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 175–192.

Hopp, H. (2023). Sentence processing in a second language: linguistic approaches. In Godfroid, A., & Hopp, H. (Eds.) *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and psycholinguistics*, Routledge, 216-228.

### *Other references (optional):*

Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (Eds.). (2013). *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Godfroid, A., & Hopp, H. (Eds.). (2023). *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and psycholinguistics*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Comajoan-Colomé, L. (2020). The aspect hypothesis and the acquisition of L2 past morphology in the last 20 years: A state-of-the-scholarship review. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 42(5), 1137-1167.

### 10. Feedback for evaluation:

Apart from the end-of-term course evaluation, the teacher and the teaching assistant welcome students' timely comments and suggestions on any aspect of the course. Email communication and in-class discussions are preferred. Appointment meetings can also be arranged.

### 11. Course schedule:

Week	Date	Topics	Readings	Question
1.	Jan 5	Lecture: Introduction - Tutorial: Why is learning an L2 difficult?	Chapter 1 & 2	
2.	Jan 12	Lecture: Historical overview - Tutorial: Error analysis	Chapter 3 & 4	Q1
3.	Jan 19	Lecture: Formal linguistics and SLA - Tutorial: The sun and the ring	Chapter 6	Q2
4.	Jan 26	Lecture: Typological approaches to L2 - Tutorial: "The lady who I danced with her"	Chapter 7	Q3
5.	Feb 2	Lecture: Temporality in L2 - Tutorial: Sophie's verb choice	Chapter 8	Q4
6.	Feb 9	- <b>Quiz I (30%, covering 5 lectures in Weeks 1-5, 80min)</b> Workshop: guidelines, demonstration and scheduling for presentations		
7.	Feb 16	No class – Happy Chinese New Year!		
8.	Feb 23	Lecture: The L2 lexicon - Tutorial: Presentations (Cluster A)	Chapter 9	Q5
9.	Mar 2	Lecture: Processing L2 sentences - Tutorial: Presentations (Cluster B)	Chapter 11 Hopp (2023)	Q6
10.	Mar 9	Lecture: Processing L2 speech - Tutorial: Presentations (Cluster C)	Tremblay (2021)	Q7
11.	Mar 16	Lecture: Input and interaction in the L2 - Tutorial: Presentations (Cluster D)	Chapter 13	Q8
12.	Mar 23	Lecture: Individual differences in L2 learning - Tutorial: Presentations (Cluster E)	Chapter 15	Q9
13.	Mar 30	Lecture: L3 and multilingual acquisition - Tutorial: Presentations (Cluster F)	Puig-Mayenco et al. (2020)	Q10
14.	Apr 6	No class – The day following Ching Ming Festival		
15.	Apr 13	Lecture: Course review, Quiz I analysis - <b>Quiz II (40%, covering 6 lectures in Weeks 8-13, 100min)</b>		

### 12. Contact details:

Teacher: Prof. MAI Ziyin (Maggie) 麥子茵

Email: [maggiezymai@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:maggiezymai@cuhk.edu.hk)

Teaching assistant: Mr. LIU Zhuo (Rhodri), 劉卓

Email: [zhuoliu@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:zhuoliu@cuhk.edu.hk)

### 13. Details of course website

Course website in Blackboard.

### 14. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in teaching, learning and assessments

This course adopts the following approach in the major assessment components (i.e., items that count towards 30% or above of the final grade):

#### Use of AI tools

Approach 1 - Prohibit all use of AI tools in the major assessment components (quizzes)

- For general information about use of AI tools in learning:  
[AI Hub@CUHK https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ai-hub/](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ai-hub/)
- CUHK Library website on AI in Education:  
<https://libguides.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/c.php?g=917899&p=6975970>

### 15. Use of AI tools for grading and provision of feedback on student work

The teacher and the teaching assistant(s) will NOT use AI tools for grading and providing feedback on student work in the major assessment components.

### 16. 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/>.

- 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' work may be investigated by AI content detection software to determine originality.

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 prior to the submission of the piece of work.

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