Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition

Purdue University
School of Languages and Cultures

Time: TR: 9:00-10:15 am
Instructor: Prof. Mariko M. Wei
Office: SC 174
E-mail: moroishi@purdue.edu
Office Hour: T 1:00-2:00pm
R 12:00-1:00pm

Textbooks:
Required:

Optional:

NOTE: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; modifications are likely to be necessary and will be implemented as a result of students’ needs and classroom life.

COURSE AIMS

Individual differences among second language learners are a prominent feature of SLA, because a great deal of the variation in language learning outcomes is attributable to various learner characteristics. In this course, course participants will discuss how variables such as personality, aptitude, motivation, learning styles, age, and L1 relate to different learning outcomes of second language learners.

Learning objectives of this course are: a) to develop an expert and personally relevant understanding of individual differences in SLA, b) to become familiar with theories, methods, and findings in the field, c) to develop your ability to read SLA research reports critically, and d) to support you through the process of conducting and reporting on a project that explores an SLA topic of your choice that might lead to master
or doctoral research.

COURSE COMPONENTS

Preparation and class participation (15%):
The course will be conducted via informal lectures by the instructor, presentation by students, and class discussion. Because this is a graduate seminar, preparation, attendance, and class participation are all mandatory. I expect from students that they make every effort to contribute meaningfully to planned and spontaneous discussions and that they consciously create and exploit opportunity for personally relevant learning.

Attendance is mandatory except for religious holidays. If you know that you have to miss a class in order to observe religious holidays, please let me know ahead of time so that this will not count as an absence. **Students who accumulate four absences will receive an automatic full grade reduction. Students who accumulate five absences will not be eligible for a passing grade in the course.**

Article Presentation (15%):
Readings in this class may be difficult because they are long, some times technical, and often about research areas not all students in class may be familiar with. In order to help everyone make better sense of the readings and get more out of each, I will ask each student to take responsibility for readings and design class presentation/discussion format around the reading. The goal is to “teach” an article that has been read by all. Each student will choose one article of his/her interest, thus become a discussion leader once during the semester.

Final Research Project (25%):
This is due on 12/6 (Th), last day of the class. One of the most important aims in this course is that you will find a topic of your interest, through classroom discussion and readings that have been covered in this course, that might be developed to master’s research papers or doctoral dissertations. The paper should be type-written (double-spaced) and between 10-15 pages in length. It has to show the following abilities in your writing: 1) to articulate insightful research questions which can contribute to future research in the field of language acquisition and state why and 2) to discuss classic and recent literature that motivates the need for investigation of the research problem.

Final papers should be composed of the following sections:

1. Title page
2. Introduction
   - Question posed in paper
   - Motivation for research (e.g., research gap, desire for replication of results, etc.)
3. Literature review
   - Select at least 15 books or journal articles (make sure to include 10 sources you have chosen for annotated bibliography) that are directly related to your research questions.
   - Discuss each study critically by referring to contradictory findings from different researchers, highlighting the failings of previous studies (e.g.,
limited analysis/less than ideal methodology, etc.), and showing an awareness of questions which remain unanswered.

- **DO NOT SIMPLY PROVIDE A SUMMARY OF EACH STUDY,** but rather tie together the results of the studies so that their relevance is clear. When conflicting findings are reported in different studies, suggest possible explanations.

4. **Biography**
   - The bibliography should contain all references included in the paper. Please use APA style (http://www.apastyle.org/).

**Annotated bibliography (15 X 2 = 30%):**
An annotated bibliography is a list of books, journals, websites, etc. that include a summary and evaluation of each of the sources. It is an excellent preparation for writing a literature review for your research paper. It forces you to find most relevant sources for your research questions, read them carefully and critically, and assess how they help you to shape your argument. You are required to submit an annotated bibliography twice during the semester: **on 10/25 (Th) and 11/15 (Th).** For each assignment, find **five books or articles** and annotate them. A sample annotated bibliography form will be provided later in class.

**Oral presentation on final research project (15%):**
15% of your grade will be for the formal presentation on the final research project at Class Colloquium (during the last two weeks of the semester). You are required to do a PowerPoint presentation. Credit includes how clearly you present your research questions as well as the review of the literature, how professional your PPT slides look like, and how well you answer questions from the classmates and the instructor after the presentation.

**GRADING CRITERIA:**

- A+ 96–100
- A 93–96
- A- 90–93
- B+ 86–90
- B 83–86
- B- 80–83
- C+ 76–80
- C 73–76
- C- 70–73
- D 65–70
**SCHEDULE:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture/ Reading Material</th>
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| 8/21 (Tu) | Introduction/ Course Overview  
SLA: What do we want to know, and what we know so far |
| 8/23 (Th) | SLA: What do we want to know, and what we know so far |
| 8/28 (Tu) | Individual differences in SLA  
Dörnyei & Skehan (2003) |
| 8/30 (Th) | Motivation  
MacIntyre (2002) (R: Ch. 3) |
| 9/4 (Tu) | Motivation  
Csizer & Dörnyei (2005)  
Dörnyei (2002) (R: Ch. 7) |
| 9/6 (Th) | Age  
DeKeyser (2000) |
| 9/11 (Tu) | Age  
Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson (2003) |
| 9/13 (Th) | Age  
Harley & Hart (2002) (R: Ch.12)  
Ross, et al. (2002) (R: Ch.11) |
| 9/18 (Tu) | Language aptitude  
Skehan (2002) (R: Ch.4) |
| 9/20 (Th) | Language aptitude  
Sternberg (2002) (R: Ch.2)  
Robinson (2002) (R: Ch.6) |
| 9/25 (Tu) | Language aptitude  
Lanta (2002) (R: Ch. 8) |
| 9/27 (Th) | Working memory  
Robinson (2002) (R: Ch.10) |
| 10/2 (Tu) | Working memory  
Mackey et al. (2002) (R: Ch. 9) |
<p>| 10/4 (Th) | Learning styles and strategies |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/11(Th)</td>
<td>Learning styles and strategies</td>
<td>Reid (1987) [ ] Johnson, Prior, &amp; Artuso (2000) [ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/16 (Tu)</td>
<td>Learning styles and strategies</td>
<td>Carrell (1989) [ ] Carson &amp; Longhini (2002) [ ]</td>
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<td>10/18 (Th)</td>
<td>Learners’ beliefs about L2 learning</td>
<td>Oxford &amp; Crookall (1989) [ ]</td>
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<td>Gu &amp; Johnson (1996) [ ]</td>
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<td>10/23 (Tu)</td>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Verhoeven &amp; Vermeer (2002) [ ]</td>
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<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Elkhafaifi (2005) [ ]</td>
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<td>10/30 (Tu)</td>
<td>L1: Cross-linguistic influence</td>
<td>Odlin (2003) [ ]</td>
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<td>11/1 (Th)</td>
<td>L1: Cross-linguistic influence</td>
<td>Van Hell &amp; Tanner (2012) [ ]</td>
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<td>Sparks (2012) [ ]</td>
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<td>11/6 (Tu)</td>
<td>Learning disabilities</td>
<td>Gringorenko (2002) (R: Ch.5) [ ]</td>
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<td>11/8 (Th)</td>
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<td>Seung, Siddiqi, &amp; Elder (2006) [ ]</td>
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<td>Petersen, Marinova-Todd, &amp; Mirenda (2012) [ ]</td>
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<td>11/15 (Th)</td>
<td>Class Colloquium</td>
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<td>12/4 (Tu)</td>
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<td>12/6 (Th)</td>
<td>Class Colloquium</td>
<td>Due: Final paper</td>
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