

CMM 375
Language Acquisition

MODULE HANDBOOK

Module title:	Language Acquisition
Module Code:	CMM375
CRN:	58094
Credit points:	20 credits

Module Co-ordinator:	Dr Juliana Gerard (j.gerard@ulster.ac.uk)
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Hours per week:	3hr lecture/seminar
	Independent study, assignment preparation and directed reading (including assessment)
When:	Lecture and Seminar on Tuesday from 12.15-15.15
Where:	Lecture and Seminar in 17C25

Why am I studying this module?

This module will focus on specific topics in children's language acquisition, including issues in phonetics and phonology, word learning, and different syntactic phenomena. Special emphasis will be placed on becoming familiar with the kinds of questions, argumentation, and experimental designs that are used in academic journal articles on the topics in this module.

What am I going to learn on this module?

Week	Topic	Reading
1	Introduction, module overview	- DeLoache, Miller, & Rosengren (1997) - Meltzoff & Moore (1977) - Onishi & Baillargeon (2005) - Wynn (1992)
2	The problem of language acquisition and presentation skills (Catrin)	- Guasti ch.1 (req)
3	Language made fun	- Guasti chapter 2 and 3 selections (req)
4	Acquisition of phonetics and phonology and segmentation of the speech stream	- Kuhl, Tsao, & Liu (2003) (req) - Werker & Tees (1984) - Saffran, Aslin, & Newport (1996) (req) - Senghas & Coppola (2001)
5	Word learning: nouns and strategies	- Guasti chapter 3 selections (req) - Booth & Waxman (2009) (req) - Booth & Waxman (2003)

6	Word learning: verbs and hypothesis spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Naigles (1990) (req) - Naigles et al (1992) - Lidz, Waxman, & Freedman (2003) - Regier & Gahl (2004) - Pearl & Lidz (2009)
7	Careers guest lecture	
8	Bilingualism (Susan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bialystok (2010) (req) - Kovacs & Mehler (2009) - Teubner-Rhodes et al (2016)
9	Syntactic revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trueswell et al. (1999) (req) - Clackson, Felser, & Clahson (2011)
10	Pronouns and binding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conroy et al (2009) - McKee (1992) - Kazanina & Phillips (2001)
11	Null subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Valian (2016) (req) - Orfitelli & Hyams (2012) - Valian (1991)
12	Group project presentations	

What should I be able to do by the end of this module?

By the end you should be able to:

- Define and discuss the Logical Problem of Language Acquisition in terms of positive evidence, (indirect) negative evidence, and the primary linguistic data
- Distinguish between arguments for the roles of the environment and of internal properties, and apply these to phenomena discussed in the module.
- Distinguish between arguments for language-specific and more general factors in language acquisition, and evaluate the evidence provided for in support of these factors for a given phenomenon.
- Recognize the key components of an academic research article, and discuss the conclusions of the article by citing the arguments made by the authors.

How am I going to learn on this module?

You have a **two hour class** during which the material will be presented by the lecturer, followed by a **weekly one hour seminar** (starting week 2) for discussing questions about assignments and reviewing course material and for presenting research articles as a group with other students in the module. Attendance and participation in both the lectures and seminars is important, and will count towards the final grade. Questions may also be posted in the online discussion board before class, and will still count towards participation.

The lecture will cover new concepts and phenomena in children's language. The seminar will focus more on experimental design, but will also provide more of an opportunity to cover any questions about new material.

How will I be assessed on this module?

- Most weeks: QALMRI analysis of a research article: 40% ([instructions](#))
- Group presentation of research article: 10%
- Participation/attendance during lecture/seminar: 10%
- Final project, including group presentation (experiment proposal): 40%

What should I read for this module?

Required reading:

Guasti, M. T. (2002). *Language Acquisition: The Growth of Grammar*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

[Link to ebook](#)

DeLoache, J. S., Miller, K. F., & Rosengren, K. S. (1997). The credible shrinking room: Very young children's performance with symbolic and nonsymbolic relations. *Psychological Science*, 8(4), 308–313.

Meltzoff, A. N., Moore, M. K., & others. (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human neonates. *Science*, 198(4312), 75–78.

Onishi, K. H., & Baillargeon, R. (2005). Do 15-Month-Old Infants Understand False Beliefs? *Science*, 308(5719), 255–258.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1107621>

Wynn, K. (1992). Addition and subtraction by human infants. *Nature*, 358(6389), 749–750.

Kuhl, P. K., Tsao, F.-M., & Liu, H.-M. (2003). Foreign-language experience in infancy: Effects of short-term exposure and social interaction on phonetic learning. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 100(15), 9096–9101.

Saffran, J. R., Aslin, R. N., & Newport, E. L. (1996). Statistical Learning by 8-Month-Old Infants. *SCIENCE*, 274, 13.

Booth, A. E., & Waxman, S. R. (2009). A horse of a different color: Specifying with precision infants' mappings of novel nouns and adjectives. *Child Development*, 80(1), 15–22.

Naigles, L. (1990). Children use syntax to learn verb meanings. *Journal of Child Language*, 17(02), 357.

Bialystok, E. (2010). Bilingualism. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, n/a-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.43>

- Kovacs, A. M., & Mehler, J. (2009). Flexible Learning of Multiple Speech Structures in Bilingual Infants. *Science*, 325(5940), 611–612.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1173947>
- Trueswell, J. C., Sekerina, I., Hill, N. M., & Logrip, M. L. (1999). The kindergarten-path effect: Studying on-line sentence processing in young children. *Cognition*, 73(2), 89–134.
- Conroy, A., Takahashi, E., Lidz, J., & Phillips, C. (2009). Equal treatment for all antecedents: How children succeed with Principle B. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 40(3), 446–486.
- Valian, V. (2016). Null Subjects. *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Linguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199601264.013.17>
- Recommended reading
- Senghas, A., & Coppola, M. (2001). Children creating language: How Nicaraguan Sign Language acquired a spatial grammar. *Psychological Science*, 12(4), 323–328.
- Werker, J. F., & Tees, R. C. (1984). Cross-language speech perception: Evidence for perceptual reorganization during the first year of life. *Infant Behavior and Development*, 7(1), 49–63.
- Booth, A. E., & Waxman, S. R. (2003). Mapping words to the world in infancy: Infants' expectations for count nouns and adjectives. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 4(3), 357–381.
- Naigles, L., Fowler, A., & Helm, A. (1992). Developmental shifts in the construction of verb meanings. *Cognitive Development*, 7(4), 403–427.
- Lidz, J., Waxman, S., & Freedman, J. (2003). What infants know about syntax but couldn't have learned: experimental evidence for syntactic structure at 18 months. *Cognition*, 89(3), 295–303.
- Regier, T., & Gahl, S. (2004). Learning the unlearnable: the role of missing evidence. *Cognition*, 93(2), 147–155.
- Pearl, L., & Lidz, J. (2009). When Domain-General Learning Fails and When It Succeeds: Identifying the Contribution of Domain Specificity. *Language Learning and Development*, 5(4), 235–265.
- Teubner-Rhodes, S. E., Mishler, A., Corbett, R., Andreu, L., Sanz-Torrent, M., Trueswell, J. C., & Novick, J. M. (2016). The effects of bilingualism on conflict monitoring, cognitive control, and garden-path recovery. *Cognition*, 150, 213–231.

- Clackson, K., Felser, C., & Clahsen, H. (2011). Children's processing of reflexives and pronouns in English: Evidence from eye-movements during listening. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 65(2), 128–144.
- McKee, C. (1992). A Comparison of Pronouns and Anaphors in Italian and English Acquisition. *Language Acquisition*, 2(1), 21–54.
- Kazanina, N., & Phillips, C. (2001). Coreference in child Russian: Distinguishing syntactic and discourse constraints. In *Proceedings of the 25th Boston University Conference on Language Development*. Boston, MA: Cascadilla Press.
- Moscato, V., Romoli, J., Demarie, T. F., & Crain, S. (2016). Born in the USA: a comparison of modals and nominal quantifiers in child language. *Natural Language Semantics*, 24(1), 79–115.
- Orfitelli, R., & Hyams, N. (2012). Children's grammar of null subjects: evidence from comprehension. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 43(4), 563–590.
- Valian, V. (1991). *Syntactic subjects in the early speech of American and Italian children* (Vol. 40). [https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277\(91\)90046-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277(91)90046-7)
- Gualmini, A., Hulsey, S., Hacquard, V., & Fox, D. (2008). The Question–Answer Requirement for scope assignment. *Natural Language Semantics*, 16(3), 205–237.