

**CMM 375**  
**Language Acquisition**

**MODULE HANDBOOK**

<b>Module title:</b>	Language Acquisition
<b>Module Code:</b>	CMM375
<b>CRN:</b>	59655
<b>Credit points:</b>	20 credits

<b>Module Co-ordinator:</b>	Dr Juliana Gerard ( <a href="mailto:j.gerard@ulster.ac.uk">j.gerard@ulster.ac.uk</a> )
<b>Office hours:</b>	<a href="https://calendly.com/julianagerard/meeting">calendly.com/julianagerard/meeting</a>

<b>Hours per week:</b>	3hr lecture/seminar Independent study, assignment preparation and directed reading (including assessment)
<b>When:</b>	Lecture and Seminar on Tuesdays from 11:15-14:15
<b>Where:</b>	BC-02-426

**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	
2	The logical problem of language acquisition	- <b>Guasti ch.1 (req)</b> section 1.5.3 optional - <a href="#">Senghas &amp; Coppola (2001)</a> (req) - <a href="#">He (2022)</a> (optional)
3	Acquisition of phonology	- <b>Guasti chapter 2 and 3 selections (req)</b> - <a href="#">Werker et al (1981)</a> (req) - <a href="#">Kuhl, Tsao, &amp; Liu (2003)</a>
4	Segmentation of the speech stream	- <a href="#">Saffran, Aslin, &amp; Newport (1996)</a> (req)
5	Learning strategies: nature/nurture	- <b>Guasti chapter 3 selections (req)</b> - <a href="#">Lidz, Waxman, &amp; Freedman (2003)</a> (req) - <a href="#">Regier &amp; Gahl (2004)</a>
6	Learning strategies: bootstrapping	- <b>Guasti chapter 3 selections (req)</b> - <a href="#">Naigles (1990)</a> (req) - <a href="#">Naigles et al (1992)</a> - <a href="#">Naigles (1996)</a>
7	Bilingualism	- <a href="#">Kovacs &amp; Mehler (2009)</a> (req) - <a href="#">Bialystok (2010)</a>

8	Professional development week	
9	Syntactic revision	- <a href="#">Trueswell et al. (1999)</a> (req) - <a href="#">Choi &amp; Trueswell (2010)</a> - <a href="#">Ozge et al (2016)</a>
10	Pronouns	- <a href="#">Conroy et al (2009)</a> (req) - <a href="#">Kazanina &amp; Phillips (2001)</a>
11	Null subjects	- <a href="#">Orfitelli &amp; Hyams (2012)</a> (req) - <a href="#">Valian (2016)</a> - <a href="#">Valian (1991)</a>
12	Review for final project	-
	Easter break	

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

By the end you should be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of core issues in Language Acquisition across language domains.
- Identify key components of an empirical research paper (research question, hypotheses, predictions, methods, results, and conclusion).
- Develop skills and strategies for effective project management in a research context.
- Apply AI tools to support understanding of the above LOs, particularly with respect to tools for question-answering.

How am I going to learn on this module?

**This module uses a FLIPPED CLASSROOM format**

*Before the lecture:*

1. View recordings which cover content on the module.
  - Each week there are 5-7 recordings
  - Recordings are 5-10 minutes each (and include captions)
  - Access the recordings from the Blackboard site
2. Read the journal article(s), focusing on key points (covered in weeks 1-2)

**Bloom's Taxonomy: understand**

*During the lecture*

- Structured activities and discussion of lecture content and journal article
  - Rotating project roles to facilitate discussion
    - Understanding content
    - Identifying questions
  - Analyse, evaluate AI outputs

**Bloom's Taxonomy: apply, analyse, evaluate**

*Final project*

- Propose an experiment that follows up on one of the readings

**Bloom's Taxonomy: analyse, evaluate, create**

How will I be assessed on this module?

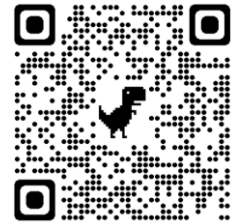
- Participation during lecture/seminar (readings completed): 20%
- Final project:
  - o Proposal outline: 20%
  - o Proposal writeup: 60%
- Up to 5% extra credit: participation in a [research study](#)

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](#)



- 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.
- 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>
- 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.
- Naigles, L. (1990). Children use syntax to learn verb meanings. *Journal of Child Language*, 17(02), 357.
- Orfitelli, R., & Hyams, N. (2012). Children's grammar of null subjects: Evidence from comprehension. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 43(4), 563–590.
- Saffran, J. R., Aslin, R. N., & Newport, E. L. (1996). Statistical Learning by 8-Month-Old Infants. *SCIENCE*, 274, 13.
- Senghas, A., & Coppola, M. (2001). Children creating language: How Nicaraguan Sign Language acquired a spatial grammar. *Psychological Science*, 12(4), 323–328.
- 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.
- Werker, J. F., Gilbert, J. H. V., Humphrey, K., & Tees, R. C. (1981). Developmental Aspects of Cross-Language Speech Perception. *Child Development*, 52(1), 349–355. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1129249>

Recommended reading

- Bialystok, E. (2010). Bilingualism. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, n/a-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.43>
- Choi, Y., & Trueswell, J. C. (2010). Children's (in)ability to recover from garden paths in a verb-final language: Evidence for developing control in sentence processing. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 106(1), 41–61.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2010.01.003>

- He, A. X. (2022). Optimal input for language development: Tailor nurture to nature. *Infant and Child Development*, 31(1), e2269. <https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.2269>
- Kazanina, N., & Phillips, C. (2001). Coreference in child Russian: Distinguishing syntactic and discourse constraints. *Proceedings of the 25th Boston University Conference on Language Development*.
- 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.
- Naigles, L., Fowler, A., & Helm, A. (1992). Developmental shifts in the construction of verb meanings. *Cognitive Development*, 7(4), 403–427.
- Naigles, L. R. (1996). The use of multiple frames in verb learning via syntactic bootstrapping. *Cognition*, 58(2), 221–251. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277\(95\)00681-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277(95)00681-8)
- Özge, D., Kornfilt, J., Münster, K., Knoeferle, P., Küntay, A., & Snedeker, J. (2016). Predictive Use of Case Markers in German Children. *Proceedings of the 40th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development*.
- Regier, T., & Gahl, S. (2004). Learning the unlearnable: The role of missing evidence. *Cognition*, 93(2), 147–155.
- Valian, V. (1991). Syntactic subjects in the early speech of American and Italian children. *Cognition*, 40, 21–81. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277\(91\)90046-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277(91)90046-7)
- Valian, V. (2016). Null Subjects. *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Linguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199601264.013.17>