

PSU34140 Child Language Acquisition & Development

JS/SS/PCC years 1 & 2

5 ECTS

One semester; 11 lectures; 114 hours independent study

Module description

This module looks at the process of first language acquisition by examining the social and cognitive mechanisms that drive language learning in the first few years of life. The module is designed to provide students with an in-depth understanding of first language acquisition with a focus on spoken language in typical healthy children. The module starts with an exploration of pre-verbal communication in infancy and tracks verbal development during toddlerhood into middle childhood. Overarching issues in linguistic theory, in the form of competing explanations of language acquisition patterns, will be discussed and key debates and current research in the field will be examined.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the general course of child language acquisition
- Evaluate major and contemporary theories and models of language acquisition
- Discuss methods used in child language research
- Critically evaluate the evidence for and against the factors proposed to underlie and support early language learning and development
- Discuss the concept of Individual Differences in First Language Acquisition
- Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the inter-relationships among cognitive, social and communication development

Indicative topics

- Theories of language acquisition and development: Formalist vs functionalist
- The first year: Sound perception
- Pattern recognition: Statistical language learning
- Maturation (crawling, walking, gestures, memory, changing visual input)
- Environment and Input: Child Directed Speech
- The lexicon
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Pragmatics and Discourse

Assessment: 100% course work

Reading: As this is an advanced Sophister research-led taught module, state-of-the-art and up-to-date journal articles from the relevant research literature will be made available throughout the module.

Module pre-requisites: **Cognate foundation modules (e.g., developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, psychology of language)**