SPAN 445/645:
SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

University of Nevada, Reno
Department of World Languages and Literatures

Meeting days: MW
Meeting time: XX
Instructor: Dr. Tania Leal
Office hours: TBA
Office Location: 241 U
Email: tanial@unr.edu

Course Description
This course surveys second language acquisition research, focusing on influential theories and research traditions. Students will analyze data to understand how research is conducted in SLA.

Overview of the course
In this course we will conduct an overview of the field of second language acquisition (SLA), with a focus on those theories that have been most influential in the research. We will also cover some of the most important methodologies that have been used to gather data as well as the research questions that have guided the empirical and theoretical work in SLA. We will focus on the acquisition of a variety of language combinations, including Spanish, English, French, and others. We will also explore learning contexts around the world. During class, we will engage in collaborative activities where we will analyze real second language (L2) data with the goal of evaluating the evidence first hand and developing critical and analytical skills.

The course will also focus on the history of SLA from its inception, covering research traditions including Generativism and Usage-Based Approaches. Another goal of the course is to introduce the critical terminology, including notions such as “interlanguage,” “critical period,” and “linguistic universals. For graduate students: Through a final project (which will consist of the articulation of a research question complete with a literature review and a proposed methodology), each student will be able to explore a topic of their interest.

Undergraduate Prerequisite: SPAN 301
Undergraduate Recommended Preparation: SPAN 441 or SPAN 451
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

◈ Describe the historical progression of the field of SLA, especially as it pertains to research methods and approaches.
◈ Identify key terminology in the area of SLA research and how this terminology relates to research in learning contexts.
◈ Describe the issues and problems in current SLA research with examples drawn from multiple languages and global learning contexts via written essays and oral presentations.
◈ Use one's own experience in their written research paper in order to deepen the understanding of second language acquisition research.
◈ Analyze real L2 data (including one's own) from multiple perspectives to critically evaluate alternative interpretations of the data.
◈ Evaluate current hypotheses and develop a personal stance based on concrete data.
◈ For 645: Graduate students will be required to synthesize second language acquisition research to come up with feasible ways to test a research question in an area of their interest, yet based on the theory, in an APA-compliant manuscript.

Class Materials
Our main text will be the textbook by Roumyana Slabakova (Slabakova, R. (2016). Second Language Acquisition. Oxford: University Press). Throughout the semester, we will also cover material from required readings, many of which with deal specifically with the acquisition of Spanish as a Second Language. This readings will include primary sources such as empirical studies and also state-of-the-art articles. Graduate students will also be required to complete additional project, as marked in the syllabus.

CO13
This course satisfies Core Objective 13: Integration and Synthesis. Students will be able to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues using knowledge of linguistics and language acquisition. As such, this course will require students to read a variety of sources as well as express their opinions both through writing assignments and oral participation (CO1), in order to critically analyze information using linguistic data from existent studies as well as data of their own (CO3). Students will be required to apply these modes of inquiry and a data analysis to problems in applied linguistics, in this case, the acquisition of languages beyond a first language in a variety of global contexts. Students will draw connections between different acquisition settings, including naturalistic acquisition and classroom
contexts and different socioeconomic contexts (bilingualism of prestige vs. bilingualism of circumstance), using data in order to answer the research questions that have been most important in the field but also research questions of their own.

For undergraduates, CO 13 will be assessed via the completion two reflections, homework assignments and an a Research Project which is guided by a specific research question of their interest but based on SLA theory. For this assignment, students will be asked to analyze their own language learning histories and propose a question that was sparked by their own experience.

Although the CO are not assessed for graduate level courses, CO 13 will be assessed via the completion two reflections, and homework assignments. Students will also be assessed on this objective through the completion of a Research Project which will center around a research question of their own creation. This research project should include a literature review and propose a methodology. Students will also be required to hypothesize potential outcomes and elaborate what these would mean in terms of the testing of their hypothesis.

Details will be provided on the assignment sheets for every homework and assignment.

### Grade distribution

Grades will not be assigned following a statistical curve—thus, final grades will be earned according the percentages as shown here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-97%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-79%</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>73-77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>68-69%</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63-67%</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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### Course Components

<table>
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<th>1. Participation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The success of this class largely depends on the quality of the discussions in which we engage. All participants, regardless of their background, have important contributions to make that will help us all better understand the material. As we will learn from the class content, discussing the material from different angles serves an important purpose in the understanding and retention of the material. I expect you to come prepared and ready to contribute.</strong> Please note that graduate students have additional readings to complete.</td>
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### 2. Reflexiones

10%

By the third week of class, you will hand in an autobiography or your own experience learning a second language. It will be two pages in length, double-spaced. This narrative should reflect your personal experience. This assignment will hopefully motivate you to think about how you learned a second language (or became bilingual) and should include comments on your successes, challenges and failures. This will hopefully help you think about the various theories and models of SLA that we will be studying this semester and contextualize them in your own experience. This paper will be worth 3% of your total grade.

At the end of the semester you will write a second comment paper on your own SLA experience. This comment will be more analytic in nature and touch on topics we covered over the course of the semester. It will be between 3-4 pages in length. You can select one of the theories or approaches that best addresses your experience or select more than one, if appropriate. You will use your first text as a base to comment upon your L2 learning experience in the light of what you have learned during the semester. You must cite appropriate sources and theories. The second commentary is due at the beginning of the last day of class. The second comment paper will be worth 7%.

**Graduate students** will be required to write more in-depth reflections and will also be required to integrate research outcomes from our reading list.

### 3. Homework

15%

Homework assignments will entail the analysis of L2 data sets or short problem sets based on raw data. These assignments are meant to test your understanding of the material that we cover in class and to work on some aspects of acquisition on your own. Homework assignments will require the application of the analytical tools we will cover and practice during the class. **Graduate students** will be required to complete additional assignments and analyses. Also, they will be expected to engage in more in-depth discussions.

### 4. Mini-pruebas

10%

Periodically there will be short quizzes or assignments to be carried out during class time. For some of them you will be asked to look at data while for others you will be asked to answer questions related to what we have seen in class or the reading you had to complete for that day. If you are absent on the day a quiz is assigned, you will receive zero. There are no make-ups for the quizzes but you can drop the lowest grade.

### 5. Tests

20%

We will have a midterm and a final which will consist of short answers and essay questions based on information from the lectures, readings, and class discussion. These will also include a short problem set for analysis. Grad students will have additional analytical questions.

### 6. Research Project (undergrad) 25% or (grad) 30%

**UNDERGRAD:** The student will prepare a research paper of 8 pages, APA style. The paper will be on a topic of your interest and will include complete bibliographical information about a collection of works on a particular subject of topic. In addition to the paper, you will be expected to produced an annotated bibliography of 5 articles selected from peer-reviewed periodicals.

**GRAD:** Each student will prepare a research paper of at least 15 pages, APA style. The topic is up to the student but it will be vetted by the instructor. Papers should focus on a given aspect of second language acquisition. Details in assignment sheet on Canvas.
In groups of up to three people, you will present information about a particular instrument or experimental method or task that is used in the field of SLA to measure learner knowledge or abilities. During the second week of class I will assign the topics and dates for the presentations. The group will have to do the following:

- Using appropriate sources, research the test/measure/task – its goal, purpose and at least two studies that have used it.
- Prepare an example of the test/measure/task and bring in enough copies for the entire class to carry it out.
- Give the group the task or exercise, with appropriate instructions and explanations to allow them to complete it easily and clearly.
- Prepare a short presentation (maximum 10 minutes) for the class with the above information.
- All group members must participate.
- The group has to go to my office hours one week prior to the presentation to discuss what will be presented. This is part of your grade.

Instead of a methodology presentation, graduate students will be expected to present a working version of their research proposals, including the methodology that was proposed.

**Requirements on written work**

1. All written work must be done by computer. Assignments written by hand will not be accepted. The essays must be double-spaced. Other written work may be single-spaced.

2. Assignments of more than one page must be stapled together.

3. Assignments must be uploaded via Canvas prior to the beginning of class on the day that they are due.

4. If you know that you are going to be absent from class the day that an assignment is due, you must hand in the assignment ahead of time through Canvas. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade, and no assignment will be accepted more than one class meeting late. A missed assignment will receive a grade of 0. This can have a significant effect on your grade!

**Late Work Policy**

All work is due by the means I have specified in the assignment description and in the schedule (see Canvas for updated versions); submission by any other means is unacceptable. This means that, if I have specified that you must submit a hard copy, and you cannot physically make it to campus on the due date, you must turn the hard copy in early or send it with a friend or classmate. For the most part, I will require online submissions so please plan ahead in terms of technology issues. Canvas will help you remind you of these assignments—we will prepare for real-world teaching: deadlines (for grants, for grades, for applications, etc.) matter.
I generally do not accept late work, with some exceptions made for extenuating circumstances. **Communication is the key here.** If you know you have to miss class for any reason, I need to be apprised of that in advance. Contact me via my UNR email or see me before or after class or during office hours. Barring very special circumstances, late work will be subjected to penalties—if it is not turned in by the designated due date, you will be penalized 10% per day. After three days, the assignment will not be accepted. **Again, please communicate early if you have any issues.**

### Changes to Syllabus and Class Schedule
Both this syllabus and the class schedule are tentative and subject to changes at my discretion. I will notify you of any changes such as class cancellations, room changes, and revised due dates or reading assignments. Canvas will always be our guide for due dates.

### Electronic Devices
Laptops will not be permitted for note-taking and in-class writing (barring a need accommodations). Phones must be kept on silent and put away at all times. Texting in class is a serious pet peeve of mine: just don’t do it.

### E-Mail
Check your email address every day. Contact me via my unr.edu address only. Any email sent to another email address will be treated as if it doesn't exist. Please indicate to me your course in the SUBJECT line of the email. This means that every single email you send me needs to have the subject header: “WLL 445: (Insert Reason for Emailing).” Every email should also contain your full name somewhere in the body. Every email should start with either **Dear Profe** or **Estimada Profe** just as a matter of good practice.

I have a 24-hour rule when it comes to answering email, meaning that if you send me an email and do not hear back within 24 hours, you may send another email. On the weekends, this is a 48-hour rule. What this means is that the frenzied email you send me at 11 PM the night before an assignment is due at midnight will not be answered in time.

**SPAN 445-645**

#### 400/600 Distinction

1. **How will graduate students achieve deeper understanding of the material presented to the combined group?**
   Graduate students will complete a longer version of the research project (15 pages vs. 8 pages). In addition, this project which requires them to write a research question and attempt to answer it by proposing an experimental set up complete with potential participants and methodology. For this purpose, graduate students will write a review of the literature in the topic, propose a methodology to answer the research question and hypothesize potential results and what these results might mean in terms of testing their initial hypothesis.
2. How will graduate student assignments differ from those of the undergraduates in their nature or quantity?
Graduate students will complete an extra project, their homework assignments will require them to complete additional analyses, and their exams will include more analytical questions.

3. How will increased opportunities for independent study or for interaction with the instructor(s) be made available for graduate students?
Graduate students are required to interact with me during preparation of their project and their presentation during my office hours.

4. Discuss any synthesis experiences specifically for graduates?
Graduate students will be required to synthesize second language acquisition research to come up with feasible ways to test a research question in an area of their interest, yet based on the theory, in an APA-compliant manuscript.

5. Identify on the proposed syllabus the opportunities the graduates will have for work at a higher academic level.
The syllabus states that a) their homework assignments will include more analytical problems, b) they are required to prepare a more in depth presentation, c) their exam will include more analytical questions and d) they are also required to complete a research paper which will engage with the material in more detail, requires them to synthesize more sources, and propose an empirical investigation. Finally, e) graduate students will also have additional readings, which are noted in the syllabus.

6. Discuss how the work of graduate students will be evaluated differently from that of undergraduates by describing the criteria used in grading an undergraduate assignment versus those used in grading a graduate level assignment.
The written work of graduate students in their homework and papers will be evaluated expecting more analysis and synthesis of the information from the students.

7. How will graduates leave the course feeling that they have obtained greater academic value?
This course offers them the opportunity to explore a topic of their interest, write a literature review, and propose and empirical project. A successful graduate research experience is necessary because it offers students a taste of the culture of research while allowing them to get individualized feedback and interact with faculty who share similar interests to their own.

**Academic Conduct**
We will define “academic misconduct” as any activity which compromises the academic integrity of the institution and undermine the educational process. This includes cheating (the use of unauthorized materials, assistance, etc. during exams), plagiarism (presenting ideas and statements of another person as one’s own), and facilitating academic misconduct (helping another student do any of the above). With this in mind consider the following: all assignments for this course should be your own work. (and only your own work!) Cheating,
plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student's enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment.

**University Policies**

**On Disability Services:** "Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the Disability Resource Center (Pennington Student Achievement Center, Ste. 230) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations."

**On Audio and Video Recording:** "Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded."

**On Academic Success Services:** "Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (775) 784-4422, Tutoring Center (775) 784-6801, and University Writing Center (775) 784-6030. These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student."

**On Online Course Evaluations:** "Your chance to evaluate this course will appear two weeks before the last day of classes in the form of a new course on your Canvas home page. This new course contains only the evaluation survey. These online course evaluations are extremely important to your instructor and to the Department of WLL, so please take a few minutes to complete your course evaluation when it becomes available. The evaluation is completely anonymous and your comments can never be connected with your name. Instructors cannot see the evaluation course on Canvas and will not have access to the contents of these evaluations until after final grades have been posted."