

Linguistics module

Topic 6 Language Acquisition

Topic Overview: In this topic, students are introduced to the topic of First Language Acquisition (FLA) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). FLA is one of the most remarkable and complex tasks a child will accomplish in their lifetime, yet it is taken for granted and often proceeds unnoticed. By contrast, SLA is a conscious process that usually involves some form of instruction.

Key Skills	Information management: gathering and evaluating information and data Pattern recognition Problem-solving Data analysis Creativity
Expected time	Two hours (not including extra resources)
Self-assessment (check with students at the end of the topic)	<p>I understand that language acquisition is subject to critical periods.</p> <p>I understand that the ability to learn language is innate.</p> <p>I understand that children go through stages in their development.</p> <p>I understand how the Wug Test works.</p> <p>I understand the main difference between first language acquisition and second language learning.</p>
	✓ / X

Task 6.1 Description: Students learn about Critical Periods in language development

Learning Intentions	Students understand that first language acquisition is constrained by critical periods. Students understand experimental techniques used in First Language Acquisition research.
Resources	PPT slides Introduction to Language Acquisition Worksheet 6.1 Exercise 1: The linguistic genius of babies Worksheet 6.1 Exercise 2: Theories of First Language Acquisition
Task Outline	<p>Teacher uses the PPT to introduce some basic issues (such as a critical period) and experimental techniques in L1 Acquisition. Students watch the TED Talk (Patricia Kuhl). This is accompanied by Exercise 1 on Worksheet 6.1.</p> <p>Teacher uses the PPT to present different hypotheses on how children acquire their first language. Students will evaluate these theories on the basis of empirical data.</p> <p>Students complete Exercise 2 (Worksheet 6.1) which consolidates students' understanding of theories of first language acquisition.</p>

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Task 6.2 Description: Students learn about the Wug Test

Learning Intentions	Students understand how the Wug Test works. They will be able to create their own Wug Test with different grammatical categories.
Resources	<p>PPT slides to introduce the Wug Test.</p> <p>Worksheet 6.2 (Puzzle on overregularisation errors) Puzzle: We are all molistic in a way and Solution</p> <p>All puzzles mentioned in this module are at: https://ailo.adaptcentre.ie/tymodpuzzles/</p>
Task Outline	<p>Teachers present the slides on the PPT to explain how the Wug Test works. Students watch some original footage of the Wug Test with Jean Berko Gleason.</p> <p>Students are given Worksheet 6.2 which has a puzzle on overregularisation errors. Students are asked to work in pairs to complete the worksheet. Students then complete the AILO puzzle 'We are all molistic in a way'.</p>

Task 6.3 Description: The students will be introduced to Second Language Acquisition

Learning Intentions	Students will reflect on their own language learning. They will understand the fundamental differences between first language acquisition and second language learning.
Resources	<p>PPT slides to introduce Second Language Acquisition</p> <p>Worksheet 6.3 on Second Language Acquisition</p>
Task Outline	<p>Teachers present the slides on the PPT. Students complete Exercise 1 on Worksheet 6.3. This is a reflection on their own language learning. Students discuss their reflections in class.</p> <p>The PPT contrasts first language (L1) acquisition and second language (L2) learning. Students complete Exercise 2 on Worksheet 6.3. They translate 5 simple English sentences into a language they learn in school and subsequently evaluate their (lack of) effort/success. They compare their efforts to that of young children and apply the theories of L1 and L2 acquisition covered in this unit.</p>

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Extra Resources

Project

Students can research the following topics/questions and do a project:

Feral children (Genie)

Create a Wug Test.

What are the implications of the critical period for the preservation of Irish?

What are the implications of the critical period for foreign language learning?

How do you best learn a foreign language?

Online resources:

Feral children/Genie:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20101008200326/http://www.feralchildren.com/en/index.php>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jul/14/genie-feral-child-los-angeles-researchers>

Jean Berko Gleason's Brief But Spectacular take on language

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5afexlm2o7E>

We encourage every school and student to take part in the 2022/23 [All Ireland Linguistics Olympiad \(AILO\)](#). The preliminary round is held in your own school at the end of January with the National Final in Dublin City University in March 2023.

Register at <https://ailo.adaptcentre.ie/enter/> and try other puzzles at <https://ailo.adaptcentre.ie/puzzles/>.