



# Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

## Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

# First Language Acquisition and Language Impairment

Course Code	L_AABACIW111
Credits	6
Period	P5+6
Course Level	100
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Humanities
Course Coordinator	dr. J. Lin MA
Examiner	dr. J. Lin MA
Teaching Staff	dr. J. Lin MA
Teaching method(s)	Seminar, Lecture

## Course Objective

After this course, students will:

- gain knowledge and insight regarding the characteristics of specific and non-specific developmental language disorders;
- get acquainted with the most important theories, and research methodologies regarding child language acquisition;
- be able to critically evaluate different theoretical positions on (aspects of) child language acquisition as well as (recent) research publications in the field;
- become familiar with instruments detecting a language deficit or delay, as well as with speech language therapy materials;
- be able to summarize the pros and cons of these instruments and therapy materials;
- be able to apply these instruments and therapy materials in giving advice to parents, language teachers, and other professionals working with children;
- be able to integrate information into a research question, to design a study to answer this question, to conduct this study, and in the end to report on it;
- gain basic skills in automatized and manual analysis of child language data in an existing database, e.g. CHILDES.

## Course Content

The main topic of the course is on First Language Acquisition (FLA). Students will study the phases that children go through when acquiring their native speech, i.e. their first language (L1). By reading various book chapters, and articles, students will also explore different explanations for the fact that every healthy, or typically developing child, is able to master his or her L1 within a few years, solely based on the language input they are exposed to, and interaction with e.g., caregivers, but without any systematic instructions or feedback on language. This fact will be unraveled from both a generative and a usage-based perspective.

Furthermore, students will also study the language acquisition processes of children with atypical language development. These children do not go through the same process as observed with typically developing children in their L1 acquisition. They may show a delay, or a distinct pattern. It is also possible that they do not fully acquire their L1 system. Sometimes there is a clear cause for an atypical development, such as hearing disabilities. However, it is not always the case to have a clear cause for atypicality in L1 development. One example here is children with a specific disorder for language learning, i.e. developmental language disorder. Students will therefore also study different types of disorders which one can diagnose before the age of 6 years old.

The course also includes several practicum sessions. Students will spend these sessions to learn how to analyze spontaneous production data by children – both typically and atypically developing – by either using a computer program (i.e. CLAN) or in a manual way.

In addition to the above-mentioned topics, students will also focus on how to transform knowledge - theoretical knowledge combined with child- specific knowledge - into advice and recommendations to parents and professionals (e.g. caretakers in child-care, teachers in special education). Students will then gain a first impression of possible career opportunities as an applied linguist after the Bachelor study.

## Additional Information Teaching Methods

Period 5: one lecture (1,5 hours) and one practicum (1,5 hours) per week and in period 6: two seminars (3 hours in total) per week. You will be required to complete weekly, in-class assignments during the practicums and seminars.

## Method of Assessment

You will be assessed for this course by five individual practicum assignments (ungraded), one written exam (60% of the final grade; by the end of Period 5), and one individual assignment (40% of the final grade; by the end of Period 6). A minimum grade of 5.5 of both the written exam and the individual assignment is required to pass the course. This minimum grade is moreover required for the whole course to pass it.

## Entry Requirements

Students must have participated in Introduction to Linguistics (L\_AABACIW103) or an equivalent course.

## Literature

- Ambridge, B. & V.M. Lieven (2011). *Child Language Acquisition. Contrasting Theoretical Approaches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verhoeven, L. & van Balkom, H. (2004). *Classification of Developmental Language Disorders. Theoretical Issues and Clinical Implications*. Mahwah, NJ/Londen: Lawrence Erlbaum.

## Additional Information Target Audience

- Bachelor's students in Communication and Information Studies (CIS): Language and Mind
- Pre-master's students in Applied Linguistics: Language Disorders
- Exchange students and other students with an interest in child language acquisition

## Explanation Canvas

For this course, Canvas is used for all kinds of communication between the teacher and/or coordinator of the course, and the students. Canvas is moreover used for announcements, illustration of the course structure with schedule and topics, assignments submission and grading (with feedback), sharing the teaching materials, etc.

## Recommended background knowledge

Basic knowledge of general linguistics and/or factual knowledge of child language (development)