Course description
First Language Acquisition (1LA)

This course will introduce students to first language acquisition, from before birth to adulthood. Because it is in Semester 1, it will necessarily prepare the way for other related courses such as second language acquisition, semantics, pragmatics, child psychology etc. A distinctive part of the course will be the use of videos, both short and long, so that students can actually see examples of the content discussed in class. There will also be a link with the course on Corpus Linguistics, through an introduction to the CHILDES database. Both theoretical and practical, the course will include a critique of Chomsky, and a discussion of competing theories such as connectionism. For this section, a background in logic and mathematics would be an advantage, but it is not a requirement. Of necessity there will be some overlap with the S2 course on Second Language Acquisition.

A. Introduction
1. The importance of studying 1LA as a basis for understanding multilingualism
2. Methodology including cases studies, longitudinal, experimental. The Childes database.

B. Themes
1. Pre-birth language perception.
2. Development of phonetics
3. Development of vocabulary
4. Development of comprehension
5. Development of semantics and pragmatics
6. Development of syntax
7. Brief introduction to cognitive development, as a prelude to metalinguistic development
8. Various language threshold hypotheses. Wild children.
9. Language handicaps such as autism, dyslexia, aphasia. The work of therapists. Language loss: dementia etc
10. Spelling
11. Reading: children, adult literacy, changes due to the internet etc
12. Writing. Tools for native speakers such as dictionaries.
13. Adult first language acquisition.
Note, very few courses deal with this topic, yet it is obvious that many people learn thousands of new words and phrases as adults.
14. Chomsky, briefly presented, and evaluated.
15. Alternatives to Chomsky. Connectionism.