Department Mission Statement

Through coursework, experience abroad, and other cultural encounters, the Department of Modern Languages cultivates communicative skills and cultural awareness that prepares students at Western Kentucky University to be more knowledgeable and sensitive to citizens of the local, regional and global communities. The Department's purpose is to deliver high-quality language instruction based on nationally-recognized standards, and to contribute actively to cross-disciplinary international initiatives on campus. Our programs are designed to graduate majors and minors whose language skills provide them with enhanced opportunities for careers at the regional, national, and international levels and/or preparation for advanced study in language, literature, and culture.

Description and Rationale

This course will help students to understand current research and theories of second language acquisition (SLA). Through readings, critical analysis, and thoughtful discussion, students will be able to hone their beliefs and theories about the acquisition of second languages. Students will learn to understand and view the major theories, concepts, and guiding hypotheses in the fields of Applied Linguistics, World Languages and TESOL/TEFL. Students will explore the many factors that affect school performance of second language learners.

Learning Outcomes

1. To develop an understanding of how second languages are acquired.
2. To develop an understanding of factors influencing the development of second language proficiency and communicative competence(ies).
3. To understand and articulate the important theories in the fields of Applied Linguistics, WL and TESOL.
4. To develop an appreciation for the breadth of the field in terms of individual, social, psychological, and educational variables.
5. To develop the critical skills necessary to assess and evaluate learners’ development of second language
6. To develop the critical skills necessary to evaluate and interpret new theories in the fields as they are presented.

Required Texts


Graduate students only must purchase:


Online articles:
Online articles are available in Blackboard

**Acccommodations:** Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC), Downing Student Union, 1074. The SARC telephone number is (270) 745-5004. Please DO NOT request accommodation directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the SARC. After obtaining the appropriate documentation, students should make an appointment to discuss the accommodations confidentially.

**Statement on Academic Integrity:** All turned in assignments must be your own original work. As a student at Western Kentucky University, you are expected to demonstrate academic integrity, as outlined in the University’s “Student Life Policies on Student Rights and Responsibilities” in the WKU Student Handbook and available online at http://www.wku.edu/judicialaffairs/student-rights-responsibilities.php. Violations of the academic code include, but are not limited to, cheating (by giving or receiving unauthorized information before or during an exam or assignment), dishonesty (including misrepresentation and/or lying), copying (submitting work completed for another class) and plagiarism. Plagiarism consists of turning in work that is not your own—including, but not limited to, copying from a book/article, pasting text from webpages, using an internet source to obtain all or part of a paper and quoting material in a paper and not crediting the original author with proper citation (APA or MLA style). Cases of academic dishonesty may be referred to The Office of Judicial Affairs for review, where the sanctions for academic dishonesty outlined in the WKU Student Handbook and available online at http://www.wku.edu/judicialaffairs/sanctions.php may be applied.

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance at all class meetings is required. Since we only meet twice each week, ANY MORE THAN TWO ABSENCES WILL REDUCE YOUR FINAL GRADE BY ONE POINT for each additional absence. If you do miss a class, please connect with a classmate for notes and handout copies. Arriving late to class or leaving class early will count as an absence.

**Communication:** Occasionally, information about the course will be posted in the announcements in Blackboard and an email will be sent out to notify you of the announcement. You are expected to know how to use Blackboard. Some course information will be shared in class; if you are absent, it is your responsibility to ask a classmate for any pertinent updates. Communication by email is preferred. You may email me at kelly.conroy@wku.edu or you can email me through Blackboard (Communication, Send Email, To instructor). The email must be courteous and professional or it will not receive a response. Please allow one business day for a reply but if you do not hear back from me, please resend. Feel free to email me if you have questions or to set up a time to meet, if you cannot make it to my office hours. If you have any comments, suggestions, or problems, please see me. I am available to you all in my office hours and by appointment, and I am happy to meet with you.

**Missed or Late Assignments:** In-class work cannot be made up or deferred; homework assignments are due on the date indicated on the syllabus. Late assignments will be handled on a case-by-case basis (e.g. ranging from not accepted to lowered grade).

**Grades:** Blackboard provides an estimation of your grade; please see the instructor for the most accurate grade information. Any grade concerns or final grade disputes must be discussed in person with the
instructor and will not be handled through email.

Undergraduate Students only
1. Quizzes 15%
2. Class Discussion/ Participation 15%
3. Exams 20%
4. Language Learning Experience Journals on Bb 15%
5. Second Language Learning Survey Project 15%
6. Model of Second Language Acquisition/Learning 20%

Graduate Students only
1. Quizzes 15%
2. Class Discussion Participation 10%
3. Exams 20%
4. Language Learning Experience Journals on Bb 15%
5. Second Language Learning Survey Project 15%
6. Model of Second Language Acquisition/Learning 20%
7. Presentation of one chapter in Gass & Selinker 5%

Grading Scale (%):
100 – 90 = A
89 – 80 = B
79 – 70 = C
69 – 60 = D
59 and lower = F

Quizzes: We will have short quizzes almost daily throughout the semester. These quizzes will evaluate your knowledge of readings (e.g., terminology, important names, acronyms, and concepts). The quizzes may be essay, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, etc. You may drop your lowest quiz score.

Class Discussion Participation: In every class session, you will be asked to participate in a discussion of the course readings. This type of discussion requires a careful reading of the texts and some preparation for the discussions (e.g., notes, outlines, questions, etc). You are expected to be an active member in class and to come prepared for each class period. All homework should be completed by the beginning of class. The participation grade is the sum total of your attendance, your homework, and your class participation in discussion topics.

Your attendance, preparedness, and participation are evaluated each class period during the semester with the following rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 points</td>
<td>Student is always prepared for class (brings required textbooks and articles to class) and participates regularly during class. Student volunteers to participate in class. When working in groups, the student is a valuable team member.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 point | Student is sometimes prepared for class (may not bring textbooks or have completed readings) and sometimes participates. When he/she does participate, the student does not volunteer but is called on instead. When working in groups, the student sometimes contributes.

0 points | Student is rarely prepared for class and rarely participates. When working in groups, the student is distracting and often off-task. Student is absent.

**Exams:** You will have a mid-term exam and a final exam based on the terminology, theories, and key concepts in course readings. The exam sections may include essay, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, etc.

**Language Learning Experience Journals on Blackboard Discussion:** You will write a journal entry at the end of each chapter of Brown (10 total), using the chapter prompts to inspire your entry. You may respond to all prompts or just one, depending on what you find most compelling. You will write your entry at least two business days before our class meeting and respond to at least two other people’s entries before the class meeting. You will need to plan ahead with your reading and journaling schedule. Your entry should be thoughtful, drawing on personal experiences, other coursework, class readings, etc. It must be at least 150 words in length. Please note that meeting the minimum requirements (one post of 150 words and one reply) does not equal full credit or 100% on the assignment.

**Second Language Learning Survey Project:** This will be done in pairs or on your own.

1) Identify **ONE** theoretical construct from their readings and/or course discussion that you’d would like to investigate. For example, constructs could be speech acts, learning strategies, acculturation, negotiation of meaning, tolerance of ambiguity, motivation.

2) Design a brief survey of 8-10 questions that will provide your group with insight into the language learners’ past or present experiences with that specific construct of SLA. This can be an open- or closed-ended survey. Open-ended surveys have open-ended questions, whereas closed-ended have yes/no questions or a range from “highly infrequent to highly frequent”, for example. Be sure to leave room on the survey for the name and email of the student who is completing the survey. NOTE: your survey participants may not necessarily know or understand the concept you are discussing, so you will need to talk around it, and still obtain the information.

3) Administer the survey to 6-8 students (English language learners or foreign language learners). Choose an appropriate population in terms of grade and/or proficiency level. Remember that if you are going to administer this survey to children or in the public schools you will need permission of the parents and/or schools. Include an introductory paragraph explaining the reason for the survey (for a class project) and the voluntary nature of the survey.

☐ Write a brief summary (2-3 pages) of your findings and connect them to the construct that you were inquiring about. Compile the findings in a clear, thoughtful format. In the report be sure to address a) research questions b) background and number of subjects c) analysis of findings d) what your group would do differently next time (what you learned from this experience) and e) what the next step would be for this research question (what do you want to learn more about in the future)

☐ Add an appendix that includes tables with the most interesting findings.

☐ Include a copy of the final survey with the project.

☐ Write in your most formal writing style, follow APA guidelines (1 inch margins, 11 font, double spaced)

☐ Organize the summary and make it presentable (in terms of appearance).

☐ Each student will individually email Professor Conroy about group participation. See note below **
**Before the project is due, each student will individually email Dr. Conroy. In this email, you will describe how each member of the group contributed to the project throughout all stages - include yourself. Next, the email will clearly show the distribution of work with the following: if your group were given 10 points –indicate how you would divide these points amongst the members of the group to express the division of work (e.g. If both members participated equally, then each would receive 5 points. If there was an unequal amount of work, then indicate that one person would receive 3 points and the other would receive 7). Indicate honestly how the work was equally shared or not.

The entire project will be due on the second to last day of class. Certain stages of the project may be due at check-points throughout the semester. See rubric for this project in Blackboard.

Model of Second Language Acquisition/Learning: Your final project will be a creative opportunity for you. Throughout the semester you will have been questioning, constructing, and designing what you consider to be a comprehensive model of SLA. That is the answer to the question, “How are languages acquired or learned?” This model does not have to be only one single theory; rather, consider integrating and synthesizing the principles and theories in the field to create a comprehensive model of SLA that makes sense to you (see Brown’s model as an example). The model you create will show how different components interact. The paper that accompanies the model will explain why.

- Physically build a MODEL of SLA to explain the processes involved in SLA and how these components interact. You can create a diorama, a model, a game, basically a physical representation of the process of how we acquire/learn languages. Posters are only allowed if they explain or support a physical model. Posters are not a sufficient model on their own. Be sure to label the parts of the model. See rubric for more details.
- At the very least, the model should account for a) exposure to input b) learning versus acquisition c) Effect of a learner’s L1 on SLA d) learner output e) variable outcomes in SLA (e.g. learners may learn under same conditions of exposure but have different stages and ability)
- Write a paper (4 page minimum) discussing and explaining the physical model. In the paper be sure to a) explain the model using theories and terminology from the course b) account for a comprehensive model of SLA based on above c) organize the paper with clear topic sentences
- Cite relevant resources in APA format
- Write in your most formal writing style (avoid use of “I”) with appropriate grammar. (1 inch margins, 12 font, double spaced)
- Be able to explain the physical model orally to the professor within 2 minutes (this will happen during the last day of class)

The entire project will be due on the last day of classes (not the final exam day). Certain stages of the project may be due at check-points throughout the semester. See rubric for this project in Blackboard.

Graduates only must individually choose one chapter from Gass & Selinker listed as a chapter to read (not skim). Please prepare a 20-25 minute presentation on the topic (only cover the portion related to that week’s other readings, do not “cover the whole chapter” or include extraneous information-Ask if you have any questions about the topic of focus) with all visuals, activities, handouts, overheads, etc. that may be necessary to make the information comprehensible to the undergraduate students. Schedule a time with Dr. Conroy to know when you will be presenting.

Note: Instructor reserves the right to modify any course policy, requirement, or the calendar.
**Tentative Reading Schedule:** All readings MUST be completed PRIOR to class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>bROWN</th>
<th>LIGHTBOWN &amp; SPADA</th>
<th>Online (Blackboard)</th>
<th>GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 29</td>
<td>Movie: American Tongues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Link to movie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 3</td>
<td>Theories of human learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Read the whole syllabus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 5</td>
<td>Theories of human learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Theories of first language acquisition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 12</td>
<td>Theories of first language acquisition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 17</td>
<td>Age and language acquisition (Critical Period Hypothesis)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 24</td>
<td>Learning styles &amp; strategies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 26</td>
<td>Learning styles &amp; strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete Learning Styles Survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 3</td>
<td>Personality factors and SLA development</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spring Break March 9-13
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 17</td>
<td>Review/Catch-Up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 19</td>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 24</td>
<td>Socio-cultural factors in SLA development</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 31</td>
<td>Communicative Competence</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Communicative Competence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>Discuss the concepts of interlanguage, variation, contrastive analysis, and transfer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9</td>
<td>Discuss the concepts of interlanguage, variation, contrastive analysis, and transfer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Theories of SLA (Krashen). Importance of input &amp; output.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>Theories of SLA (Krashen). Importance of input &amp; output.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second Language Learning Survey Project due. 

May 5  Conclusions, Beliefs, and Myths  6  Second Language Learning Survey Project due. 

May 7  7  SLA Final Projects due & presentation

**Final Exam**  
Monday, May 11, 1:00-3:00

---

**Bibliography**


