English Language Teaching and Acquisition

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MÁSTER INTERUNIVERSITARIO EN ESTUDOS INGLESES AVANZADOS E AS SÚAS APLICACIÓNS

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1. Course general information

Description

This is an elective course which forms part of the *Inter-University Master Programme in Advanced English Studies* run by the Universities of Santiago, A Coruña and Vigo. It is a three-credit course and it is taught in the spring term. It is particularly addressed to those students who want to specialise in English Language and Linguistics.

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2. Course objectives

2.1. General

- To introduce students to the world of second language acquisition and learning.
- To make connections between linguistic theory and pedagogical practice.
- To reflect upon the factors influencing second language learning and language teaching.
- To familiarise students with the main literature in the field.
- To reflect upon general and individual factors and variables that condition the learning of English.

- To acquaint students with basic terminology on the different topic areas of the course.

2.2. Specific

- To study language learning theories as well as the different variables and factors conditioning the language learning process.
- To examine the similarities and differences between first language acquisition and second language learning.
- To compare and contrast second language acquisition/learning and second language teaching.
- To examine the role of new technologies in the teaching of English.
- To familiarise learners with the most recent European developments on the teaching and learning of languages: the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP).
- To provide students with basic theoretical principles and practical techniques for their own development as future English language teachers.
- To introduce students to second language acquisition research.

3. Teaching methodology

This course is very practical. English will be used throughout. Attendance and participation are a requirement. Lectures will alternate with seminars and group discussions, and some practical sessions may be conducted in the computer lab.
Additional materials for the different units of the course will be available through the e-learning platform.

4. Skills and Competences

G01, G02, G03, G04, G05, G06, G07, G08, G09, G10, E01, E02, E03.

- Development of language skills, with particular attention to oral presentation skills.
- Development of pedagogical skills.
- Fostering of an environment that promotes learning and takes on board students' contributions and initiatives.
- Development of skills for the use of new technologies in the teaching of English.
- Efficient time-management and effective organization of the resources available, establishing priorities, alternative ways and means and identifying weaknesses in the decision-making process.
- Fostering of the ability to work in cooperative, pluridisciplinary and plurilingual contexts.

5. Study time and individual work

The time devoted to study in will vary considerably from one week to another. It is reckoned that students will have to devote an average of 8-10 hours per week to the completion of different assignments, readings and activities. Class attendance and participation are a requirement. Students should try to keep up to date with class work.

6. Assessment

- Class attendance and active participation. **Attendance is compulsory**.
- Readings.
- Assignments.
- Oral presentations: students may be asked to present some work to the rest of the class. All the materials used together with a brief report of the activities conducted will have to be handed in at the end of the presentations for assessment.
- Tests.

Those students who do not pass the course in June will be required to sit a final exam in July. This also applies to those students who were granted special permission from the Faculty authorities not to attend lessons regularly and to those who did not pass the course the previous year.

7. Contents

This outline should be regarded as illustrative. It may be modified according to the students' ongoing needs and interests.

7.1. General Outline
1. Applied Linguistics and the teaching of English. Main fields in Applied Linguistics.
2. Current issues in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language.
3. Current issues in Second Language Acquisition.
4. Conducting research in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching.

7.2. Unit by Unit Outline

UNIT 1. APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH. MAIN FIELDS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS.

(a) **General Description**

This is a general introduction to the course. Attention will be paid to the different fields within Applied Linguistics.

(b) **Further Details**

1.1. Introduction.
1.2. Analysis and evolution of the term "Applied Linguistics".
1.3. Fields of study in AL: Language teaching, corpus linguistics, translation studies, language planning, forensic linguistics, speech pathology/clinical linguistics, etc.
1.4. Suggestions for further reading.

(c) **Sample of Activities**

Here is a list of linguistic issues. Examine them carefully and decide whether they are more closely associated with Theoretical Linguistics (TL) or with Applied Linguistics (AL). If they belong to the latter, discuss the branch where they would best fit.

E.g.: The teaching of English to children with special needs.
Answer: AL. Language learning and language teaching

1. The notion of ergativity in the English language.
....
2. The problems derived from the translation of proper names.
....
3. The problems associated with the standardisation of the Galician language.
....
4. The importance of word order in English.
....
5. Disorders in the production of lexical units.
....
6. Automatic oral translation systems.
....
7. The importance of the age factor in the learning of foreign languages.
....
8. Special features of Yorkshire English as compared with standard British English.
....
9. Clinical description of aphasia.
....
10. Lexical revolution as an expression of nationalism in the Balkans.
....
11. The classification of the form *to* in *to go* as a word class.
....
12. Disorders of syntactic comprehension.
....
13. An analysis of the teacher's language in the EFL classroom.
....
14. The simulation of speech systems.
....
15. Shifts of cohesion and coherence in translation.
....

UNIT 2. CURRENT ISSUES IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE.

(a) **General Description**
This unit will serve to acquaint students with the latest tendencies in the teaching of English with particular reference to the *Communicative Approach* (CA), *Task-based Approach* (TBA) and *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL). Attention will also be paid to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and to the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP).

(b) **Further Details**
2.1. New tendencies and approaches to the teaching of English.
　　　2.1.1. The Task-based and the Communicative Approach.
　　　2.1.2. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).
2.2. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).
2.3. The European Language Portfolio (ELP).

(c.1) **Sample of Activities**

CEFR/ELP
TRUE (T) OR FALSE (F)?

1. Galician is considered to be an official language by the European Union.
2. German as L1 is the most widely spoken language in the European Union.
3. Over 40% of European Union citizens can speak a foreign language.
4. Spain is one of the few countries in the European Union where minority languages are officially recognised in their educational system.
5. We cannot speak of the existence of 'dead' languages in Europe.
6. Content-based learning/teaching is quite common in our country.
7. Parents of European children are not interested in their children learning a foreign language.
8. The initials CEFR mean "Common Framework of Reference".
9. The CEFR is a document published by the European Union which is at present in force in all the member states.
10. According to the CEFR, *multilinguism* and *plurilinguism* are similar concepts.
11. The CEFR was published in 1998.
12. The CEFR establishes five main levels of reference.
13. The names given to the levels of reference are: Breakthrough (A1), Waystage (A2), Threshold (B1), Vantage (B2), Effective Operational Proficiency (C1) and Mastery (C2).
14. The CEFR distinguishes 4 basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
15. The qualitative aspects of the spoken language use considered by the CEFR descriptors are: range, accuracy and fluency.
16. The initials ELP mean "European Language Passport".
17. The European Language Portfolio contains three components: passport, biography and dossier.
18. All the European Language Portfolios have a different structure and organisation.
19. There are three modalities of ELP: primary, secondary and adults.
20. ELP can be applied to any language, including the mother tongue and the second language.

(c.2) **Sample of Activities**

1. Explain the main differences between acquisition and learning.
2. What is meant by "language development"?
3. Give the full form for the following abbreviations:
TEFL:…………………………
TESOL:……………………….
EFL:…………………………..
ESL:…………………………..
TL:…………………………….

4. Write a summary of the main ideas presented in chapter 1 of Ellis' 2004 book on Second Language Acquisition.

UNIT 3. CURRENT ISSUES IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

(a) **General Description**

We will give a general account of the second language acquisition process by paying special attention to the following issues: the role of the L1 in the acquisition of the L2, interlanguage theory, language transfer, learning theories and factors (motivation, learning strategies, aptitude, personality, age, intelligence, learning and cognitive styles), learner corpora, etc.

(b) **Further Details**
3.1. The acquisition of the first language.
3.2. Factors and theories in SLA.
3.3. Second language learning theory and practice: Connections and interplays.
3.4. Suggestions for further reading.

(c.1) **Sample of Activities**

Look at the examples taken from various children in which imitation does not appear to be involved. Think about how the children arrive at the forms they produce.
(Note: The ages of children are shown in years and months; for example, 5.10 means five years and ten months):

1   Kyo (6.10)   I'm hungry.
       Dad   We'll have some poppy seed bread in a little while.
       Kyo   I want it now.
       Dad   We have to wait till it's defrosted.
       Kyo   But I like it *frossed*.

2   Randall (3.0) had a little bump on his hand and his mother said that they'd have to take him to the doctor.

       Randhall   Why? So he can *doc* my little bump?

3   Michel (2.10) Mummy, I'm *hiccing up* and I can't stop.

4   At Lucy's twelfth birthday party, toasts were proposed with grape juice in stemmed glasses:
        Father   I'd like to propose a toast.
After a long period without toasts, David (5.1) raised his glass and said 'I'd like to propose a piece of bread'. Only after all the laughter sent David slinking from the table did the group realise that he wasn't joking!

5   Randhall (2.9) Are dogs can wiggle their tails?

6   Randhall (3.5) You took the towels away because I can't dry my hands.

(c.2) **Sample of Activities**

1. We have been discussing the differences between FLA and SLA. Can you list the similarities between them?
2. In what ways do you think the fact of already knowing a language helps in the learning of a second one?
3. Draw a comparison between the processes of learning a language as a second language, and learning a language as a foreign one.
4. If possible, observe a young child learning the L1. Write down the utterances made as well as the reactions observed. Then look at a second language learner and concentrate on the same phenomena as before. Write a report on the similarities and differences between the two processes.

(c.3) **Sample of Activities**

1. Draw a conceptual map of Krashen's Monitor Model.

2. Complete the following table:

SLA THEORY	SITUATIONAL FACTORS	ROLE OF INPUT	LEARNER FACTORS	VARIABLE L2 INPUT	OTHER
Acculturation					
Accommodation					
Nativisation					
Discourse					
Monitor Model					
Variable Competence Model					
Universal Hypothesis					
Neurofunctional					

(c.4) **Sample of Activities**

Say whether the following statements are right or wrong. Justify your answer.

1. For a successful learning of a foreign language, learners should be exposed to uncontrolled input.
2. There is direct correlation between what students are taught and what they learn.
3. All learners learn English in a similar way.
4. The distinction between the notions of *input* and *intake* may be misleading.
5. In the interaction process students may learn from each other's mistakes.
6. Errors should be avoided by all means and learners should be immediately corrected.
7. Motivation is perhaps the most important factor in the learning of a second language.
8. It is questionable whether formal instruction actually helps second language learning.
9. The learning of a second language is mainly a conscious process.
10. Students' interaction through the use of communicative activities is not at all effective as we are dealing with an artificial situation.

Learner differences
Who do you think is being described in these examples? Put C = children, A= adolescents, Ad = adults or ? don't know in the boxes.

1 A small group of students come to see you and say that they're finding learning English much more difficult than they had hoped. They want to stop the classes. D
2. After a lesson, a group of students come to see you and say, 'We don't like the way you're teaching. We want more grammar'.   D
3. One of the students' favourite activities is the chanting of rhythmic sentences to develop good pronunciation.   D
4. Students get really excited when you offer to let them sing a song.   D
5. Students play tricks such as hiding under desks and giving wrong names when you are taking the register.   D
6. When you arrive late for class, some of the students are quietly getting on with their work.   D
7. When you ask a student to come out to the front of the class to take part in a demonstration, he is extremely reluctant to do so because he is nervous.   D
8. You get students in groups to play a board game adapted from a general knowledge quiz. They are reluctant to play the game.   D
9. You get students to write poems on the subject of friendship and you are surprised and moved by their work.   D

(Taken from J. Harmer, *How to Teach English*, 2007, p. 188).

UNIT 4: CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND TEACHING.

(a) **General Description**

General guidelines will be provided on how to conduct research in second language learning and teaching. Attention will be paid to the general structure of research projects typical of this field. Research instruments and data analysis will also be considered.

(b) **Further Details**

4.1. Introduction.
4.2. Planning a project.
4.3. Research instruments: diaries, questionnaires, interviews, attitude scales, observation, surveys, etc.
4.4. Possible structure and organisation of a language learning project.
4.5. Practical task. The preliminary design of a research project.
4.6. Suggestions for further reading.

(c) **Sample of Activities**

Read the study by Naiman et al. (1978) on the good language learner and explain in what way and to what extent the general structure of a research project proposed in this unit is followed.

8. BASIC AND SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

8.1. Textbooks

- Ellis, Rod. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Harmer, Jeremy. *How to Teach English*, Longman, Harlow, 2007.
- Lightbown, Patsy M. & Nina Spada. *How Languages are Learned*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Palacios Martínez, Ignacio M., Rosa Alonso, Mario Cal, Paula López Rúa & José Ramón Varela. *Diccionario de enseñanza y aprendizaje de lenguas*, Madrid, En Clave, 2007.
- Ur, Penny. 1999. *A Course in Language Teaching. Theory and Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

8.2. Recommended references

- Brown, H. Douglas. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, Prentice Hall Regents, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1994.
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- Stern, Hans Heinrich. *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983.
- Vez Jeremías, José Manuel. *Fundamentos lingüísticos en la enseñanza de lenguas* extranjeras, Ariel, Barcelona, 2000.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Examples of materials that could be used in the course

UNIT 3

What is SLA?
- Theoretical and experimental field of study that looks at the phenomenon of language development.   - The term 'second' includes 'foreign', 'third', 'fourth', etc.   - Since the 1970s, SLA researchers have been concerned about the processes and mechanisms of language acquisition (that is why they have been attempting to describe and explain non-native language).

SLA and Other Disciplines
- Based on research carried out in various branches of theoretical and experimental psychology, theoretical linguistics and sociolinguistics, with the help of current linguistic theory.   - SLA is not about language teaching. The hope is that SLA research will provide a firmer scientific basis for language instruction and will benefit the language teacher.

- Acquisition: spontaneous, natural, unconscious.
- Learning: conscious. Formal learning process (language as a system).
- L1: native, mother tongue, primary language.
- L2: second language, non-native, secondary language, target language. Institutional, social role.
- L3: third language.
- Target/Source language (esp. in translation).
- FL: foreign language. No social or institutional role.

Different ways of looking at the L1 in relation to the L2

- Constrastive analysis (CA)   LADO
- Error analysis   (EA)   CORDER
- Interlanguage   (IL)   SELINKER

The role of the L1

EA challenged the previous assumption by providing a methodology for investigating learner language.
Corder suggests the following steps:

- Collection of a sample of learner language.
- Identification of errors.
- Description of errors.
- Explanation of errors.
- Evaluation of errors.

Interlanguage

- Premises
- The learner constructs a system of abstract rules which underlines comprehension & production of the L2.
- The grammar is permeable, that is, it is open to influence from the outside (input) and from the inside (omission, overgeneralisation, etc.).
- The learner's grammar is transitional. This results in an IL continuum.
- Lrs. employ learning strategies to develop their ILs.
- The learner's grammar is likely to fossilise or backslide.

L2 Language Learning 'NATURAL ORDER' (English as proposed by Krashen)

- **Stage I**: *-ing* gerund / present participle / plural / copula;

- **Stage II**: auxiliaries / definite article;

- **Stage III**: irregular past;

- **Stage IV**: regular past / 3rd person singular present / possessive *'s*.

UNIT 4

Planning a project

PLANNING	ACTION
1. Write a short list of possible topics.	1. Consult library catalogues, recent volumes of specialised journals.
2. Select from the list one possible topic.	2. Discuss possible outcomes with your supervisor.
3. Establish the precise focus of study.	3. Draw up initial ideas together with lists of questions.
4. Determine the purpose of your study.	4. Think carefully what is worth investigating.
5. Write first draft.	5. Consider the structure of the project very carefully.
6. Read enough on the subject to know you are on the right track.	6. The reading will give you an idea of pieces similar to yours.
7. Devise a timetable and work out a feasible time scale for each stage of the project.	7. Organise your time in proportion to the difficulty of the different sections of the project.
8. Talk to your supervisor when you feel at a loss.	8. Talking to your supervisor is really important.
9. Write first draft and be prepared to change things.	9. Remember that writing means rewriting.
10. Be critical with your work.	10. Think about the limitations and shortcomings of your work.

Research instruments

- Questionnaires.
- Protocols.
- Interviews: structured, semistructured, open, closed.
- Tests.
- Introspection/Self-reports.
- Diaries.
- Observation.