

**Research in Second Language Learning  
Linguistics 6010  
Spring Semester 2014**

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**I. Course Description:**

The main goal of this course is to familiarize students with research approaches used in the fields of second language acquisition, language education, and language use. The course prepares students to understand and evaluate published research in the field. The second goal of the course is to teach students to design their own research study investigating some aspect of language learning/teaching. Students will learn how to identify a research topic, narrow the topic down, write a literature review, select an appropriate research method, collect data, and analyze it.

The course is highly practical in nature. In the first part, students will orient themselves to the kinds of research that applied linguists pursue. As part of this orientation, USU professors who are researchers in the field of applied linguistics will visit the class. Through an interactive Q&A format, students will learn from these guests how applied linguists carry out research. In the second part, students will delve more deeply into research design as they pursue their own research question. The course will cover both qualitative and quantitative approaches, enabling students to understand the basic premises of both approaches and to explore the types of research questions that each approach is best suited to answer. Course assignments will involve minimal mathematical expertise, and no prior knowledge of statistics is required.

**II. Course resources:**

**Textbook (required):**

One textbook has been selected for use in this course. This is a required textbook which will be read in its entirety.

Perry, F.L. (2011). *Research in applied linguistics: Becoming a discerning consumer* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge. *Be sure to get the second edition!*

**Supplemental readings:**

The rest of the required readings are posted on the course website (<https://canvas.usu.edu/>)

**Class Notes:**

Students can access the lecture notes on the course website. The slides are organized by weekly theme. The slides will be posted on the website immediately after we finish the theme of each week.

### III: Requirements & Expectations

The six major requirements of the course include:

- Classroom participation and attendance (10% of final grade): Students enrolled in this course are expected to come prepared to class. Preparation includes reading the assigned materials, bringing questions to be asked in class, and being ready to lead a discussion regarding the theme of the week. According to the attendance policy of this course, students are allowed one undocumented absence per semester. However, after this absence, two percentage point will be deducted from their attendance grade for every undocumented absence. Your attendance grade is the percentage of the remaining classes that you have attended. Regardless of whether or not you tell the instructor that you will be absent, your absence will NOT be excused except under extreme circumstance. If you have any *documentation* of such circumstances, please submit them to the instructor on the last day of classes (21 April).
- IRB-Training (10% of final grade): To prepare themselves for actual research involving human subjects, students in this course are required to take *on-line training program* regarding the safe and ethical treatment of human subjects. This training takes 4-6 hours and can be done at any time convenient to the student. It does not need to be done all at once; the program allows you to work in stages. This training must be completed by January 27. Be sure to have the program *print out your certificate*. Show your certificate to the professor to receive credit for this training. Follow the instructions for “New Users” on the USU website <http://irb.usu.edu/htm/training/certification-procedures> and complete the training called “Social & Behavioral Research Modules, Basic Course”.
- Article Critique (15% of final grade): In class on February 24, you will be given a copy of a research article from a journal. This will form the basis of your *Article Critique*, due March 17. You should read the article at least twice, and perhaps also discuss it with classmates. Then (individually!) type up a 5-page report consisting of three parts. First, describe the main themes of the literature review, the research questions, the main features of the design, the results, and conclusions. Second, provide your assessment of the article’s strengths and weaknesses. Third, conclude the report with a final paragraph on what the author’s findings mean to you.
- In-class presentation (15% of the final grade). Each student will lead the class in a brief *presentation* (about 30 minutes) of a selected journal article. Your presentation should be structured as follows:
  1. Present the **background** of the study (i.e., literature review: Why did the authors want to investigate this topic, what was already known to them from the literature; what are the research questions pursued in this study?)
  2. Explain the **set-up** (i.e., design: How many subjects were tested, what’s their background, what were they asked to do, what kind of data was collected, how was the data analyzed?)
  3. Discuss the **findings**, and their **implications** for language teachers

4. Offer **your perspective** on what the authors did well, and what you would have done differently
5. **Describe a differently designed project** that could be carried out to address the same or a similar research question.

While your classmates have read the article once, you are the person who has read it multiple times and will lead the classmates in recalling the pertinent points. You may use any format you deem attractive and engaging, as long as you cover the important points and stick to your time limit.

- The culminating project for this course is the *Final Research Paper*. The final research paper will consist of a research proposal (i.e., you will **not** carry out any data collection). In this proposal, you will
  1. formulate a research question
  2. provide a literature review of relevant prior research and a statement of purpose
  3. formulate the research questions to be investigated in your research
  4. describe the method to be used (subjects, materials, procedures, analyses)
  5. explain the contribution of the study (if it was to be carried out)
  6. provide a list of references, formatted in APA style

The paper will be completed in stages. Before you submit any part of your project to the professor, you should have at least one classmate read it critically for you, then make revisions based on the classmate's feedback. You will receive written feedback (but not a grade) on each of the stages of your project; all work submitted at these stages should be considered drafts, and revisions are expected before the final paper is turned in. No late submissions of drafts will be accepted. If you do not hand in one of the drafts, you will have missed out on an opportunity for feedback. The final paper is due by the close of business day of 25 April.

1. Stage 1: By the end of the fifth week, you should have developed a few ideas regarding the topic for your Research Project. Communicate with the instructor via email to *discuss your ideas*.
2. Stage 2: A one-page proposal of the paper will be due on 10 February. The proposal should state your topic, research question, and methodology. I will return these proposals with comments and my approval (or suggestions for modifications).
3. Stage 3: The *Annotated List of Initial Sources* should be handed in as a 1-page typed paper stating the main idea for your project, a few supporting sentences, and complete bibliographic references to 8-10 journal articles (at least six of them published in the past ten years) on your topic. These should be sources you have actually gotten your hands on, not just something you found listed in a database. Use APA format for complete citations. Due February 24.
4. Stage 4: Develop a detailed draft of your paper including: your justification of the study, abridged literature review, research questions, research methods, the potential contribution of your study to the existing literature (if it were to be carried out). The research plans will be used in peer review discussions in class on 31 March. Turn in the detailed draft to the instructor on March 31.

5. Stage 5: Prepare and turn in an abstract of your work to the Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium. Bring an evidence of the abstract submission by 7 April (?).
6. Stage 6: Prepare a 5-minute presentation of your papers to be made on 21 April.
7. Stage 7: Turn in final paper in to instructor's mailbox in FLB 4080, by 5pm on Friday, 25 April.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not collect data for this paper. In order to carry out a research project involving human beings, your proposed project **MUST** be cleared by the Institutional Review Board **BEFORE** you carry out your project. The approval process can take up to 6-10 weeks.

#### **IV. Assessment:**

The students' final grade will be the culmination of their grades on all class requirements. The students' final grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and participation	10%
IRB-training	10%
Article critique	15%
In-class presentation	15%
Abstract to the Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium	5%
Final research paper (3 proposal, 2 references, 8 draft, 2 presentation, 30 paper)	45%
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Total	100%

#### **V. Grading:**

This course will be graded based on the following scale:

A= 93-100 %	A-= 90-92%	B+= 87-89%
B= 83-86%	B-= 80-82%	C+= 77-79%
C= 73-76%	C-= 70-72%	D+= 67-69%
D= 63-66%	D-= 60-62%	F= below 60

#### ***Additional materials:***

Brown, J.D. (1988). Critiquing statistical studies. In *Understanding research in second language learning* (chap. 5). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007) How to choose the appropriate research method. In *Research methods in applied linguistics* (chap 14). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Mackey, A. & Gass. S. (2011). *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design* (chaps. 2 & 7) New York: Routledge.

Nunan, D. (1992). Doing research. In *Research methods in language learning* (chap. 10). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Seliger, H.W., & Shohamy, E. (1989). The preparatory stages of research. In *Second language research methods* (chap 3). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

## **VI. Important Dates:**

Mon, 6 Jan	Beginning of instruction
Mon, 20 Jan	Martin Luther King, Jr. day (no class)
Mon, 17 Feb	President's day (no class)
Mon-Fri, 10-14 March	Spring break (no class)
Fri, 25 April	Last day of instruction
Fri, 25 April	Final Paper by 5 pm in instructor's mailbox, room 204 OM

## **VII. Academic Integrity, "The Honor System"**

([http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/teaching/syllabus\\_resources.cfm](http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/teaching/syllabus_resources.cfm))

Each student has the right and duty to pursue his or her academic experience free of dishonesty. The Honor System is designed to establish the higher level of conduct expected and required of all Utah State University students. The Honor Pledge: To enhance the learning environment at Utah State University and to develop student academic integrity, each student agrees to the following Honor Pledge: "I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity." A student who lives by the Honor Pledge is a student who does more than not cheat, falsify, or plagiarize. A student who lives by the Honor Pledge:

- Espouses academic integrity as an underlying and essential principle of the Utah State University community;
- Understands that each act of academic dishonesty devalues every degree that is awarded by this institution; and
- Is a welcomed and valued member of Utah State University

## **VIII. Disability Services:**

([http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/teaching/syllabus\\_resources.cfm](http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/teaching/syllabus_resources.cfm))

The Americans with Disabilities Act states: "Reasonable accommodation will be provided for all persons with disabilities in order to ensure equal participation within the program. If a student has a disability that will likely require some accommodation by the instructor, the student must contact the instructor and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center (797-2444), preferably during the first week of the course. Any request for special consideration

relating to attendance, pedagogy, taking of examinations, etc., must be discussed with and approved by the instructor..."

### IX. Schedule:

Dates and Topics	Readings	Assignments/Events
<b>Week 1 (6 Jan)</b>		
Introduction		
<b>Week 2 (13 Jan)</b>		
Research questions Overview of quantitative vs. qualitative approaches	Perry Ch. 1 Dörnyei (2007) Ch. 14	
<b>Week 3 (20 Jan)</b>		
<b>M. Luther King's Day</b>	No class	
<b>Week 4 (27 Jan)</b>		
Primary and secondary sources	Perry Ch. 2	IRB-training certificate due
<b>Week 5 (3 Feb)</b>		
Structure of primary research articles	Perry Ch. 3; Seliger & Shohamy (1989) Ch. 3	
<b>Week 6 (10 Feb)</b>		
Sampling & the sample	Perry Ch. 4	Research proposal due
<b>Week 7 (17 Feb)</b>		
<b>President's Day</b>	No class	
<b>Week 8 (24 Feb)</b>		
Research design	Perry Ch. 5; Nunan (1992) Ch. 10	Annotated bibliography due
<b>Week 9 (3 March)</b>		
Working with human subjects Ethical considerations	Perry Ch. 6	
<b>Week 10 (10 &amp; 14 March)</b>	Spring break (no classes)	
<b>Week 11 (17 March)</b>		
Quantitative data collection	Mackey & Gass (2012), Ch. 3	Article critique due
<b>Week 12 (24 March)</b>		
Qualitative data collection	Mackey & Gass (2012), Ch. 3	
<b>Week 13 (31 March)</b>		
Data analysis	Brown (1988) Ch. 5	Draft of the paper due
<b>Week 14 (7 April)</b>		
Descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and correlations	Read Perry Ch. 7	Abstract to the Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium due
<b>Week 15 (14 April)</b>		
Classroom research	Mackey & Gass (2012), Ch. 7	
<b>Week 16 (21 April)</b>		
Conference presentations: abstract, presentation, and proceedings		In-class presentation of final research paper due