

Research in Second Language Learning
Linguistics 6010
Spring Semester 2018

Instructor: Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini

Time and place: 4:30-6:59 p.m. on Thursdays; 304 Old Main

Office hours: 9:30–10:30 MW

Office: Old Main 202-H

I. Course Description:

The main goal of this course is to familiarize students with research approaches used in the fields of second/foreign language acquisition and language education. 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 studies 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. In the second part, students will delve more deeply into research design as they pursue their own research questions. 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 require no prior knowledge of statistics or mathematics.

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://my.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 five 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 and being ready to engage in discussions regarding the theme of the week. According to the attendance policy of this course, students are allowed one undocumented absence per semester, which they can use in times of need (e.g., illness, family emergency, conference) and when they have no documentation for their absence. However, after this absence, two percentage points will be deducted from their attendance grade for every undocumented absence. Regardless of whether or not you tell the instructor that you will be absent, your absence **will NOT be excused** except under extreme circumstance. It is your responsibility to scan and upload any documentation of your absence to Canvas (go to “Assignments” and then to “Attendance and participation.” Your attendance grade is the percentage of the remaining classes that you have attended.
- **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 February 15. Be sure to **upload your certificate to Canvas** after you save it to your computer. 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): for this assignment, you need to use the scholarly paper in your “article critique” file. You should read the article at least twice, and perhaps also discuss it with classmates. Then **individually** type up a 4-page, double-spaced report consisting of four parts. Your critique should include the following:
 - ✓ First, describe the main issues motivating the study, research questions, design, results, and conclusions.
 - ✓ Second, provide your assessment of the article’s strengths and weaknesses.
 - ✓ Third, discuss what you would have changed if you were conducting this study.
 - ✓ Conclude the report with a paragraph on what the author’s findings mean to you.

The *Article Critique* is due on 1 March.

- **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. This gives you practical experience in presenting at regional and national conferences. Your presentation should be structured as follows:

- ✓ Present the **background** of the study (i.e., 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?)
- ✓ Explain the **set-up** (i.e., design: How many subjects were tested, what's their backgrounds, what were they asked to do, what kind of data was collected, how the data was analyzed?)
- ✓ Discuss the **findings**, and their **implications** for language teachers
- ✓ Offer **your perspective** on what the authors did well, and what you would have done differently
- ✓ **Describe a differently designed project** that could be carried out to address the same or a similar research question.

While your classmates may 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.

- **Research Project** (50% of the final paper): 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
 - ✓ introduce a topic and explain its significance to FLT/SLT
 - ✓ explain the need for your study
 - ✓ provide a literature review of relevant prior research and a statement of purpose
 - ✓ formulate the research questions to be investigated in your research
 - ✓ describe the methods to be used (subjects, materials, procedures, analyses)
 - ✓ explain the contribution of the study (if it was to be carried out)
 - ✓ 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 may want to have at least one classmate read it critically for you, then make revisions based on the classmate's feedback. You will receive written feedback (and 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. The final paper is due by 30 April.

- ✓ Stage 1: By 15 March, you should have developed a few ideas regarding the topic for your Research Project. For this assignment, you need to find sources that are relevant to your topic. The *Annotated List of Initial Sources* should be turned in as a 2-page typed paper stating the main idea for your project (a few 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. Write 3-4 sentences summarizing the main idea of each reference and its significance to your research project. Use APA format for complete citations.

- ✓ Stage 2: A one-page, double-spaced proposal of the paper will be due on 29 March. The proposal should state your topic, its significance, need for the study, research questions, and methodology. I will return these proposals with comments and my approval (or suggestions for modifications).
- ✓ Stage 3: Develop a detailed draft of your paper including: the importance of the topic, justification of your study, abridged literature review, research questions, research methods, potential contribution of your study to the existing literature (if it was to be carried out). The research plans will be used in peer review discussions in class on 12 April.
- ✓ Stage 4: Prepare a 5-minute presentation of your papers to be made on 26 April.
- ✓ Stage 5: Turn in the final paper through Canvas by 11.59 p.m. on Monday, 30 April. The final paper should consist of the following sections:
 - a. Abstract (about 200 words; on a separate page along with your name and title of the paper)
 - b. Introduction (2+ pages)
 - c. Literature review (4+ pages)
 - d. Methods (2+ pages)
 - e. Implications (1+ pages)
 - f. References

IMPORTANT NOTE 1: 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.

IMPORATNT NOTE 2: Students are highly encouraged to present their final projects at the Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium.

Assignment Policy:

- ✓ All assignments should be typed in a 12-point Times Roman font.
- ✓ All assignments should be submitted through Canvas (Please **DO NOT** send your assignment through email, even if it is late).
- ✓ If your assignment is between 1 and 24 hours late you will be penalized 20% of the assigned points. After one day of the due date, the assignment will be considered missing and zero points will be the official grade.
- ✓ Plagiarism is highly discouraged. Students are expected to acknowledge source materials. Please let me know if you have any questions about this issue.

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%
Research project (5 bibliography, 3 proposal, 10 draft, 2 presentation, 30 final paper)	50%
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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, 8 January	Beginning of instruction
Mon-Fri, 5-9 March	Spring Break (no class)
Thursday, 26 April	Last day of instruction for this class
Monday, 30 April	Research Paper due by 11:59 p.m.

VII. Academic Integrity, “The Honor System”

(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)

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
Week 1 (11 January)		
Introduction		Check the presentation papers and try to find one of interest to you
Week 2 (18 January)		
Research questions Overview of quantitative vs. qualitative approaches	Perry Ch. 1 Dörnyei (2007) Ch. 14	- Choose your presentation paper by the end of this week (22 January). Indicate your choice on Canvas
Week 3 (25 January)		
Primary and secondary sources	Perry Ch. 2	- Presentation about library resources
Week 4 (1 February)		
Structure of primary research articles	Perry Ch. 3; Seliger & Shohamy (1989) Ch. 3	Start of students' presentations
Week 5 (8 February)		
Sampling & the sample	Perry Ch. 4	
Week 6 (15 February)		
Research design	Perry Ch. 5; Nunan (1992) Ch. 10	IRB-training certificate due
Week 7 (22 February)		
Working with human subjects Ethical considerations	Perry Ch. 6	
Week 8 (1 March)		
Quantitative data collection	Mackey & Gass (2012), Ch. 3	Article critique due
Week 9 (8 March)		
Spring break	No class	
Week 10 (15 March)		
Qualitative data collection	Mackey & Gass (2012), Ch. 3	Annotated bibliography due
Week 11 (22 March)		
Qualitative data collection	Mackey & Gass (2012), Ch. 3	
Week 12 (29 March)		
Data analysis	Brown (1988) Ch. 5	Research proposal due
Week 13 (5 April)		
Descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and correlations	Read Perry Ch. 7	
Week 14 (12 April)		
Classroom research	Mackey & Gass (2012), Ch. 7	Draft of Final Paper due Discussion of the drafts in class
Week 15 (19 April)		
Classroom research	Mackey & Gass (2012), Ch. 7	
Week 16 (26 April)		
Review & students' presentations		In-class presentation of final research paper due