

Course FA-44 THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING (45 class hours)

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DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to second language acquisition, that is, a first acquaintance with how a non-native language (L2) is learned once a first language (L1) has already been developed. Second language acquisition is a dynamic process that millions of individuals worldwide are engaged in; it is also a growing interdisciplinary field of study within the megafield of applied linguistics.

The focus of attention is on the L2 learners' individual differences. These refer to personal variation in language learning as evidenced by a number of interrelated factors such as age, aptitude, personality traits, motivations, attitudes, social identities, gender, intelligence, learner beliefs, learning strategies, among others. Such differences tend to be psychological/affective, social/sociocultural, cognitive/biological in nature. SLA researchers have claimed that such differences enhance or inhibit both the process and the product of L2 acquisition. The claim is that individual differences partially determine how fast learners learn and how successful they become towards the end of their learning process.

In the long term, the process of L2 acquisition may be related to individual bilingualism in that a growing expectation—yet not the automatic result of it—is that by the end of the L2 acquisition process—whenever that 'end' actually takes place for individual learners—the original L2 learner will hopefully have reached an advanced proficiency level and have become an autonomous L2 user (i.e., a bilingual individual).

AIMS

The following are the main aims of this course: Students are expected to **(i)** develop an informed, reflective, and analytical attitude regarding the factors that play a role in the processes of acquiring and using of two (or more) languages; **(ii)** recognize the meanings of key terms and concepts used in the field of second language acquisition and bilingualism studies; and **(iii)** make connections between the descriptive contents covered and their own past and present experiences involving foreign/second language learning and use.

METHODOLOGY AND ACTIVITIES

This course includes both descriptive as well as practical contents and the teaching methodology used is eclectic (informed eclecticism). In-class activities will include lecturing, guided discussions on selected issues, oral presentations prepared by the students on topics of their choice, and informal presentations by guest speakers (both L2 learners of English and Spanish-English bilinguals).

SYLLABUS

Unit 1: Introducing Second Language Acquisition

- First vs. second language acquisition
- Diversity in language learning and learners
- Second language learning contexts: Naturalistic, mixed, instructed context.

Unit 2: The psychology of SLA

- Languages and the brain: basic concepts of neurolinguistics / neuroscience
- Language processing and its subprocesses: noticing, storing, integration, organization, retrieval.

Unit 3: Social and psychological differences in L2 learners

- Age
- Intelligence
- Aptitude
- Personality
- Learning and cognitive style
- Learning strategies
- Attitudes
- Motivation
 - Gender
 - sociocultural identities
 - Socio-economic factors

Unit 4: Individual bilingualism

- Who is a bilingual?
- Definitions of bilingualism; basic distinctions
 - Sequential bilingualism
 - Psycholinguistic aspects of individual bilingualism

ASSESSMENT

Grading will consist of the following four (4) criteria:

- Class preparation (mainly reading assignments), attendance, and participation: 10 %
- Individual oral presentation (on a topic to be chosen): 20%
- Midterm test: 35 %
- Final test: 35 %

Required Materials

Class booklet (available at the School's copy center at the beginning of the semester)

References

- Cook, V. & D. Singleton. 2014. Key Topics in Second Language Acquisition. Multilingual Matters.
- Hummel, K. (2014). Introducing Second Language Acquisition. Perspectives and Practices. Wiley Blackwell.
- Lightbown, P. & N. Spada. 2013. How Languages are Learned. OUP.
- Saville-Troike, M. & K. Barto. (2017). Introducing Second Language Acquisition. CUP.

References (dictionaries)

- Byram, M. & A. Hu. (2013). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*. Routledge.
- Field, F. (2011). *Key Concepts in Bilingualism*. Palgrave.
- Loewen, S. & H. Reinders. (2011). *Key Concepts in Second Language Acquisition*. Palgrave.
- Richards, J. C. & R. Schmidt. (2010). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Longman.
- Swann, J. et al. (2004). *A Dictionary of Sociolinguistics*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Thornbury, S. (2006). *An A-Z of ELT*. Macmillan.
- Winstanley, J. (2006). *Key Concepts in Psychology*. Palgrave.