



School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies Course Outline

LALS 540 Evaluating Research in Applied Linguistics Trimester 1, 2009

1. Course Coordinator: Stuart Webb

2. Staff: Lecturer: Stuart Webb

(Lecturer)
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Office hours: by appointment
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3. Class times and rooms:

Mondays 4:10-6:00
24 KP 103

4. Announcements:

Additional information concerning this course will be posted on the course blackboard site.

5. LALS main office: VZ210, 2nd floor Von Zedlitz Building, Kelburn Parade

6. Course Administrator:

Rachel Scholes, Postgraduate administration
Tel: 463-5600

Web contact: www.blackboard.vuw.ac.nz

Email: LALS-540@vuw.ac.nz

7. Aims:

The aim of this course is to give an overview of different types of research in language teaching and applied linguistics, so you can evaluate published research and consider its implications for professional practice.

8. Objectives:

By the end of the course, you should have achieved these objectives:

1. To understand the nature and scope of research in applied linguistics.
2. To be able to discuss the relevance of research in your own professional situation.
3. To be knowledgeable about research issues, particularly concerning the criteria for good quality research.
4. To be able to evaluate published research studies, by considering the strengths and weaknesses of the design and the wider applicability of the findings.

9. Trimester dates

Week	Topic	Reading from McDonough & McDonough	Other reading
1 9-Mar	Teachers and research	Chapters 1&2	Tsui (1996)
2 16-Mar	Characteristics of good research	Chapters 3 & 4	Fathman and Whalley (1990)
3 23-Mar	Classroom observation	Chapter 7	Block (1994)
4 30-Mar	Diary studies	Chapter 8	Krishnan & Lee (2002)
5 5-Apr	Experiments 1	Chapter 9	Peñate Cabrera & Bazo Martinez (2001)
3 week mid-term break			
6 4-May	Experiments 2	Chapter 10	Horst, Cobb, & Meara (1998)
7 11-May	Survey research	Chapter 11	Yamashita (2004)
8 18-May	Introspection/ verbal reports	Chapter 12	Mackey, Gass, & McDonough (2000)
9 25-May	Case studies	Chapter 13	Harklau (2000)
10 1-Jun	Review of criteria for evaluating quantitative and qualitative research	None	Chapelle & Duff (2003)

10. Texts:

Required:

- McDonough & McDonough (1997). *Research Methods for English Language Teachers*. London: Arnold.
- A packet of research articles is also available through student notes.

Recommended:

Information on other readings of interest is available on the course blackboard site.

Vicbooks has two locations - Student Union Building on Kelburn Campus and Rutherford House on Pipitea Campus (which stocks textbooks for Law and Commerce only). We distribute student notes (for Law (all stages) and Commerce from stage 2 upwards only) from the Pipitea shop and the student notes shop on the ground floor of the Student Union Building. Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email an order or enquiry to enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz We can courier books to customers or they can be picked up from either shop the day after placing an order online.

We can be contacted by telephone

Kelburn 463 5515

Pipitea 4636160

Opening hours

8am - 6pm Mon - Fri (during termtime - we close at 5pm in the holidays)

10am - 1pm Saturday

11. Assessment:

Your achievement of the course objectives will be assessed by means of weekly article responses,

one assignment, and two tasks:

- Article responses (300-400 words), due weekly and worth 10%
- Task 1(800-1000 words), due Wednesday 30 March and worth 25%
- Task 2 (800-1000 words), due Monday 11 May and worth 25%
- Assignment 1 (1800-2000 words), due Monday 8 June and worth 40%

Article Responses

The article responses require preparation through reading before class, and attendance at lectures (for on-campus students) or timely participation on blackboard (for distance students). For on campus students, you will need to reflect on questions about the readings during the trimester. For each week of class, I will post on blackboard questions about the articles you read each week (note, the article responses should involve critiquing the research studies we read each week, not the McDonough and McDonough book). You will need to select up to 2 of these to respond to in a short (300-400 word) response. You need to bring these responses with you to class each week. I will not accept late responses. These questions and your responses will form part of our class discussions. Your article responses can also include questions about research that the article raised for you. The focus of the responses should be the design of the research (how it was carried out) rather than the findings of the research.

Distance students will also submit article responses, but will do so online. Your responses will be submitted on the discussion board. You will be assigned to small groups at the beginning of the trimester. On Blackboard, in the menu tab called "Distance Students" is a space set up for each group. Under this tab, you will find a group learning journal for each group.

By the day of each lecture (Mondays weekly) you will be required to read the assigned readings and write a response. These should be similar to those of the on-campus students, described above. You should read the responses by other students in your groups, and you can comment on them in separate entries or by using the comments option.

Finally, you should select 3 weeks of the trimester in which you will write a summary of your groups' article responses. On the weeks that you select, you should write a summary (no more than 400 words) of your groups' reflection on the readings and lecture notes. The summary should include a short (150-200 word) summary of the main ideas from the readings followed by a 200-250 word personal reflection and response to the ideas discussed. These summaries should be posted on the Blackboard Discussion Board. Forums to post summaries for each week have been created on Blackboard. Remember, you only need to write a summary of your groups' discussion and post it on Blackboard 3 times during the semester. Summaries should be posted no later than the Thursday following the class lecture date. I will respond to summaries.

Task 1: Replication

Carefully read the Littlewood (2000) article posted under the class readings tab on Blackboard. For your task, you should consider how you would conduct a new study designed to answer the same research question that Littlewood asked. Your task should include a discussion of the strengths of the article as well as the weaknesses, as well as discussion of how your study would overcome the most important weaknesses. You should also consider any new problems that might arise in your replication study. You should support your discussion with reference to the required readings and other studies.

Task 2: Research methods

Choose one of the general research questions below, and decide which primary research method you would use to investigate the question. Explain briefly how, where, and among which participants you would carry out the study. You should use the required readings and other literature to support your choice, and should consider how your selection of a research method might impact on your findings.

Research Questions:

- Do students attend to grammar when engaged in second language writing?
- What motivates students most in the language classroom?
- Does working in an English medium environment help students to learn English?

Assignment 1: Contrasting two research articles

Compare the two research studies by Barkhuizen (1998) and by Garrett & Shortall (2002), which are in the Course Readings on pp. 97-126. After providing a suitable introduction, write an evaluation of the two studies. Identify the key features of the research design in each case and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the two pieces of research, paying particular attention to the validity of the results. You should also consider the appropriateness of the research methods/measurements for investigating the issues at hand, and other methods of research that may have been equally/more valid. You must explicitly compare/contrast the two studies, either as an integral part of the main discussion or in a separate section towards the end of the assignment.

You may also wish to comment on how well the articles are written and whether any significant information is not given; however, the main focus should be on the quality

of the research being reported. While this is partly a comparison, and will involve some summary, it is important to remember that this assignment is mainly an evaluation, and should be centred on an informed critique.

Submitting assignments and tasks

General guidelines

- Set margins to at least 2.5 cm
- Set line spacing to 1.5
- Set font size of 12 point
- Include page numbers
- Include a title page which shows the course number and name, your name, the course lecturer, the title of the assignment, and the date the assignment is due
- Provide a word count at the end of the assignment (not including the Reference section)

Hard copy submissions

- Type on one side of A4 paper
- Staple pages together
- Avoid presenting assignments in bulky folders or sleeves unless necessary
- Avoid inserting individual pages in clearfile sleeves

12. Penalties:

No specific penalty will be imposed if you obtain permission to submit the assignment after the deadline. If you find that you need an extension, you **must** get explicit permission from the course coordinator before the due date. Extensions will only be granted when the assignment is not completed due to unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or family emergencies. Assignments that are handed in on time will be marked and commented on and returned in a timely manner. Late assignments will be marked when at the lecturers' convenience, and receive fewer, if any, comments.

Plagiarism will result in failure in the course. See also page 17 of the MA Handbook.

13. Relationship between assessment and course objectives:

Assignment 1 will help you fulfil objectives 1 and 4. Assignment 2 will help you fulfil objectives 3 and 4.

14. Workload:

It is anticipated that you will need to devote approximately 15 hours per week to this course (including readings, class attendance or discussion board postings, outside readings, working on assignments, etc.). Please remember that this is considered a minimum time requirement. You may find that you require more.

15. Mandatory Course Requirements (Terms):

To receive a final grade for this course, you need to meet the following requirements:

- Submit all assessments
- (Distance) Post weekly to the Blackboard site as explained above.
- (On campus) Attend all class meetings, unless prevented by ill-health, bereavement or some other important reason.

16. Attendance:

Distance students are required to contribute to Blackboard weekly and in a timely manner. On-campus students should attend all classes. If a conflict necessitates missing a class, you should arrange to make up the work with the instructor. Absences should be the result of unforeseeable conditions only.

17. Statement on the use of Turnitin

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <<http://www.turnitin.com>>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting misreferencing, misquotation, and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. At the discretion of the head of School, handwritten work may be copy typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin. You are strongly advised to check with your tutor or the course coordinator if you are uncertain about how to use and cite material from other sources. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

18. Academic integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times. Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the Victoria homepage at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically under "Course Outline General Information" at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general>

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct

- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support