



**School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies  
Course Outline**

**LALS 540 Evaluating Research in Applied Linguistics  
Trimester 1, 2010  
(March 1-July 4)**

**Trimester dates**

Teaching dates: 1 March 2010 to 4 June 2010

Mid-trimester break: 5 April to 18 April 2010

Study week: 7 June to 11 June 2010

Examination/Assessment period: 11 June to 4 July 2010

**Withdrawal dates**

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawlsrefunds.aspx>

**1. Course Coordinator: Stuart Webb**

**2. Staff: Lecturer: Dr. Stuart Webb**

(Lecturer)

VZ 307

(04)463-9779

Fax (LALS) 463-5604

Office hours: by appointment

Email: [stuart.webb@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:stuart.webb@vuw.ac.nz)

**3. Class times and rooms:**

Mondays 4:10-6:00

24 KP 103

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

**5. Course Administrator:**

Rachel Scholes, Postgraduate administration

Tel: 463-5600

**Web contact:** [www.blackboard.vuw.ac.nz](http://www.blackboard.vuw.ac.nz)

## **6. Course delivery**

The course is delivered in two modes: on campus and by distance. On-campus classes are run as workshops. For distance students, the course is available at <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>. Blackboard is Victoria's online teaching and learning system. In both modes, students are expected to participate actively in activities and discussions. Further information about Blackboard is available under Frequently Asked Questions, on the MA page.

## **Communication of additional information**

Additional information about this course and information about any changes will be announced in on-campus classes and posted on the course website in Blackboard.

## **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. Texts:**

### **Required:**

- o McDonough & McDonough (1997). *Research Methods for English Language Teachers*. London: Arnold.
- o 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.

For the first two weeks of trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of vicbooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two all undergraduate textbooks will be sold from vicbooks and student notes from the Student Notes Distribution Centre on the ground floor of the Student Union Building.

Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at [www.vicbooks.co.nz](http://www.vicbooks.co.nz) or can email an order or enquiry to [enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz). Books can be couriered to customers or they can be picked up from the shop. Customers will be contacted when they are available. Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays). Phone: 463 5515.

## 10. Trimester dates

Week	Topic	Reading from McDonough & McDonough	Other reading
1 8-Mar	Teachers and research	Chapters 1&2	Tsui (1996)
2 15-Mar	Characteristics of good research	Chapters 3 & 4	Fathman and Whalley (1990)
3 22-Mar	Classroom observation	Chapter 7	Block (1994)
4 29-Mar	Diary studies	Chapter 8	Krishnan & Lee (2002)
<b>2 week mid-term break</b>			
5 19-Apr	Experiments 1	Chapter 9	Peñate Cabrera & Bazo Martinez (2001)
6 26-Apr	Experiments 2	Chapter 10	Horst, Cobb, & Meara (1998)
7 3-May	Survey research	Chapter 11	Yamashita (2004)
8 10-May	Introspection/ verbal reports	Chapter 12	Mackey, Gass, & McDonough (2000)
9 17-May	Case studies	Chapter 13	Harklau (2000)
10 24-May	Review of criteria for evaluating quantitative and qualitative research	None	Chapelle & Duff (2003)

## 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 Monday 29 March and worth 25%
- Task 2 (800-1000 words), due Monday 3 May and worth 25%
- Assignment 1 (1800-2000 words), due Monday 31 May 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. The article responses should involve critiquing the research studies we read each week, not the McDonough and McDonough book. You will need to write a short (300-400 word) critique. 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 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. When you are writing your papers remember that this course is about methodology not about the different topics which the questions focus on.

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. 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**

**On-campus students may submit a hardcopy to the School office, or submit electronically through BB.**

**If you have a problem submitting through BB you can submit by email to [LALS-MA@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:LALS-MA@vuw.ac.nz). However, please note that I will not be looking for submissions in that mailbox so if you were to submit there you will need to let me know.**

#### General guidelines

When submitting typed or word-processed assignments:

- 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)
- Follow APA citation guidelines.

#### Hard copy submissions

- Put a LALS cover-sheet on the assignment, and complete the information requested there
- 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:**

#### **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.

For assignments handed in late without an extension the maximum grade possible is B+ and no personal comment will be provided

Be careful to keep within the word limits. Assignments that are slightly excessive in length (more than 10% over the limit) will be marked down one grade ie. from a B+ to a B, or from a B to a B-. Assignments that are far over the word limit (more than 25% over the limit) will be marked down one full grade ie. from B+ to C+, or A- to B-.

Plagiarism will result in failure in the course. See also Academic Integrity and Plagiarism below, and 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.

### **Class Representative**

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, 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* or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC(Academic) website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/Publications.aspx>

**Victoria University of Wellington**  
**School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies**

**COVER SHEET**

**COURSE NAME &  
CODE**  
e.g. LING 211

**SURNAME** : \_\_\_\_\_

**GIVE NAME** : \_\_\_\_\_

**ID NUMBER** : \_\_\_\_\_

**TUTOR / LECTURER** : \_\_\_\_\_

**ASSIGNMENT TITLE /  
NO** : \_\_\_\_\_

**NUMBER OF WORDS** : \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE DATE** : \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please complete the following checklist:**

**tick box**

I have checked my work carefully before submitting

I have included a list of references, properly formatted

I have numbered the pages of this work

I have retained a copy of this work

There is no plagiarism in this work

I value your feedback and will collect my work promptly

**OR**

I do not require any feedback on this work

**STUDENT'S SIGNATURE** : \_\_\_\_\_



DATE : \_\_\_\_\_