



School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies

MASTER OF ARTS

LALS 541: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

TRIMESTER 2 2011

11 July to 12 November 2011

Trimester dates

Teaching dates: 11 July to 14 October 2011

Mid-trimester break: 22 August to 4 September 2011

Study week: 17–21 October 2011

Examination/Assessment period: 21 October to 12 November 2011

Withdrawal dates

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

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

Names and contact details

Course coordinator and instructor

Associate Professor Frank Boers

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Course Administrator

Kirsten Sims Office: von Zedlitz Building, Room VZ210

Phone: 463 5894 or 463 5600

E-mail: kirsten.sims@vuw.ac.nz

Post: as above

Class times and locations

Seminar time: Wednesdays 16.10 – 18.00

Seminar venue: Room 202, 24 Kelburn Pde [Kelburn campus]

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 notes will be 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. For distance learners the workshops will be simulated in the format of on-line discussion forum. Further information about Blackboard is available under Frequently Asked Questions, under the Study tab of the School website.

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.

Course Prescription

A study of the design and the implementation of research studies in applied linguistics

Course content

This course explores methodological issues in conducting applied linguistics research, especially research in the area of (instructed) second language acquisition. During the course, we will follow the research process from the formulation of a research question to the research report. Different types of research designs and data analysis will be exemplified and discussed, with an emphasis throughout on the validity and reliability of research methods, and the need for caution in interpreting findings. Students will set up their own research project, report on its development and elicit/give constructive feedback from/to peers.

This course relates closely to LALS 540 (Evaluating Research in Applied Linguistics) which is taught in the first trimester. While LALS 540 focuses on understanding and appraising second language research, LALS 541 focuses on *conducting* the research. Part of the course content will be determined by the nature of individual students' elected research project.

The course will provide members with opportunities to study and experience:

- a. The stages of the research process
- b. The relationship between research questions and research design
- c. Piloting and feedback to the research design
- d. Means and intricacies of data analysis
- e. The dissemination of research findings

Learning objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to

- a. formulate research questions in response to unresolved issues in applied linguistics research (preferably in the area of second language acquisition) and translate these into testable hypotheses;
- b. choose/adapt/develop appropriate research methodology to address a specific question;
- c. collect, analyse, and synthesize data, and draw justified conclusions from the findings;
- d. make appropriate modification to a chosen research methodology after having piloted it.

Expected workload

It is anticipated that you will invest 150 hours across the course. However, in order to achieve a high grade in the course, you may find it necessary to invest more.

Workshops (on-campus): 2 hours per week

Discussion board (distance): 2 hours per week

Mandatory course readings and readings for peer-review preparation: av. 5 hours per week

Research project: av. 5 hours per week

Readings

Essential texts:

Articles describing and exemplifying research designs and data analysis methods will be made available on the LALS 541 Blackboard site.

Recommended Reading:

Recommended reading relevant to the students' research projects will also be made available on the LALS 541 Blackboard site.

Recommended research methodology books for this course are:

Dornyei, Z. (2007) *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methodologies*. Oxford University Press.

Mackey, A. & S. Gass (2005) *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

All undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer from 4 to 22 July 2011, 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 of the trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from vicbooks on Level 4 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. Books can be couriered to customers or they can be picked up from nominated collection points at each campus. 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.

Assessment requirements

Assessment will be based on (a) your contributions to the workshops (in class) or the online discussion board (distance) and (b) two written reports on your research project.

Component	Value	Word count	Due date	Objectives
Workshops	20%	n. a.	Weekly	a, b, c, d
Assignment 1	30%	1700-2000	Wed, 17 August	a, b
Assignment 2	50%	1700-2000	Wed, 26 October	b, c, d

Workshops:

In the first couple of workshops, research methodologies and the stages in their implementation will be described and illustrated. Examples will be evaluated. Students will be expected to read and critique sample studies. From week three onwards, students will start exploring their own research idea and report on its development (starting by

delineating the research question and ending with a full research proposal that has benefited from piloting the proposed research method). You will be expected to give constructive feedback to your peers and give careful consideration to their feedback (and mine) on your ideas. The aim is for us to collaboratively learn about the research process. In parallel with the gradual development of your research project, you will be asked to tackle additional tasks intended to help the group recognise potential pitfalls at various stages of the research process.

Assignment 1: Literature review and research question(s)

Choose an area of research and a research question that you suspect has yet not been addressed in a satisfactory way. Then conduct a thorough literature review to evaluate what previous research has already revealed concerning the chosen research question. On the basis of the review delineate or modify your research question, so that seeking an answer to it will complement previous research. Your review should go beyond summarizing articles, to drawing connections between them to build a research-based explanation of your topic area. The literature review should lead into / motivate your specific research question(s) and hypothesis(es) (if any).

Assignment 2: Method Section

Starting from your research question(s) and hypothesis(es) (if any), describe the method you'd use to conduct the investigation. Your report should include a description of the intended participants and setting, the materials used in the study (included in the appendix), the study procedure, the proposed method for coding/categorizing/analysing the data (including examples), a projection of the implications/value of the research for language teaching or language learning and directions for future research (limitations of the proposed method). You may also need to include a discussion of the second language form(s) investigated. It is extremely useful to pilot the planned procedures (on a small scale), so that improvements can be made to the actual proposal and certain steps can be justified with reference to pilot data.

Penalties

If you find that you need an extension, you **must** get explicit permission from the course coordinator before the due date. No specific penalty will be imposed if you obtain permission to submit the assignment after the deadline.

Mandatory course requirements

Each course member is required to:

1. Complete weekly reading requirements in preparation for classes
2. Contribute weekly to the collaborative learning process (i.e. provide peers with scheduled materials to elicit feedback on; read peers' drafts and offer advice)
3. Complete both assessments.

Class Representative

The class representative for the MA programme is Emma Rowbotham (emma.riley.chris@gmail.com). Her contact details are available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. As the class representative, Emma 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>

Use of Turnitin

Student work provided for assessment in this course will be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <http://www.turnitin.com>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted material on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions is not made available to any other party. Turnitin is linked to BlackBoard. More instructions will follow.

WHERE TO FIND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study. Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress. Most statutes and policies are available at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy, except qualification statutes, which are available via the *Calendar* webpage at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the website of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic.