

EDUC 697P - Principles of First and Second Language Learning and Teaching
Fall 2003

Wednesday 3:30-6:30
Holyoke High School Library

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PURPOSE:

In our everyday practices, we all have opinions about how first and second languages are learned and should be taught. Our opinions, or what might be called our “theories,” whether derived from personal experiences or from reading books and articles, shape the kinds of learning opportunities we provide English language learners (ELLs), and are therefore highly consequential to the academic trajectories of our students. For this reason, the purpose of this course is to support you in constructing a highly informed, explicit theory of classroom based language learning as it relates to supporting students’ academic development and the teacher research projects you have been developing under the direction of Dr. Willett.

The central vehicle for building this framework and exploring your research questions will be an in-depth analysis of students learning using digital video and audio recordings of interactions that take place in your classrooms. You will be supported in collecting and analyzing classroom interactions by “Classroom Project Assistants (PAs)” These are doctoral students at the University of Massachusetts in the Language, Literacy, and Culture Concentration who are interested in issues related to classroom based second language learning. Dr. Carballo has endorsed your research projects and the work of these PAs and will be sending a memo of support to your principals in the coming days indicating that PAs have his permission to regularly visit your classrooms, collect student work, record classroom interactions, and interview parents and community leaders. These PAs will contact this week as to when it will be convenient for them to visit your class and start collecting the kind of data you will need to complete assignments for this class and your masters degree (a list of PA assignments and contact information is forthcoming).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a result of the data collection and analysis activities you will be involved in this course, you will:

- develop the ability to analyze classroom “discourse” (e.g., classroom interactions or “turns-at-talk”) in regard to their power to support or limit students’ academic language development;
- construct your own informed theoretical understanding of classroom language learning;
- make appropriate changes in your evolving teaching practices in light of your research project to support the academic achievement and social well-being of your students;
- develop the ability to use technology as a valuable professional development tool (e.g., digital video);
- develop the ability to work in new ways with colleagues, administrators, and families as an informed advocate for the academic success of ELLs.
- Be able to critique different theories of first and second language acquisition and the implications of these theories for classroom practice;

CLASS ORGANIZATION

Each class session will have the following format:

- A 15 minute discussion of the readings in pairs
- A 60 minute presentation regarding the topic-of-the-day
- A 15 minute break
- A 30 minute technology demonstration (e.g., emailing, downloading PDFs, accessing web resources, using digital video, scanning documents, and presenting using PowerPoint).
- A 60 minute research workshop to discuss and analyze the data you are collecting with others in the seminar with similar interests.

REQUIREMENTS

Below are the requirements for this course. Please do not hesitate to discuss your approach to completing these assignments with me, Dong shin, or your PA.

Participation (25%): You are expected to attend all classes and contribute actively to class discussions. Your grade for this aspect of the course will be based on class attendance and the quality of assigned class work (e.g., weekly research e-memos). If you must miss a class, please see members of your group so that they can bring you up to speed. NOTE: You cannot pass this course if you have more than 2 absences. This policy reflects the degree to which much of the learning that happens in this class comes from the kinds of interactions that take place in class between individuals and the instructors and among participants in the class in the context of discussing the data you are

collecting. There is simply no way to make up this work. When I note an absence, I will email you to let you know so there is no confusion on this point.

Reading log and related assignments (25%):

The purpose of this assignment is to support you in actively engaging with the authors of the readings, in keeping track of the ideas you discover, and in preparing you to participate actively in class discussion (see example). In this log, you may record:

- responses to assignments
- frequently encountered terms
- interesting/thought provoking/troubling quotation
- critical comments
- insights into your own learning strategies
- connections to your own classroom practices
- connections to your research project

Logs should be completed before class meetings (one log per class). They should be typed, labeled with the number of the week they are due (Reading Log Week 2), and contain complete references. Length will vary depending on your approach and the articles assigned. I will collect and respond to logs three times during the semester.

In regard to teaching practices, I encourage you to think about assigning logs in your own classes. They can be time consuming for students and teachers, but they are also a great way to support your students in developing studying skills, engaging with new ideas, having a risk-free ways of "trying on" academic vocabulary and syntactic structures, and having a place to challenge authors and ideas that come up in class discussions.

Group Presentation (25%)

Your course project will center on analyzing interactions that take place in your classroom. The purpose of this assignment is to “hold still” the sociolinguistic practices that shape the learning experiences that language learners have in schools. This “holding still of language” will help you make the concepts you encounter in the readings more concrete, discover tensions inherent in classroom language teaching, and reflect on your own future classroom practices. What your group present and how you present it will depend on the interests of the members in your group and the data you collect, so there is no set form. Later in the semester I will provide you with some guidelines to think about in preparing your presentation (e.g. length, having a handout, making connections to the goals of the course, and reflecting on your classroom practices in terms of student learning). For the moment, however, let me say that presentations should be well organized and thoughtfully delivered in a way that generates debate, but they should not be considered the place where you present a “final” or conclusive analysis of your on going research projects. In fourteen weeks this is not possible.

Individual Final Paper (25%)

A week after your group presentation, you will hand in an individual paper. Again, papers should be well organized and thoughtful, but I do not expect (nor do I think it is possible) to present a final statement of the “truth” about what is happening in your classroom and what it means for your students. Rather, I expect you to explore your

research question in a thoughtful manner that draws on class discussions and the readings in an informed way.

GRADING

You may select either a Pass/Fail or a letter grade. Let me know by the second class session which you prefer. Final grades will be based on a review of a course portfolio of the above assignments in light of the “essential questions and skills” the faculty and I have identified as central to this course (see below). Your portfolio should have the following sections (see example):

- All reading logs (11 total)
- All e-memos (11 total)
- Presentation materials (see handout for details)
- Course paper (see handout for details)

All assignments are due on the days indicated in the course schedule. If you do not get everything in on time, I cannot guarantee that I will be able to give you comprehensive feedback.

If you have any condition, such as a physical or sensory disability, which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as I have outlined it above, or if you need extra time to complete assignments for whatever reason, please notify me in the first two weeks of the course so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

Last, I *strongly* discourage you from taking an incomplete except in cases of emergency discussed with me prior to the end of the semester. In the event that you do receive or request an incomplete, it is your responsibility to complete the appropriate paperwork and assigned work as governed by University policy.

Required texts (Available at Amherst Book Store and Collective Copies, Amherst).

Required Book: We can purchase and deliver these materials to class if you provide us with a check.

- Lightbown, P. and Spada, N. 1999. How languages are learned. Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Amherst Bookstore, Phone: 413-256-1547).
- The course packet (Collective Copies, Phone: 413-256-6425). The following readings are in the course packet and are assigned for the weeks listed:

Week 4

Johnson, K. (1996). *Understanding communication in second language classrooms*(Chapter 1 & 5). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Week 6

Wong-Fillmore, L. (1985). When does teacher talk work as input? In C. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second*

language acquisition. Rowley, MA: Newbury House. 17-50

Kramsch, Claire J. (1985). Classroom Interaction and Discourse Options. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. v7 n2 p169-83.

Week 7

Brown, D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (pp. 122-141). New York: Longman

Week 8

Schmidt, R. (1983). Interaction, acculturation, and the acquisition of communicative competence: A case study of an adult. In N. Wolfson and E. Judd (Eds.) *Sociolinguistics and second language acquisition*. Newbury House. 137-74

Week 9

Test Material

Week 10

Peirce, B. N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29 (1), 9-31

Week 11

Willett, J. (1995). Becoming first graders in an L2: An ethnographic study of L2 socialization. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(3), 473-503.

Week 12

Gebhard, M. (2003). School reform, hybrid discourses, and second language literacies. *Tesol Quarterly* (in review).

Week 13

Clair, N. (1998). Teacher study groups: persistent questions in a promising approach. *TESOL Quarterly* 32 (3). 465-491

Gebhard, M. (1999). A Case for Professional Development Schools. *TESOL Quarterly*. v32 n3 p 501-10.

Recommended Books (Also available at Amherst Bookstore, Phone: 413- 256-6425)

- Brown, H.D. 1994. Principles of language Learning and Teaching. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:Prentice Hall.
- Cazden, C. (1988) Classroom Discourse. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Pinker, S. (1994). The language instinct. New York: William and Morrow.

OFFICE HOURS AND ADVISING

My office hours are Mondays 3:00 – 5:00 in Room 206, Furcolo Hall or after class. You may reach me at 413.577.0863 or by email at gebhard@educ.umass.edu to schedule an appointment. I do answer telephone messages, but I reply faster and prefer email.

COURSE “ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS” AND SKILLS

As a result of participating in this course, teachers should be able to answer these *essential questions* regarding classroom based second language acquisition:

1. What is classroom discourse analysis? What is the value of discourse analysis for teachers of second language learners?
2. How do different theories explain first language learning?
3. How do different theories explain second language learning?
4. How do different theories explain the difference between L1 and L2 acquisition?
5. Who is Krashen? What is his theory of SLA and in what ways did this theory make a valuable contribution to the field of SLA? How have researchers and teachers critiqued his theory in the past 20 years?
6. How do different theories of approach “learner errors?”
7. How do different theories define “interlanguage”?
8. How do different theories define the concepts of “input,” “intake,” “negotiation,” “uptake,” and “output”?
9. How do different theories understand the importance of individual differences and “learner variables” in the process of second language learning (age, gender, L1, class, previous learning experiences, personality, motivation, and general intelligence)?
10. How can students and teachers develop communication strategies that support second language learning?
11. How do issues of identity and language learning intersect in the classrooms?
12. How do historical, political, and economic factors influence classroom second language learning?
13. How can teachers become a more powerful advocate for their students and their own professional growth?

As a result of participating in this course, teachers should develop these *essential skills*:

- The ability to define terms in SLA clearly and succinctly
- The ability to adopt multiple view points regarding interactional data and classroom based SLA
- The ability to contextual and analyze information
- The ability to take an informed, principled position on an issue
- The ability to reflect and modify one’s teaching practices in light of new information
- The ability to email, create PowerPoint presentations, use digital video, scan documents, and send attachments.
- The ability to collaborate and learn from members of the seminar.