

# Theoretical Applications

The courses in this stream cover a wide range of issues in the theoretical background of language and language learning with a forward look toward applications in language teaching. The underlying idea guiding each of these courses is that teachers, to be more responsive and reflective in the classroom, need to know not only what they are doing but also why they are doing certain things. This is why theories can be important.

## **Introduction to Linguistics**

This course is designed to provide students with instruction in the underlying psychological systems of language and English in particular and how this vast body of knowledge can be of benefit to English language teachers in the classroom and beyond. We review and compare and contrast different models, the generative and the cognitive, to help students develop a feel for what language is and how it is reported to work.

## **Developing Bilingualism**

This three-hour-per-week course is designed to provide students with a course in issues and practices related to the development and/or enhancement of bilingualism and the theoretical underpinnings of this rapidly developing area of language research. A bilingual individual is defined loosely as someone, according to Mohanty (1994)\*, who has the ability, "to meet the communicative demands of the self and society in their normal functioning of two or more languages in their interaction with the other speakers of any or all of these languages". Based on this definition, we can see that bilinguals do not need to be equally proficient in all their languages and that what really defines them is language **use**. It is from this perspective that we will look at the issue of language development and enhancement this semester. In this course, we will be looking at ways of developing bilingualism (or aspects thereof) in our students particularly from a psycholinguistic and what is called a 'dynamic approach' to multilingualism. In doing so we will quickly discover that socio-cultural considerations have a large effect on language use and language development, particularly in multilingual systems. In this way we will be taking rather heavy theory and using it to develop practical approaches in language teaching. This course will be rather heavy on the reading, but should be interesting. The course is also designed with no prerequisites. Students who have previously taken the Second Language Learning Theories or Intro. to Linguistics classes will find some of the ideas here a bit easier to grapple with, but the material is approached from the point of view of a beginner to the field.

\*Mohanty, A.K. (1994). Bilingualism in a multilingual society: Psychological and pedagogical implications. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages.

## **Human Learning and Cognition**

This course has two main components. The first of these is the brain and memory component. For the winter reading project students will be reviewing some very basic material on the brain in order to get a solid overview of how

the brain works in general. Once we get into the classroom students will be looking at how memory and learning can be incorporated into the modern framework of an integrated brain. The second component revolves around brain structure and functioning as it relates specifically to language. Here we will be looking at different elements of language and how they can be explained through theories of brain structure and functioning (Lieberman, 2000). In effect we are looking for ways in this course to tie together the brain and language in a holistic, principled way.

### **Sociolinguistics in Language Teaching**

This course is designed to provide students with instruction and practice dealing with the issues surrounding the field of sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics is an interesting and important area for language for teachers because it deals with how languages are used and thought of in the real world. In this course we will review some of the basic ideas underlying language use by looking at language from three different but overlapping theoretical viewpoints. We will be taking a look at sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and interlanguage pragmatics. Based on this, students are expected to be exposed to and to generate a full picture of how language use develops and is to be assessed and taught and specifically in subsequent language learners. As such, this course is seen as being a basic course and one which marries necessary theories in SLA with practical outcomes related to language use. Students will be encouraged to come up with real-world applications of the theories discussed in class for use in their own teaching.

### **The History of the English Language**

Languages are not benign and they do not lead natural lives. Languages exist through the will and intent of the people who speak them or wish to speak them. Nowhere is this truer than for English in the current world. English is, for better or worse, the language of globalization with the US and UK wearing the face and cutting the cloth of globalization. This makes dealing with English, teaching English, a political, social and even cognitive issue. One of the best ways of understanding the present and predicting the future is to study the past. This is exactly what we presume to do in this class. This three-hour-per-week course is designed to provide students with instruction in the sociolinguistic history of English as a global language. Simply put, we will be looking at not only the effects the English language has had on globalization but also the effects that globalization have had on English. We will examine the spread of English across the globe and how and why this feat was achieved, thus launching English in its current position as a global language. Once more, we will be looking at English and globalization from two different points of view. From all this we will try to analyze how we as the principle purveyors of English in this country can responsibly deal with English linguistically, socially and politically. Based on this, by the end of this class, students should have a good idea of their own place in this globalized world as citizens and English teachers endeavoring to develop minds.

### **Second Language Learning Theories**

This course is going to be different from many other courses on SLA and also what we have done in the past in that it will not focus on approaches to the very complex phenomenon of second language learning (For a neutral discussion of *approaches* to SLA see Mitchell, R. and F. Myles. (2004). *Second language learning theories* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). London: Arnold). The problem is that these approaches are not only confusing but also not always helpful to the language teacher. The reality is that despite all that has been researched and discussed not one of these approaches provides a comprehensive model for successful consecutive language learning. Rather, they each approach certain issues from different perspectives. It, therefore, seems that it is the issues rather than the approaches that need to be tended to and that is what we are going to do in this course.

This three-hour-per-week course is designed to provide language teachers/students with a comprehensive overview of some of the main issues associated with second language learning. After a brief introduction to the form and purpose of language in general, we will be focusing in turn on different issues identified and investigated by leading researchers related to the question of how second languages are learned. In addition, a strong connection will be made between specific issues in SLA and certain language teaching methodologies, focusing more specifically on the connections between theories and practices in second language and foreign language situations. By the end of the course, students should have acquired not only a wide overview of issues related to second language learning but also how these different issues have been and can be used to generate specific teaching practices in the foreign language classroom.