



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES

**MASTER OF ARTS
LALS 515 LANGUAGE CURRICULUM DESIGN
15 POINTS**

TRIMESTER 3 2014

Important dates

Trimester dates: 17 November 2014 to 22 February 2015

Teaching dates: 26 November 2014 to 11 February 2015

Mid-trimester/Xmas break: 22 December 2014 to 4 January 2015

Last assessment item due: 20 February 2015

Withdrawal dates: Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds. If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats.

Class times and locations

Wednesdays 4-6 pm

24 Kelburn Parade, Room 202

Names and contact details

Course Co-ordinator

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Communication of additional information

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

Prescription

The aim of this course is to familiarise students with the processes, issues and options of language course design and evaluation.

Course content

The course offers a critical study of the practice and principles of developing curricula for second language learning. It treats curriculum development as a complex problem-solving process in specific educational contexts.

The course will be organised as opportunities for analysis and interpretation of language learning and teaching in your own working context and elsewhere through reading, discussion and assignment work. The reading in the course consists of a number of articles (usually two) set for each topic. These readings are available in Blackboard as pdf files. You are also expected to read beyond the set texts using the range of resources available through the University library or elsewhere. The following topics will be covered:

1. Curriculum as problem-solving

How do we perceive curriculum development as a problem solving activity about individual learning and group teaching? What sort of 'transformations' are to take place and what are the ends and means of such transformations?

2. The learner

What are the implications for the curriculum of the motivation of the learner and their strategic behavior in learning and using a second language?

3. The teacher

How do teacher beliefs about teaching and learning influence their teaching and interpretation of the curriculum?

4. Language learning as performance

What is the expected performance by learners and how does a curriculum allow for that performance?

5. Setting goals

How can learning goals represent complex communicative performance and motivate learners towards achieving that performance?

6. Learner autonomy

What are the implications of learner autonomy for the language curriculum? (This topic links to the specialised MA course on learner autonomy.)

7. Learning opportunities

How can we characterise learning opportunities in a way that guides curriculum development and guides the learner in their learning activity?

8. Evaluation

What evidence can you gather to show whether or not your intended, or an unintended, transformation has been achieved, and that certain variables have contributed to the change?

9. Curriculum as problem-solving: reprise

A sharing of your reflections on the problem you are working on for your second assignment, drawing on the notions of transformation, learner and teacher roles, learning opportunities, evaluation.

The scheduled input and interaction on the course will occur in the first 8 class meetings or Blackboard discussions. The remaining session will be available for individual consultation in the lead-up to the second assignment.

The schedule of meetings and the associated readings are as follows:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 26 November | 1 Curriculum as problem-solving | Coleman 1988, 1992 (<i>Case study</i>) Allwright 2003 <i>See also:</i> Tajino and Smith 2005) |
| 3 December | 2 The learner | Guilloteaux and Dörnyei 2008 Rowland 2011 |
| 10 December | 3 The teacher | Tsui 2007 Sun 2012 |
| 17 December | 4 Language learning as performance | Bandura 1991 Nguyen et al 2012 |
| Mid-trimester break | | |
| 7 January Task 1 due | 5 Setting goals | Cumming 1986 Locke and Latham 2002 Little 2006 <i>See also:</i> Dörnyei 2003, Kornos et al 2011 |
| 14 January | 6 Learner autonomy | Gremmo and Riley 1995 Chu 2007 |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 21 January | 7 Learning opportunities | Crabbe 2007 Swain 2000 See also: Crabbe 2003, Allwright 2005. |
| 28 January | 8 Evaluation | Beretta 1990 (+Prabhu's reply) Elder 2009 |
| 4 February 20 February Task 2 due | 9 Curriculum as problem-solving: reprise | Discussion of problems selected for Assignments |

Course learning objectives (CLOs)

The course aims to provide opportunities for participants to develop the skills and knowledge to manage the complexity and effectiveness of organised language learning in specific contexts. The learning objectives for this course are listed below and are intended to encourage critical thinking, good communication and addressing real world problems in an enquiry-focused way. The course will provide standard opportunities including readings, guided discussion, feedback on assignments, or on specific questions you raise. You are expected to create and manage further opportunities, such as those outlined below.

| Learning objective <i>What you should be able to do</i> | Learning opportunities <i>What you can do to achieve the objective</i> | Assessment <i>How you demonstrate you have achieved the objective</i> |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Critically assess current and historical claims about language curriculum development in context and indicate types of evidence to support the claims (all topics). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay attention to how research questions are formulated in published research. Read relevant published material and course notes on trends in language teaching. Become practised at identifying claims in paragraphs from articles and establish whether they are empirical or evaluative in nature. Relate your own experience to various trends in language teaching. Explore ways of establishing evidence for the claims. Clarify information by: making verbal or diagrammatic summaries, raising questions in class or on Blackboard. Seek feedback from peers and tutors on your understanding. | This is a general objective and will be assessed in both assignments |
| 2. Represent the learning task in any particular context in a way that will guide teaching. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on your own language learning experiences (needs, motivation, goals, achievement) and the influence of the learning context. Read relevant published material and course notes about needs analysis, motivation and goal theory. Practise describing the learning needs of individual learners. | Assignment 1 (40%) |

3. Fully represent a curriculum problem in a specific context, identify a potential solution together with a procedure for evaluating the process and outcome of the solution (all topics).

- Read relevant published case studies of curriculum design.
- Practise analysis of goals including their specificity, relevance and measurement.
- Keep a notebook of reflections on your own curriculum, identifying important variables influencing the curriculum in action.
- Work with a framework of learning outcomes and opportunities to analyse case studies of curricular problems to identify all the dimensions and suggest possible solutions.
- Read relevant case studies of the evaluation of language curricula.

Assignment 2 (60%)

Teaching format

The course is run in two modes: on-campus and by distance. For all students, the weekly readings and notes are available through the online system, Blackboard, on <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>. For distance students, Blackboard is also the medium by which group discussions are held.

For students enrolled in the on-campus course, there will be a weekly seminar-style meeting in 24 Kelburn Parade, Room 202 on Wednesdays 4-6p.m. For students enrolled in the distance programme, there will be weekly Discussion Boards on Blackboard. These Discussion Boards are equivalent and parallel to the weekly on-campus meetings. See the Course Schedule above for further details and feel free to contact the lecturer directly by e-mail for individual meetings as needed. Skype or e-mail are available for distance students for individual consultation.

Mandatory course requirements

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50% students must:

1. participate in all of the class meetings or Blackboard discussions (by making at least one substantive contribution to the discussion)
2. complete all set work.

Workload

The total workload on this 15-point course is assumed to be 150 hours including course meetings or time logged on to Blackboard. This equates to an average of 13-14 hours a week over 11 weeks, not including the summer break. The break-down of these hours will vary from person to person and from week to week, but as a rough guide:

Reading the set articles and others you have identified: 7 hours a week

Participating in class discussions: 2 hours a week

Preparing assessed two assessed tasks (averaged): 5 hours a week

Assessment

This course is internally assessed; there is no final examination. The assessment tasks for this course are outlined below. If you have a problem with meeting the deadlines, please talk with the course lecturer as early as possible.

| Assessment items and workload per item | | % | CLO(s) | Due date |
|--|--------------------------|-----|--------|------------------|
| 1 | Assignment 1: 2000 words | 40% | 1, 2 | 7 January 2014 |
| 2 | Assignment 2: 2500 words | 60% | 1, 3 | 20 February 2014 |

Assignment 1: A learning experience (40% of final grade)

Due date: 7 January 2015

Length: 2000 words

This assignment asks you to engage in initial problem-solving by reflecting on own learning. The outcome of the task is a report which is graded. The report should be more than a narrative. It should be a critical reflection on that narrative and a conclusion about what you have learnt from the experience.

Collecting personal data in the form of a retrospective account:

1. Choose a personal experience of second language learning you have had, or are having. If second language learning experience is lacking, you can choose an equivalent experience of learning a new skill.
2. Over the period of at least a week, make retrospective notes about your learning, starting with a narrative of the context and including reflections on your sense of purpose, your attitude towards learning, any obstacles or difficulties, your strategies to deal with your learning and communication, your achievements. These diary-like entries are important for this exercise. Making them over several days enables your thoughts to develop. Aim to write 5 to 10 pages or more of reflection. They are not to be handed in but you should use extracts in your report. This is your data.
3. Once the diary is complete, identify the themes that emerge from your reflections and annotate your notes around these themes.

The report (to be handed in for assessment):

Summarise the outcome of the task above by writing a report organised under the following headings:

1. The context of learning: (brief).
2. The themes of learning: (a discussion of each of the themes that you have identified with illustrative self-quotes from your retrospective account).
3. Conclusions from the experience: (factors that contributed to more or less success, how you would manage similar learning in future, what you would need from a formal curriculum as a learner).

Assignment 2: A curriculum problem (60% of final grade)

Due date: 20 February 2015.

Length: 2500 words

The topic for this larger assignment will be established by negotiation with individual course members. An informal topic proposal of about 150 words is due on 14 January 2015. The proposal is not assessed – it is simply a way for you to get feedback and approval for the topic.

In choosing a topic, you must avoid replication of previous assignment material from this or other courses. It is useful to focus on an area of language curriculum development that relates to your past or intended experience.

You should think of this assignment as a 'real-world' curriculum problem for which you are seeking a solution. A good way to think of this is to focus on a transformation you would like to bring about. For example, you might decide to transform the quality of teaching in an institution to a high and consistent standard. This is the sort of problem that a Director of Studies has. You would discuss the context of the problem (facts about the teachers, the students, the time available for learning and teaching, attitudes etc.) and then propose an approach to addressing the problem of bringing about the transformation, and describe a procedure for evaluating whether or not that strategy had addressed the problem. Thus your assignment would typically consist of a report organised broadly as:

- the problem (or the 'transformation' to be achieved) and the context
- the proposed strategy with some specific examples
- a plan for evaluating whether or not the strategy has in fact addressed the problem.

Each section should refer to published literature to support your discussion and decisions, as appropriate.

Marking criteria

In all assignments, the assessment will recognise core qualities of critical thinking (for example, discussion of the practical, operational, meaning of terms, the evidence for any argument, the further information that might be needed to make a decision) and communication (how well do you communicate your arguments and supporting information?) and significance (how would you demonstrate that your ideas will have an impact on the context within which you are or might be working?)

Submission and return of work

Whether you are studying at a distance or on-campus, you should submit your assignments through the Blackboard (BB) system. Instructions on how to use the BB assignment tool are on the BB website. A standard cover sheet is provided at the end of this course outline that includes a helpful checklist. Every effort will be made to return the assignments within three weeks.

Penalties

In line with school policy, handing in your assignments after the due date, without prior arrangement, may affect your grade. The length requirement for each assignment should be followed. If an assignment exceeds the word limit by a substantial amount, this could lower the grade. A penalty would only ever be applied to maintain fairness - when a participant is considered to have had a considerable advantage over others.

Set texts

There is no set text for this course but there are books on curriculum development that are a useful reference (see under References in Blackboard). There are preliminary notes for each topic and a list of set readings (see the attached schedule). Both the notes and the readings will be available in pdf format on the Blackboard site under Course Notes and Course Readings.

Recommended reading

You should be proactive in exploring further readings yourself from the beginning of the course. Language Teaching is an abstracting journal that is an invaluable guide to the literature. You should also become familiar with the ERIC and LLBA databases available on-line through the library at <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/library/research/databases/index.aspx>. There are useful survey

articles in each issue of Language Teaching. Other journals that have articles relating to language learning and teaching include TESOL Quarterly, Language Teaching Research, Applied Linguistics. Note that you generally need to be logged on through the Student Portal in order to have free access to articles in e-journals at the VUW library.

Class representative

The MA programme has a student representative whose name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The representative provides a further communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

Student feedback

This course has been organised in an attempt to provide a strong 'narrative' to tie the whole course together. This narrative is one of complex problem-solving starting with learning and moving to teaching. Feedback on this overall organisation, and on the selection of readings and discussion opportunities is welcome. (Previous formal student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php)

Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure
- Victoria graduate profile: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz