

**Linguistics 891: SLA theory application in ESL practice**  
**Th 5:30-8:00**  
**Humanities Classroom Building 303**

**Instructor information:** Mila Tasseva  
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**Course Overview:**

The two mainstream approaches in the field of second language acquisition are SLA theory and ESL/EFL practice. The SLA theorists often look into what the learners can or cannot do with their second/foreign language as a starting point for research. This course will take the opposite path. We will look into how SLA theory can inform the ESL/EFL practice. The course is designed as a hands-on attempt to bring the two subfields together. We will be looking into current SLA research on the acquisition of grammar, lexicon, pragmatics, as well as internal and external factors to language acquisition and issues related to bilingualism with the sole focus on how the findings of this research can be applied in the practice of teaching. Students will be expected to provide descriptions/ideas/suggestions on the applications of theory under each topic and produce a term paper that reflects the findings of the seminar.

**Prerequisites:**

Although there are no prerequisites for this course, it is highly recommended that students have some prior knowledge and/or experience in the field of second language theory/practice.

**Required texts:**

All readings will be posted on BlackBoard.

**Course requirements:**

1) Participation/Presentations:	15%
2) Theory-to-practice responses (3, 700 words each):	30%
3) Project	
(constitutes of abstract, presentation and manuscript)	55%
10%                20%                25%	

**Course requirements:**

**Course attendance.** I expect everyone to attend class without fail. I will keep an informal record of your attendance. Please advise me in advance if you are unable to come to class for a legitimate reason (illness, family emergency, etc), either by e-mail or by phone.

**Theory-to-practice responses.** There are two goals we want to achieve with those short responses: (i) think in a structured manner of how the findings of the theory can be applied into the practice of teaching and find possibilities for future research, and (ii) do some of the bibliography review for the final project. I strongly encourage you to choose carefully the papers you read and review. It will save you lots of time and efforts if you know at least the general direction for the research questions you want to ask with your final project before you start choosing the papers for review, e.g. decide beforehand if you maybe want to investigate the acquisition of relative clauses, or the turn-taking strategies in NS-NNS conversations, or the effect of negative feedback in classroom SLA.

**Student presentations.** Those presentations are graded. The goal of those presentations is the goal of the course—find ways to integrate the detached theoretical field into the practical application. Your goal with those is twofold: first, you want to present the study that the article reports (the relevant background, the research question, the methodology, the findings, the theoretical interpretations and implications); second, and most important, how those findings affect the practice of L2 teaching. Here you should ask yourselves the general question: So what does this tell us about classroom learning? From there proceed to suggest: 1) What happens when students in a classroom acquire a particular language component?, 2) How should teaching materials, teaching styles, teaching practices adjust to reflect the findings in the article?, 3) What food for thought do we get from this for future consideration?

**Project.** A final project that incorporates actual research is always an exciting component in a graduate course. However, the nature of this course may or may not permit you to develop a full fledged research agenda for the semester. Thus, for the final project you have two options: 1) a research paper that will put to the test your expectations of how a theoretical approach can shape the practices of teaching, or 2) an extended review paper which will survey recent theoretical work on a topic of your choice and then suggest how the findings of this work may be applied into the classroom. In either case, the requirement is for a 15-20 page paper. If you have an SLA/TESOL topic that you have researched already or are interested in researching, stay with it! If you don't have a topic, start searching immediately. I will meet with each of you individually in week 4 to talk about your projects, meeting schedule to come. Projects (to include last version of abstracts and manuscripts) are due on December 15<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM or earlier, typed according to Linguistic Inquiry style. You can submit your papers in my office (HUO 315), in my mailbox (please ask the staff in the main office to time stamp your submission), or via email (make sure that your file was last saved before 5 PM).

**Late work.** The grade for late assignments will be reduced by one-half of a letter grade for each day that they are late.

**Communication.** I encourage everyone to drop by during my office hours (or any other time) for an informal chat. Preferably, that should happen in the first few weeks of the semester. I am interested in finding out more about your interests in applied linguistics

and your expectations about the course. The best and quickest method to get in touch with me is e-mail.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Dates/week</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Student work due</b>
Aug 23 (week 1)	Introduction;	
Aug 30 (week 2) Stephanie	Implicit/explicit and incidental/intentional knowledge Goldshneider & DeKeyser 2001--Stephanie Steinel, Hulstijn & Steinel 2007-Anna	
Sept 6 (week 3) Ashley	Stabilization and fossilization Lardiere 1998--Nikki Montrul 2007 (gender)--Kathryn	
Sept 13 (week 4) Nikki	Maturational constraints Slabakova 2006a (critical period)–LeAnn DeKeyser 2000--Eun Young	meet with instructor to discuss paper topic
Sept 20 (week 5) Leann	Initial state of L2A Gruter & Conradie 2007 Tasseva-Kurktchieva manuscript	Theory-to-practice response #1
Sept 27 (week 6) Kathryn	Restructuring of the grammar Slabakova 2006b (telicity)--Maya Prevost 2003--Stephanie	
Oct 4 (week 7) Anna	Transfer Lieberman, Aoshima & Phillips 2006– Eun Young Parodi, Schwartz & Clahsen 2004--Ashley	
<b>Oct 11 (week 8)</b>	<b>(no class) Fall break</b>	
Oct 18 (week 9) Maya	Final state of L2A Montrul & Slabakova 2003--Sherry Goad & White 2006--Wing	
Oct 25 (week 10) Eun Young	Acquisition of the lexicon Sunderman & Kroll 2007--Sherry Sorace 2000--Maya	Theory-to-practice response #2
Nov 1 (week 11) Sherry	L2 processing Schulz manuscript Prevost & White 2000--Ashley	
Nov 8 (week 12) Wing	Bi/Multilingualism Comeau, Genessee & Mendelson 2007--Nikki Unsworth 2007	first version of abstracts due Nov 8
Nov 15 (week 13) ?	First/Second language attrition/ maintenance Montrul 2007 (SSLA) Polinsky 2007	
<b>Nov 22 (week 14)</b>	<b>(no class) Thanksgiving recess</b>	

Nov 29 (week 15) ?	Language pragmatics Bardovi-Harlig 2002--Wing Bigelow et al. 2006	second version of abstracts due Theory-to-practice response #3
Dec 6 (week 16)	Theory into practice at a glance	Workshop w/ paper presentations on <b>Dec 10</b> (tentative date)
<b>Dec 15, 5 PM</b>	<b>final paper</b>	