I. Descriptive Information

A. Course Number and Title
EDEC 744 Language Acquisition in Learning Environments

B. Catalog Description
Theories of language acquisition and the construction of supportive language environments.

C. Course Credit
Three (3) hours

D. Prerequisites
None

E. Intended Audience
Graduate students in education or related fields

F. Instructor
As assigned

G. Class meeting dates/times:
Weekly: 2 ½ hours contact time

II. Statement of Course Goals and Objectives

A. Goals
Participants in this class will develop understandings of 2 theories of language acquisition, their research base, and their historical antecedents and will understand specific connections between those theories and the construction of supportive environments for language users/learners.

B. Objectives: Students will:
1. Articulate what is currently understood about how human beings acquire their first language in the context of other theories of language learning: behaviorist, innate/nativist, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, critical.
2. Understand what is meant by “culturally relevant practice” (the social and cultural nature of learning); articulate its grounding in language acquisition research; and demonstrate the ability to create classroom contexts that reflect those understandings.
3. Understand the legitimacy of diverse home and community language systems and reflect those understandings in the construction of learning environments.
4. Understand stages of language development and implications for language and literacy development of learners of all ages and backgrounds.
5. Recognize and identify theoretical constructs in practice by looking closely at children as they interact with adults and with other children.
6. Articulate connections between theory and practice and plan for the implementation of instructional strategies across the curriculum (interdisciplinary connections), including technology-based strategies, that derive from what is currently known about language learning.
8. Understand the legitimacy of African American English as language and
implications for those understandings in classrooms.

9. Articulate the impact of language acquisition theory on the construction of instructional environments that support diverse learners including those representing a range of second language, ethnic, and socioeconomic communities.

10. Implement and analyze various approaches for evaluating and assessing children's language in diverse language settings.

11. Understand the potential for technology to support appreciation and knowledge of multiple languages and discourse styles.

12. Develop the ability and the knowledge to be able to connect theory to practice; use growing understandings of language acquisition theory to evaluate existing programs, justify exemplary practices, and generate new practices in diverse learning environments.

13. Understand the connection between South Carolina State ELA Standards, NAEYC national standards, and support for children’s language learning in schools and child care settings.

III. Required Texts and Readings


Articles to be downloaded from Blackboard: http://blackboard.sc.edu

IV. Academic Course Requirements

A. Professionalism, Preparation, and Classroom Participation

This course is designed to allow opportunities to ask questions, contribute to class discussion, and share relevant experiences. Therefore, participation and professionalism are extremely important. Requirements for acceptable participation include prompt, timely, and consistent attendance; attentiveness; verbal contributions to small group and whole class discussions; reflection of a positive attitude about learning and class participation; and respecting and supporting the needs of others, including the Professor. Participation includes completing all assignments which facilitate the class experience. Any missed class time, including tardiness and absence, will deduct from the participation grade. Missing more than one class will incur a significant deduction in the participation grade, even if all other participation requirements are met.

A major assignment for this course is to read from current and classic readings with great care and thought. Please come to class well prepared to discuss the readings. There are many, many ideas that cannot be presented within the context of the class time period so it is ESSENTIAL
that you devote yourself to careful reading. If you are not already in the habit of engaging in professional reading each week, this is a good time to start.

B. Blackboard Discussions

Use the EDEC 744 Blackboard website to join discussions; respond to and interact with the professor and peers; and to continue, elaborate on, question, and reflect on class discussions and assigned readings. The quality of the posts is part of your grade. *It should be clear from your comments that you have read and understood the assigned reading.* To receive full credit, you must *reference readings (from this course and/or other sources). Additional guidelines are provided at the end of this syllabus.*

C. Using Technology to Explore Language Difference

During the semester, you will search the web for examples of language used in multiple ways across linguistic communities as children and adults share their lives within and beyond their communities through oral traditions, song, poetry, and so on. At an assigned point in the semester, you will send to our class, the link to the website you feel most represents an appreciation of language as we are investigating it through this course. Class members will view an assigned number of links and come to class prepared to discuss them.

D. Looking Closely at a Child (NCATE KEY ASSESSMENT)

To better understand language acquisition and related issues in education, you will use your developing knowledge to get to know one child over the course of this semester. The child should be from a cultural and/or linguistic background different from your own. Throughout the semester, you will collect data to be kept in a Child Data File. Using this information, you will then create a Family Document and a Curricular Plan in which you describe the child as a language user, countering deficit views by making visible the language resources the child brings to the classroom and outline suggested curricular structures, attitudes and dispositions that teachers might use to support this child’s success in a school or child care setting and identification of how those structures address SC ELA standards. The document should reflect understandings gained from course readings, engagements, films, and other course experiences. To conclude the project, you will present it the family as well as to the rest of the class. Specific guidelines for this assignment will be provided in class.

V. Administrative Course Requirements

Attendance is required as the university attendance policy states in the Graduate Studies Bulletin: “Students are expected to attend all regular class meetings. Unsatisfactory class attendance may be considered adequate reason for the instructor to request that the student withdraw from the course.

Students are responsible for ensuring that a study partner or friend is designated to pick up handouts in the event of absence. Students are also responsible for familiarity with all material covered during absences. This is to be accomplished in the manner deemed most effective by the student: meeting with a fellow student, sending in a tape recorder, studying a fellow
student’s notes, etc.

VI. Administrative Course Requirements

- Missing more than 10 percent of scheduled class meetings will result in a grade penalty. Each additional absence equaling 10 percent will result in a subsequent grade deduction of half of one letter grade. This includes times that you are tardy or leave class early.
- Written materials are to be prepared and presented in a professional and timely fashion.
- Late assignments will be accepted only in the case of an emergency. 3 points will be deducted for each day that the assignment is late.

VII. Evaluation and Grading

Course assignments will be evaluated by rubrics distributed in class. Each assignment will be evaluated according to the following point scale:

| Professionalism, preparation, participation | 10 points |
| Blackboard responses                       | 30 points |
| Looking Closely at a Child                 | 40 points |
| Using Technology to Explore Language Difference | 20 points |
| Total                                       | 100 points |

93-100=A  89-92=B+  85-88=B  81-84=C+  77-80=C  70-76=D

VIII. Major Topics of the Course

A. Perspectives on Language Learning:
   1. Behaviorist
   2. Nativist/Innatist
   3. Psycholinguistic
   4. Sociolinguistic
   5. Sociocultural
   6. Critical

B. The Process of the Acquiring Language

C. Language as Culturally-Specific: Cultural Biases that impede teaching and learning; culturally relevant practice; issues of social justice.

D. Implications For Diverse Learners: Implications from language acquisition theory for the construction of environments that support diverse learners including those representing a range of socioeconomic, ethnic and second language communities.

E. African American English as language, its history, structures, and related issues.

F. The relationship between language acquisition theory and culturally relevant pedagogy in practice.

G. The relationship between state and national standards and methods of supporting young children as language learners in schools and child care settings.

IX. Mode of Instruction

Reading and literature discussion
Written reflection and response
Lecture
Student presentations
X. Schedule of Class Meetings

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Language Acquisition: Historical perspectives</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Language as culturally specific</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>African American Language: structures and history</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>African American Language: translation not deficit</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>English language learning</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>English language learning</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Environments that support diverse language learners</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Environments that support diverse language learners</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Sociocultural perspectives on language learning</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Critical perspectives on language learning</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Critical perspectives on language learning</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Review and preparation for final projects</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td><strong>Last Day of Class: Presentation of Projects</strong></td>
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XI. Bibliography


