CIEE Seville, Spain

Course name: Psychology of Learning a Second Language
Course number: PSYC 3101 CSCS
Programs offering course: Liberal Arts, Advanced Liberal Arts, Business and Society and Communication, New Media and Journalism – Spanish Programs
Language of instruction: Spanish
U.S. semester credits: 3 credits
Contact hours: 45 hours
Term: Fall 2019

Course Description
This course is an introduction to the psychological aspects that influence the acquisition of a foreign language, such as on the motivational factors, personality traits, the degree of adaptation to a foreign socio-linguistic and culturally different context and other psychological factors.

Students will also acquire the tools to identify the psychological aspects that promote and sometimes impede the learning of a foreign language: anxiety, motivations, affective and cognitive factors, learning styles and strategies, etc. In addition, the student will become familiar with the most recent research in the field of Second Language Acquisition. A good understanding of these psychological factors will help students meet the challenge that learning a foreign language presents.

Depending on the availability of schools, the student will be able to intern as an assistant English teacher at primary, secondary or high school levels. This would be a good opportunity to acquire a more reliable perspective on learning a second language in a real academic context.

Learning Objectives
- To familiarize the student with the tools necessary to identify the psychological factors that facilitate and sometimes hinder the learning of a foreign language.
- To apply the knowledge students have acquired in their time in Spain so that they have a more successful educational experience. Knowing the influence of personality traits, motivations, learning styles, etc. on the acquisition of a second language and the perception of the abroad experience.
- To complete the tests and questionnaires most used internationally for psychology and second language acquisition, which will facilitate the completion of future research about this specialization or in general.

Course Prerequisites
As an introductory course, there are no specific prerequisites. A student does not have to have previously studied psychology or applied linguistics. The course requires an enthusiasm and disposition to study and complete projects at the university level. This usually guarantees success for the achievement of the course objectives.
4 semesters of college-level Spanish (or equivalent). Students need to have a GPA of at least 2.5.

**Methodology**

1. A brief oral exposition by the teacher on the subject at hand, followed by in-depth class discussion. Each theme ends with a series of practical activities for assimilation of the material.
2. Each theme will be accompanied by a text (article, essay, etc.), which will provide the basis for an activity to be completed by the student (summary, personal opinion, etc.).
3. Together with the final exam, the student will present a final journal of 3 pages (approx 1000 words) in which the student will reflect upon his/her personal Spanish learning experience in Spain. The objective is the synthesis of the material studied during the course with the student’s personal experience. The evaluation criteria are the following:
   a. Quality of content
   b. Organization and coherence
   c. Style, grammar, and presentation
4. Practical activities realized in class include:
   a. Students will present at least one article in class. The clear presentation of the fundamental ideas of the article and creativity will be valued. The presentation of the article will be accompanied by an activity that the rest of the students should complete to learn or assimilate the presented material. For this reason, the grade of this assignment will consist of two factors: presentation and activity
   b. Spanish songs will be listened to in class in order to identify words from the text (utility of the music in the acquisition of a second language)
   c. Viewing of a film about a intercultural aspect

**Assessment and Final Grade**

The evaluation will be in accordance with the policies of CIEE. CIEE classes are not graded on a curve nor is there extra credit work. The final grade will be based upon the following criteria:

- The average grade of the **two theoretical examinations** represents **40%** of the final grade.
- The correct completion of all course **activities** represents **20%** of the final grade.
- **Active class participation** will also be factored into the final grade **15%**: asking questions, reflecting, and even questioning the professor’s comments can increase the grade! (as well as Spanish level!)
- The **final Project** **15%**

**Course Requirements**

**Attendance policy**

Students are not allowed to miss class for unjustified reasons. For each unexcused absence, the participation portion of the grade will be lowered. Hence, it will be very difficult to receive a 100 in the class. Please keep this in mind. If a student misses class twice without a valid excuse (a note from a physician in the event of an illness), then the professor will automatically lower the final
grade by 5 points (on a 100-point scale) for each class missed thereafter. Students with 6 or more absences will fail the course.

Students should arrive to class on time. Arriving more than 15 minutes late for a class will count as an unexcused absence. Please note that an excused absence is one that is accompanied by a doctor’s note: signed stamped and dated. Travelling and/or travel delays are not considered valid reasons for missing class.

* Notes from a physician will only be valid and admitted by the Program Manager if the doctor confirms that the visit could not have been arranged at another time, or that the student was too ill to attend class that day.

**Academic Honesty**

Students are expected to act in accordance with their university and CIEE’s standards of conduct concerning plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Use of online translators for work in Spanish will result in an automatic failure.

**Linguistic Resource Center**

Students are encouraged to use the Writing Center for help with class activities as well as for the final essay.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1: The Multidimensionality of Learning a Second Language**

- **Readings**
  - Cómo dominar un idioma. Artículo de prensa.

**Week 2: The Mother Tongue and its acquisition**

- **Readings**
  - Do monkeys have anything interesting to say? William J. Cromie HARVARD GAZETTE ARCHIVES

**Week 3: Basic concepts in Second Language Acquisition**

- **Readings**

---

1 All readings that appear on this syllabus are not mandatory to be read. They will be chosen by the professor depending on students’ Spanish level and class pace.
Week 4: Factors that influence the learning of a second language
Readings:


Week 5: Intelligence and “Linguistic Aptitude” and their influence on the learning of a second language
- Activity:
  - The students will take the MLAT (Modern Second Language Aptitude Test) to learn their aptitude for acquiring a second language.
  - The students will take the MSCEIT (Emotional Intelligence Test) Online scoring
- Readings:
- Activity:
  - Questionnaires: STAI, Anxiety-input, output, processing information, etc.

Week 6:
- Continuation of MLAT
- Mid-Term Exam on the previous 5 topics.

Week 7: “Anxiety”. Types of anxiety and their influence on the learning of a second language
- Activity:

Week 8: “Motivation”. Types of motivation and their influence on the learning of a second language
- Readings:

Week 9: Learning “styles” and their influence on learning a second language
- Activity:
  - Completion of style tests and strategies

Readings:

Week 10: Personality traits and their influence on the learning of a second language
- Guest lecturer: Dr. Francisco Cano, Psychology Dept., University of Seville
- Readings:
  - Mc Adams (1995) What Do We Know When We Know a Person? Journal of Personality 63:3-20
- Activity: the students will take a personality test (NEOPIR) and obtain their personal profiles based on the Big Five Personality Traits.

Week 11: Models of second language learning

Week 12:
- Final Project presentations
  - The presentation consists of an explanation of the main ideas and concepts of the student’s topic, illustrated with videos, photos, or other audio-visual supports. (10 minutes). Students will receive points if the class is actively involved in the presentation and/or if the student explains their personal motivation for choosing the topic.
- Final Exam on themes 6-11

Out of Classroom Activities
As listed above.

Course Materials

Required Readings


**Recommended Readings**

**MOTIVATION AND SLA**


ADJUSTING TO A FOREIGN CONTEXT AND SLA

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES & STYLES

ANXIETY AND SLA

**SLA AND LEARNING DISABILITIES**

**PERSONALITY AND SLA**

**BRAIN COGNITION AND SLA**


**RESEARCH AND SLA**


**OTHERS**


