

Towards a Critical Analysis of Published Empirical Research – 5 Creds.

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OBJECTIVES

This course aims to guide students in the critical and constructive reading of articles in research into applied linguistics. It is an eminently practical course based on the constant reaction on the part of the student. The constructive critique is first guided, then semi-guided and finally free and effective. Therefore, it is a course especially useful for students recently graduated from a first degree, in addition to students with more experience in research.

This course especially helps the student arrive, little by little, at the necessary level for embarking on the Master's Research Dissertation, which comprises the next stage of the department's programme. This is because the present course serves as a bridge between the Master's programme and the student's own research.

Why do we need critical readers that can evaluate the research of others? The first reason is that a critical reader can discover new areas that still need exploring and so contribute enormously to the area of research as a direct result of that critical reading. Second, in this way it can help them devise their own empirical investigation projects. That is to say, this course will help to students to think about the necessary basis before beginning any practical action. It will guide them with respect to the current knowledge and get them in condition in order to compare the usefulness of the student's own ideas with that of contemporary investigations. All this with the hope that the student's own research will be original investigations, and primary, not secondary research. Neither a mere "re-hash" of the work of others. It is hoped that future research by the students of this Master's course really advances the field. The third reason is that learning to read investigation in a constructive way is strongly linked to learning to write good research. It will be better work later presented for publication and evaluation. The last reason is that to draw sense from the information that is presented to the student is an obligation, due to the impact that articles could have on the classroom and on the professions related to applied linguistics.

CONTENTS:

- 1: Towards a critical analysis of the sections of Abstracts and Introductions.
- 2: Evaluating the Methods and Procedures subdivisions.
- 3: Giving an informed opinion about the Results.
- 4: Verifying the Discussion and Conclusions sections.

EDUCATIONAL METHODS: Seminars on the specific content and bibliography. Active participation in classes, seminars, commentaries etc., about empirical articles. Task-based methodology.

EVALUATION

1. Class attendance and participation (50% of the final mark),
2. Autonomous study and Workbook homework after each class (50% of the final mark - and only in combination with the attendance and participation quality - never separately).

RECOMMENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Corder, Gregory W. & Foreman, Dale I. (2009). *Nonparametric Statistics for Non-Statisticians: A Step-by-Step Approach*. New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell.
- Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a Literature Review*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Hewitt, Elaine. (2011). *The Use of Psychomotor Activities in Teaching Children English as a Foreign Language: Empirical Research into the PEPA Method of Language Instruction*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Hewitt, Elaine & Stephenson, Jean. (2011). Replicating Phillips's MLJ study: Associations between foreign language anxiety and performance on an oral exam. *MLJ: Modern Language Journal*, Published twice: Online Version: 14 April, 2011: Wiley Online Library, ONLINE ISSN: 1540-4781. [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1540-4781/earlyview](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1540-4781/earlyview)
- Hewitt, Elaine & Felices Lago, Ángel. (2010). Academic Style and Format of Doctoral Theses: The Case of the Disappearing Discussion Chapter. *Ibérica, Journal of the European Association of Languages for Specific Purposes*, 19, spring, pp. 119-140.
- McNeil, P. (1990). *Research Methods*. London: Routledge.
- Porte, G. (2002). *Appraising Research in Second Language Learning*. (Language Learning and Language Teaching Series). New York: John Benjamins.
- Rowntree, D. (1981). *Statistics without Tears: A primer for non-mathematicians*. London: Penguin Group Ltd.
- Tuckman, B. (1994). *Conducting Educational Research*. New York: Harcourt Brace College.

