Second-language Speech: Learning and Teaching (Debra M. Hardison)

This course focuses on how learners perceive and produce speech in a second language (L2). Topics include research on age constraints in L2 speech learning, influence of the L1, training studies on the perception and production of nonnative sounds, recognition of L2 words in speech, the relationship between gesture and language, perceptions and attitudes toward accented speech, and the challenges involved in assessing comprehensibility, fluency, and accentedness.

From recent studies, we will consider a) the relationship between learners’ speaking skills (e.g., pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, and communication skills and strategies) and their communication affect, perceived competence, and amount of L2 use, b) the relationship between L2 English learners’ use of communication strategies and their proficiency, and c) the effects of the following factors on the development of oral skills in a foreign language for L1 English speakers studying abroad: cultural knowledge, interest, and adaptability; communication affect; perceived competence; and amount of L2 use. We will also review findings from eye-tracking research on the effects of task difficulty on where observers’ look on an interlocutor’s face while comprehending speech.

Additional topics include music and language learning, segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental (rhythm and intonation) elements in teaching, special instructional techniques, and applications of technology in teaching, including visual displays of pitch contours.

Evaluation criteria for the course include a) using recorded speech samples for analysis of learners’ L2 pronunciation problems and making pedagogical recommendations, and b) a term project (a research proposal or a case study involving L2 speech learning with pedagogical implications; may involve any target language), and c) presentation of the project to the class.

Technology-mediated Language Learning and Teaching (Senta Goertler)

This course introduces you to theoretical, empirical, and practical issues in technology-enhanced teaching. You will have the opportunity to experience different tools and develop activities using such tools. We will discuss empirical research and research methodological advantages and disadvantages of SLA research in CALL (computer assisted language learning). The goal of the class is to encourage you to use technology in your teaching and to provide you with tools and techniques to do so effectively. A second goal is to familiarize you with research results and research methodological issues in CALL that relate to your teaching and your general understanding of SLA. You will have the option to select one of three focus areas in the course. Depending on your focus area, your assignments will relate to teaching, research or service. In addition, you will be asked to come to class prepared, to participate actively, and to engage in online discussions. Meetings will include a discussion of the readings, presentation of new tools, and the development of new activities. This course is intended as an overview of issues related to technology-enhanced teaching and is intended to inspire you to research more in the future and give you an edge on the job market.