

CURSO	:	COMMON MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS OF LANGUAGE USAGE
TRADUCCION	:	MITOS Y CONCEPTOS ERRÓNEOS COMUNES SOBRE EL USO DEL IDIOMA
SIGLA	:	LET062I
CRÉDITOS	:	10
MÓDULOS	:	02
REQUISITOS	:	NO PREREQUISITES
DISCIPLINA	:	LINGUISTICS
PROFESOR	:	EDWARD J. GONZALEZ

I. DESCRIPTION

This course will explore a series of language myths, opinions, misconceptions and prejudices about language acquisition, use and structure with the aim of exploring, clarifying and in some cases contradicting potentially erroneous popular notions about what language is and how it works and how it is used. The course will survey linguistics literature from various sources including sociolinguistics, language acquisition, syntactic theory and bilingualism.

II. OBJECTIVES

General:

1. Critically examine a variety of popular beliefs about language (myths) and determine their origin, prevalence, appeal, and deficiencies. Upon completion of the course, students should be able to discern opinions about language from scientific facts and hypotheses, critically evaluate statements the media and fellow language users make about language use and examine their own opinions, prejudices about language in a more rigorous and objective manner.

Specific:

1. Providing students with critical thinking skills in linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis,
2. Clarifying the nature of certain inherent beliefs people possess about their native language as well as foreign languages,
3. Aid students in establishing a position about language acquisition, use and structure based on evidence and scientific methodology rather than uninformed biases, and
4. Provide a view of language that appreciates its elegant, complex, and self-regulating nature rather than a fragile system dependent on speakers' constant policing for its survival and proper functioning.

III. CONTENTS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 What is a language myth?
- 1.2 What are prescriptivism and descriptivism in linguistics?
- 1.3 How does language work and change over time?
- 1.4 Why do speakers of a language sometimes feel that some aspect of language is wrong or deficient?
- 1.5 How can language myths be approached linguistically and what can their existence tell us about how people use and view language?

2. Language Change

- 2.1 Language change – *does* it and *should* it happen?
- 2.2 Are languages in a state of decay?
- 2.3 How do languages evolve?
- 2.4 MYTH 1 The Meanings of Words Should Not be Allowed to Vary or Change
- 2.5 MYTH 3: The Media are Ruining English

- 2.6 MYTH 21 America is Ruining the English Language
- 3. Bilingualism
 - 3.1 What are the effects of bilingualism?
 - 3.2 Benefits of bilingualism
 - 3.3 Does early bilingual exposure delay language learning?
 - 3.4 Is bilingual exposure detrimental to children's cognitive functions?
- 4. Language and Logic
 - 4.1 MYTH 8: Children Can't Speak or Write Properly Any More
 - 4.2 MYTH 10: Some Languages Have No Grammar
 - 4.3 MYTH 12: Bad Grammar is Slovenly
 - 4.4 MYTH 14: Double Negatives are Illogical
 - 4.5 MYTH 16: You Shouldn't Say 'It is Me' because 'Me' is Accusative
- 5. Language Aesthetics
 - 5.1 MYTH 2: Some Languages are Just Not Good Enough
 - 5.2 MYTH 4: French is a Logical Language
 - 5.3 MYTH 7: Some Languages are Harder than Others
 - 5.4 MYTH 9: In the Appalachians They Speak like Shakespeare
 - 5.5 MYTH 11: Italian is Beautiful, German is Ugly
 - 5.6 MYTH 13: Black Children are Verbally Deprived
 - 5.7 MYTH 17: They Speak Really Bad English Down South and in New York City
 - 5.8 MYTH 18: Some Languages are Spoken More Quickly than Others
 - 5.9 MYTH 19: Aborigines Speak a Primitive Language
 - 5.10 MYTH 20: Everyone Has an Accent Except Me
- 6. Texting vs. Writing vs. Speaking
 - 6.1 MYTH 5: English Spelling is Kattastroffik
 - 6.2 Is texting hurting writing skills?
 - 6.3 How is texting like speaking?
 - 6.4 What language need does texting fulfill?
- 7. Men's vs. Women's Speech
 - 7.1 The Myth of Mars and Venus
- 8. False etymologies
 - 8.1 A brief survey of common myths involving the origins of words and expressions

IV. METHODOLOGY

- Expository and task-centred lessons.
- Workshops (Linguistic Analysis of myths and underlying social, structural mechanisms).
- Extensive reading.
- Application of Myth to a language or phenomenon not discussed in class (essay)
- Group hypermedial presentations based on myths.
- Oral discussion.

V. EVALUATION ASSESSMENT

- In-class Quiz 1 (10%)
- Take-home Quiz 1 (10%)
- In-class Quiz 2 (20%)
- Take-home Quiz 2 (20%)
- Essay & Oral Presentation (30%)
- homework/participation/attendance (10%)

Requirements:

- The passing mark for any test or exam will correspond to the 60% of achievement in any instance of evaluation.
- If students fail to appear to any of the evaluated activities, the activity will not be repeated. At the end of term, ONE test will be held provided the student presented a medical certificate from the PUC students' medical center. This certificate must be presented the very same day the student comes back to classes. The make-up test will be held on _____

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Basic

- Bauer, L., & Trudgill, P. Language Myths. London. Penguin, 1999. 208 pages.
- Cameron, Deborah The Myth of Mars and Venus. New York. Oxford, OUP, 2008. 208 pages.

Suggested

- Bryson, B. The Mother Tongue. New York. Harper Perennials, 2001. 272 pages.
- Crystal, D. How Language Works. New York. The Overlook Press, 2006. 512 pages.
- Fromkin, V., Hyams, N., Rodman, R. An Introduction to Language, 7th edition. Boston. Wadsworth, 2003. 620 pages.
- McWhorter, J. Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue. New York. Gotham Books, 2009. 256 pages.
- McWhorter, J. What Language Is. New York. Gotham Books, 2011. 240 pages.
- Pinker, S. The Language Instinct. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 1994. 576 pages.

Web pages

- <http://languageawareness-camilla.jouwweb.nl/summaries-language-myths>
<http://wals.info/>