First and Second Language Acquisition

Given the increasing number of students for whom English is not their first language and the impact of language acquisition on the ability of students to benefit from classroom learning opportunities, potential teachers need a solid understanding of language acquisition and its impact on learning. The primary focus of this class is on language and its acquisition, with a secondary emphasis on a critique of major approaches used in public schools to support students in learning English.  Course content includes:

* the nature of language including sound systems, syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics.
* stages of acquisition in first and second language with a comparison of similarities and differences
* approaches to the study of second language acquisition – psychological, linguistic, and psycholinguistic
* general implications for public school teachers working with students for whom English is not the first language, including a critique of the major models employed for helping non-English speakers acquire English
* non-language factors that influence acquisition (e.g. personality factors, motivation, and socio-cultural norms and expectations).

Possible program objectives - Students will be able to:

* describe the processes, principles, and factors involved in first and second language acquisition
* describe similarities and differences in the acquisition of the first and the second language
* state key factors that influence and affect learning a first and second language
* explain some of the major approaches used in public schools to support the acquisition of English and summarize critiques of those approaches
* discuss implications for the public school teacher in her/his development of learning experiences that would include students at varying stages of English acquisition