The Story of English

IEEL011 5 credit module (equivalent to 2.5 ECTS)

1. Module Leader

Tim Allen

Biography. Tim has worked on a wide range of development and education projects in Africa (including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Mozambique), Europe (including Portugal and Albania), Asia (Vietnam) and America (the Peruvian Amazon). He has also published translations from various languages, including Ho Chi Minh’s Prison Diaries and songs and poetry from Mexico and Peru.

2. Module Description

The Story of English: Where does English come from and where is it heading? presents a history of the English language, a consideration of its current status and a look at where it may be heading for the rest of the 21st century and beyond.

3. Module Aims

This module aims to:

- Develop students’ confidence in understanding, discussing and communicating complex ideas, both in written and spoken language.
- Improve students’ skills in research, collaborative learning and in preparing and delivering a group presentation.
- Introduce students to history of the English language and its situation in the world today.

4. Content

The following topics will be considered on the module:

- The early history of the language, tracing its origins in the Angle and Saxon dialects of the early middle ages and the impact of Norman French following the Battle of Hastings
- An examination of scouse, which is the dialect of English spoken in Liverpool today
- A look at the Celtic languages spoken in and around the British Isles
- A comparison of UK and US varieties of English, alongside other varieties from around the world (including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India and Canada)
- An introduction to the various writing systems used for recording languages – going beyond the “alphabet”
- An exploration of where English is today, with some predictions about how it might develop over the next century

5. Module structure

The module will be delivered over a three-week period in six two hour sessions (four hours per week, total 12 hours contact time).

Each session will take the form of an interactive seminar or workshop, supported by PowerPoint slides. The tutor will provide an initial input and students will be
able to ask questions and to make contributions, based on their own knowledge of English and any other languages they may know.

In addition, it is expected that students will spend 38 study hours outside of the classroom contact hours on activities including assigned reading, optional reading of areas of personal interest, homework tasks, web research and preparation for assessment.

6. Teaching methods

The teaching approach will include the following:
- Taught sessions
- Preparation work
- Small group working
- Group discussions
- Presentations
- Online learning
- Workshops

7. Assessment:

Assessment will be by:
- Group presentation (worth 25% of the overall mark)
- Written essay/reflection of 750-850 words (worth 75% of the overall mark)

Standard University policies apply with regard to late submission of assessments. There is no re-assessment opportunity.

8. Course structure:

The Indicative schedule is as follows:

**Session One:**
*1066 and all that*
The opening session looks at the origins of English, especially in terms of the movements of Vikings, Angles, Saxons and Jutes in the early Middle Ages. We then look at how the impact of Norman French on those dialects created the basis for the language we speak today.

**Session Two:**
*Dead Boss*
This session looks at the variety of English spoken in Liverpool today (usually called “scouse”) including the powerful impact of Ireland’s Great Hunger on the spoken language of the city. We also examine some of the popular myths about scouse, and how the speech of the Beatles and of present day footballers allows us to see the differences with urban speech over a relatively short period of time.

**Session Three:**
*Everyone knows the Irish word for “water”*
“Britain” is a Celtic (not an Anglo-Saxon) word, and recent DNA evidence shows that the descendants of Celts are still strongly represented throughout the British Isles, including England. This session looks at how Gaelic and British languages have developed in these islands.

**Session Four:**
*Caddywampus and Kitty Corner*
This session looks at the many different varieties of English spoken around the world today, particularly in the US and the UK, but also further afield in Australia, Africa, Canada and elsewhere. There will be some discussion also of pidgin, expanded pidgin and creole languages.

**Session Five:**
*Abjads and Abugidas; hashtag smiley face.*
This session is in two parts. First we look at the various writing systems that have been used down the ages for recording human language, from the earliest known examples of written language to the various scripts used around the world today. The second part looks at the impact that technology is having on written language in the 21st century, and allows us to make some predictions about what might happen to English in the future.

**Session Six:**
*Group Presentations*
The final session allows the students to demonstrate what they have learned through their own research into an aspect of language(s) over the past three weeks.

9. **Learning outcomes**

On completion of this module, students will be able to:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcome</th>
<th>Assessment component which assesses this learning outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better understand and communicate complex ideas in written and spoken language</td>
<td>Written essay/reflection</td>
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<td>Group presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research a topic and work collaboratively to produce a written essay/reflection</td>
<td>Written essay/reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>and a group presentation</td>
<td>Group presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate an understanding of how the English language has developed and of</td>
<td>Written essay/reflection</td>
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<td>where it is heading</td>
<td>Group presentation</td>
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**10. Skills**
Key skills that will be developed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>How this skill is developed</th>
<th>Mode of assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Group discussions, activities and tasks in class</td>
<td>Group presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Orally in group discussions, activities and tasks in class, in writing by production of assessed assignment</td>
<td>Group presentation and written essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Online and through personal reading</td>
<td>Group presentation and written essay</td>
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11. Books, ebooks and websites:

The University Website at www.liv.ac.uk/library provides access to many relevant books and electronic books, as well as academic journals and databases.

Core Reading


It will not be necessary to have read all of the above texts before taking part in the course, but all three texts can help point students in the direction of a piece of research they might like to undertake for the final essay and presentation.

Students may also like to consider researching the histories of any other languages that they speak.