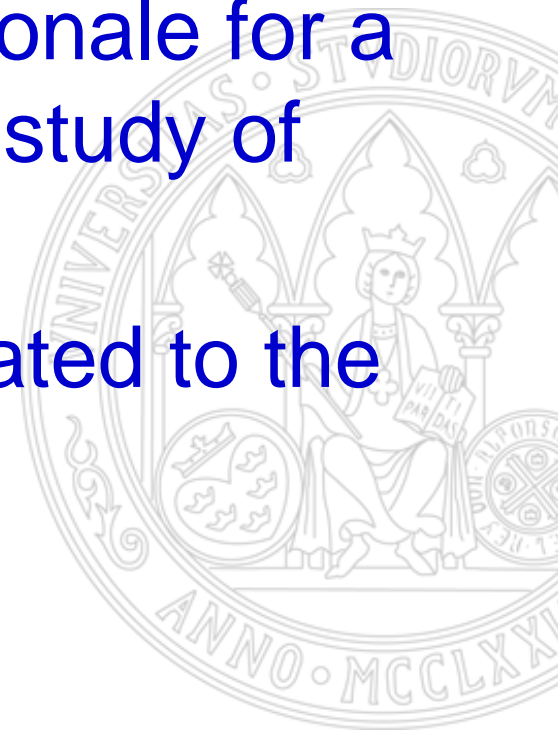# BLOCK 1. Introduction

Unit 1.1.
The rationale behind this course:
## Why engaging in a diachronic study of language teaching methods

Outline

1. Objectives of this unit

2. What this course is about

3. Rationale for this course or rationale for a critical diachronic-comparative study of methods

4. Notes on basic terminology related to the field covered by this course

1. Objectives of this unit

To gain awareness of the importance and usefulness of carrying out a critical diachronic-comparative analysis of the methods used in teaching foreign languages throughout history, from the Sumerians in the 5th millennium BC to the present day.
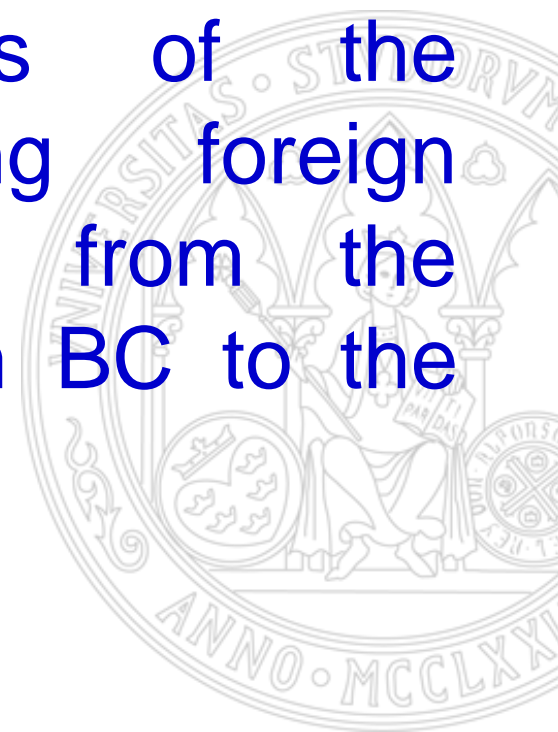
2. What this course is about

This course is aimed at presenting a diachronic critical comparative overview of foreign language teaching methods addressed to adults and young adults, especially applied to English. The period studied covers 24 centuries: from the initial testimonies available in language teaching, the Sumerians in the 5th millennium BC, until the 21st century.

2. What this course is about

While the study will be brief until the 19th century, from this century onwards the main methods will be analysed in more detail. The explanation of the different methods will cover both the theoretical and practical implications of each method in English Language Teaching, and will always be accompanied by its practical application to real working samples –audiovisual classes and/or written materials. Also, the relevance and influence of each method in English Language Teaching in general and in contemporary methodology in particular will be addressed.

2. What this course is about

- Many authors state that the 20th century was revolutionary for the language teaching field, when it gained the status of a profession (Brown, 2007; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2001, etc.) thanks to the work of many applied linguists who drew on the fields of linguistics, psychology and pedagogy to devise new methods based on sound theoretical principles.

- However, the issue of how to best teach foreig languages has always been present throughout history. This is accounted for by the predominant presence of bilingualism and multilingualism in the world not only nowadays but also in the past. From Latin 500 years ago to English today, people have always needed to master "linguas francas" and other foreign languages for various reasons: commerce and business, education, personal reasons or even for pleasure.

2. What this course is about

✓ Moreover, we can affirm without any doubt that foreign language teaching will continue to be a crucial field in today's society, both from practioners' and researchers' perspectives, given that

The future belongs to multilinguals. They are an important part of the linguistic diversity which is necessary if the planet is to have a future.

(Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002: 17)

✓ Regardless of the impetus experienced in language teaching in the 20th century, we should not forget what is demonstrated by excellent historical studies of language teaching methodology such as, for example, Titone (1968), Kelly (1969), Howatt (1984, 2004) for English, and Sánchez (1992), for Spanish:

Nobody really knows what is new or old in present-day modern language teaching procedures. There has been a vague feeling that modern experts have spent their time in discovering what other men [sic] have forgotten.

(Kelly, 1969: ix)

✓ **How to best teach foreign languages has always been a concern throughout history.**

2. What this course is about

✓ This course, then, is about a diachronic study of methods addressed to (young) adults. As Celce-Murcia (2001: 3) claims, "such knowledge will give some healthy perspective in evaluating the so-called innovations or new approaches to methodology that will continue to emerge over time".

Section 3

✓ Consequently, this course is *not* about the latest and new (but not necessarily original) trends in foreign language methodology, nor does it intend to be a recycling or updating course to brush up one's knowledge in this field. Such courses can be taken at a postgraduate level, once solid knowledge of the history of language teaching methods has been attained.

1, 2

3. Rationale for this course and for a critical diachronic-comparative study of methods

*I firmly believe that in order to undertake some sound research on a specific aspect of foreign language methodology, a historical study of the subject must be firstly carried out. Indeed, **the critical examination and understanding of earlier procedures** does not only **allow for a better understanding of these.** It inevitably results in a **much more enlightened perception of both current methodological trends and attitudes towards old routines.** (For example, in the case of sequencing, this almost unattended feature in contemporary foreign language methodology research may be a valuable parameter to untangle the present scholarly disenchantment for Audiolingualism, Situational Language Teaching and the Direct Method, just to name one practical application). On the basis of these two pieces of information, historical comparative studies may well act as a trigger for future research in turn.*

(Criado, 2005: 2. Our highlighting)

3. Rationale for this course and for a critical diachronic-comparative study of methods

A diachronic critical-comparative study of methods will allow you

1) To learn about the methods used in the past and understand their evolution throughout history.

2) To understand the controversies and major issues or dilemmas that have characterised the history of Foreign Language Teaching.

3) To recognise the distinctive characteristics of current language teaching methods and their similarities and differences with previous methods.

4) To learn about the pros and cons of past methods in order to tackle current methodological problems with a founded critical perspective.

If you decide to become EFL teachers, this course will hopefully enable you to make many *informed* decisions about your teaching and be sufficiently critical with certain propaganda.

3. Rationale for this course and for a critical diachronic-comparative study of methods

What do you think about the two following advertisements for learning English?

Aprende inglés en tres meses

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyUcNQsLPu0

Pueblo inglés

http://www.morethanenglish.com/anglos/aim-objectives.asp

- *Pueblo Inglés translates literally as English village but this merely sums up what the program is about. We take beautiful locations and flood them full of the English language. The program was designed to be, and has evolved into being, the quickest and most effective way for students to improve their English listening, understanding and conversational proficiency.*

- *Native English speakers, our native volunteers or "Anglos" as we call them, come from around the globe to help this intense immersion program achieve the following objectives:*

3. Rationale for this course and for a critical diachronic-comparative study of methods

Pueblo inglés

http://www.morethanenglish.com/anglos/aim-objectives.asp

- *To expose the students to the personal, raw and authentic styles of English spoken by native speakers. This will improve real life effectiveness as opposed to class room proficiency.*

- *To train their ears to detect and distinguish different sounds.*

- *To offer a supportive environment. Fundamental to building their confidence is showing them that despite numerous slip-ups they can still intelligibly express themselves in English.*

- *To force them to stop translating mentally and hence remove a long lasting and restrictive bad habits. On our programs there is no time to translate therefore thinking in English is pushed to the forefront.*

- *To prove to them that being effective with the English language does not necessarily revolve around a perfect mastery of grammar nor a broad spectrum of vocabulary, even though these are welcomed secondary effects.*

3. Rationale for this course and for a critical diachronic-comparative study of methods

Pueblo inglés
(http://www.puebloingles.com/pages.asp?name=filosofia)

UN ENFOQUE ÚNICO PARA APRENDER INGLÉS

Los conceptos básicos del inglés se consiguen durante el periodo educativo y con años de clases de gramática, pero la teoría no es válida si no se pone en práctica. El reto de todos los que intentan dominar otro idioma distinto del materno es siempre el mismo: hablar con nativos, en este caso angloparlantes, de manera continuada y llegar a sumergirse por completo en el inglés.

Cualquier alumno que haya realizado un curso de inglés en el extranjero, Inglaterra, Irlanda o Estados Unidos, sabe que va a compartir gran parte de su periodo lectivo y horas sociales con alumnos de otras nacionalidades que también están ahí para aprender inglés. Resulta que un día completo en otro país se reduce en 30 minutos de conversación con un nativo.

En Pueblo Inglés, los alumnos practican inglés durante más de 15 horas al día. La sencilla fórmula de Pueblo Inglés es una de las claves de su éxito: hacer convivir durante 8 días a unos 20 angloparlantes llegados de todo el mundo con otras tantas personas interesadas en hablar y darle un empujón a su inglés.

3. Rationale for this course and for a critical diachronic-comparative study of methods

Pueblo inglés (http://www.puebloingles.com/pages.asp?name=filosofia)

UN LUGAR PARA EL ENCUENTRO

***Alumnos:** Los alumnos españoles tienen distintas edades y profesiones y vienen de todas las Comunidades de España. Para poder asistir a los cursos de adultos es necesario tener, al menos, 18 años, y para los programas específicos de jóvenes, en verano, entre 14 y 17 años. Hace falta un nivel mínimo de inglés, intermedio-bajo, para poder asistir al programa, porque es justo donde el alumno se siente estancado y necesita enfrentarse al inglés fuera del aula. Todos aquellos que quieran participar deberán realizar una breve entrevista telefónica para valorar su nivel de inglés.*

***Angloparlantes:** No son profesores de inglés, son nativos de habla inglesa con inquietudes por conocer tanto a las personas como las costumbres españolas. A través de un sistema riguroso de selección, elegimos a gente de diferentes profesiones, edades y de todos los países del mundo anglosajón: Estados Unidos, Canadá, Irlanda, Inglaterra, Escocia, Australia, Nueva Zelanda y Sudáfrica con el fin de ofrecer una variedad de acentos y temas de conversación. Además, les pedimos dos cosas: que no hablen castellano y que os obliguen a hablar en inglés.*

***Nuestro Staff:** Dos personas de nuestro equipo acompañan al grupo durante los 8 días. El objetivo del Director de Programa es hacer sentir a los participantes como en casa y cuidarlos para que todo salga a la perfección. El "Maestro de Ceremonias" se encarga de la parte lúdica del programa. Ofrece un cursillo de técnicas de presentación, organiza las actividades de grupo y anima a los alumnos a que formen parte de alguna representación teatral.*

4. Notes on basic terminology related to the field covered by this course

TEFL:

Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Less commonly used than TESL, or TESOL (Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 590).

TESL:

Teaching English as a Second Language

What are the characteristics of FL contexts as opposed to SL contexts? Can you give any examples of both contexts?

TESOL:

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. An umbrella term which covers both TEFL and TESL. It also stands for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, the US-based organisation founded in 1966 (Howatt, 2004: xvii; Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 591).

ELT:

English Language Teaching. The British usage of TESOL (Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 591), coinciding with the appearance in 1946 of the British Council's journal with the same title (Howatt, 2004: xvii).

4. Notes on basic terminology related to the field covered by this course

- The contents of this course mainly deal with **foreign language teaching methodology applied to English**. In order to refer to foreign language teaching in general without any reference to a specific language we will mostly use "language teaching" instead of "foreign language teaching" (FLT).

- The acronym ELT will be frequently used too, as well as EFL (English as a Foreign Language).

- We are aware of other acronyms becoming more and more popular, such as ELF and especially EIL.

- However, we will use EFL for the sake of shortness, as we do not think that the term evokes any political connotation in Spain as opposed to the British and the USA contexts (immigration and colonialism issues).

Other key terms in relation to the method *concept of language teaching are included in Unit 1.2.*