Research in Progress

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BAAL/CUP seminars 2012

Adult ESOL in multilingual Britain

University of Leeds, Friday 13 July 2012

The purpose of this BAAL/CUP seminar was to bring together researchers, practitioners and policy-makers working in English Language Education for adult migrants in England. The aim was to encourage mutual understanding of their respective perspectives on English Language Learning and Teaching for adult migrants in superdiverse multilingual contexts.

The time was ripe for such a seminar, as the linguistic, political and pedagogic contexts of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) are changing fast. Language and communication in urban Britain are suffused with the multilingualism that comes with globalisation. On the level of national policy, recent responses to diversity have been contentious: the imposition of language tests for migrants particularly so. ESOL practitioners are faced with the twin challenges of gaining deeper understanding of language use in today's Britain, at the same time as incorporating into their practice – or resisting – the latest policy moves. Hence the desirability of gathering together ESOL practitioners, local policy-makers and academic researchers for a focused discussion about the intersection of their concerns.

The participants came from practice, research and policy backgrounds:

- researchers and postgraduate students working in areas relating to language, citizenship and migration;
- local government officials responsible for the coordination of ESOL provision;
- ESOL teachers;
- representatives and managers from ESOL providers in the FE and voluntary sectors.

The main activities were structured around five presentation/workshops, a group discussion session and, at the end of the day, a plenary discussion.

First, researchers working on language and migration began the day by sharing current understandings of language use in superdiverse urban contexts. Mike Baynham and John Callaghan (both University of Leeds) began with their presentation *Multilingual Landscapes: ESOL and ESOL learners outside the classroom*. Mike Baynham suggested that research into language learning has typically been insulated from the multilingual domains and contexts of everyday life. John Callaghan described and illustrated with photographic and video data

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what happens when researchers follow ESOL learners outside the classroom and into their daily lives.

Angela Creese (University of Birmingham), on *Translanguaging in pedagogy*, explained how, in educational settings, multilingual speakers are often required to keep their languages separate, yet beyond the classroom they are more likely to 'translanguage', using linguistic resources flexibly to make meaning. Her research has taken place mainly in complementary schools, and the discussion extended to how best to incorporate into ESOL pedagogy the complex linguistic repertoires of contemporary students.

James Simpson (University of Leeds) then discussed ESOL practice at neighbourhood and city-wide level, locating the discussion in a description of recent policy on language and migration in the UK, and drawing on findings from his recent study of ESOL provision in Harehills, Leeds. He focused on the importance of the coordination of ESOL at a local level.

Before lunch, the participants discussed in small groups the themes that had arisen so far:

- How can teachers involve students as co-researchers on the communication practices of their daily lives?
- How can student bilingualism be used in teaching and learning?
- What might a curriculum predicated on translanguaging look like?
- Should the classroom reflect the realities of students' lives outside of the classroom?
- What are the benefits of coordinating adult English language classes at a local (e.g. city) level?
- What challenges are inherent in coordination at that level, and how might they be overcome?

After lunch there were two practice-oriented workshops, the first focusing on a participatory pedagogy based on Freirean principles, and the second examining ways in which teachers and students can 'bring the outside in' using digital technologies.

Becky Winstanley (Tower Hamlets College) and Melanie Cooke (King's College London), in their workshop *Participatory approaches to ESOL*, explained how participatory approaches critically explore the shared concerns, issues and resources that learners bring along to the classroom. They drew on observations from a recent action research project at Tower Hamlets College, London, which looked at the impact of participatory approaches on traditional ESOL teaching and learning.

The final workshop was led by Richard Gresswell (University of Leeds), on *Class blogging with young adult ESOL learners*. Richard examined a class blog project with young adult ESOL learners at a further education college in the UK. Exploring the affordances of blogging, he argued that blog media can be used in the ESOL classroom in ways that are congruent with the lives of the learners.

The day ended with a plenary discussion which revolved around the central question: *What might a curriculum predicated on translanguaging look like?*

One immediate and welcome outcome was the instigation of a follow-up event which took place in Leeds in September 2012 to discuss the coordination of ESOL classes in Leeds beyond the mainstream, i.e. in the voluntary and community sectors.

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Papers relating to the presentations are available on the seminar website, www.education.leeds.ac.uk/about/events/adult-esol-in-multilingual-britain

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Language and social media: New challenges for research and teaching in applied linguistics

University of Leicester, 26–27 April 2012

The seminar took place at the Beyond Distance Research Alliance, University of Leicester, and was coordinated by Ruth Page. Thirty-four people attended in person, and around 35 more attended remotely via Adobe Connect. Delegates came from the USA, Poland, Germany, Austria, Spain and the United Kingdom, while remote attenders included delegates from Japan, Iraq, Canada, North America, Italy and Australia as well as other locations in the United Kingdom.

Introduction

The objectives of the seminar were:

1. To bring together scholars whose research examines the language of social media texts.
2. To evaluate the challenges that social media poses for traditional methodologies and concepts used in applied linguistics.
3. To explore the potential of social media as a resource for teaching in applied linguistics.

Over the last decade, social media genres such as blogs, wikis and social network sites have become an object of study across a wide range of subfields in applied linguistics (including Critical Discourse Analysis, corpus linguistics, stylistics, sociolinguistics, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), literacy and multilingualism). The texts produced in social media provide an opportunity to rethink key terms central to the study of language (such as CONTEXT, INTERACTION, VARIETY, LANGUAGE and COMMUNITY). Likewise, the rapidly evolving, multimodal, intertextual and ephemeral characteristics of social media challenge the extent to which traditional research methodologies can be applied to the study of 'online'

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