BAAL/CUP seminars 2006

Research perspectives on listening in L1 and L2 education

University of Warwick, UK, 12–13 May 2006

The aim of this two-day seminar was to bring together researchers working on listening in different areas of education and to form networks for future research projects. This report gratefully acknowledges the input of our seminar co-organisers Richard Badger and Goodith White, of the School of Education, University of Leeds. There were fourteen contributions: three one-hour keynote talks and eleven half-hour participatory sessions. The seminar also featured a poster display and demonstrations of interactive materials for developing listening skills in educational settings, and a final panel to plan ahead for future research. Two contributors received bursaries from BAAL/CUP funds to attend the seminar: Jeremy Cross of the University of Melbourne, and Alaa Mohamed al-Musaali of Sultan Qaboos University, Oman.

The keynote speakers were Gillian Brown (University of Cambridge), John Field (University of Reading) and Tony Lynch (University of Edinburgh). All three identified strategies for improving listening success but considered 'listening' from different perspectives, with reference to different populations of learners. Gillian Brown was concerned with listeners for whom English was an L1. She suggested that these listeners are primed to pay particular attention to nominals, notably those which are arguments of the verb, and argued that although this was sometimes an adequate listening strategy, it could lead to failures of understanding, especially when listening to speech delivered at high speed and containing dense and/or complex information.

John Field concentrated on second language listening and reported on a large-scale study of the listening behaviour of a group of Arabic speakers attending a British university. These listeners were found to rely heavily on word recognition rather than schematic information; overall they proved better-able to reproduce lexical terms, and recover propositional information, than to recognise underlying argument structure. Like the L1 learners described by Gillian Brown, these L2 listeners often seemed content to accept unsubstantiated meaning representations, rather than test these assumptions against evidence in the text.

Whereas Gillian Brown and John Field gathered their data in controlled, experimental environments, Tony Lynch explored the behaviour of international students who were seeking opportunities to develop their listening skills in their own free time. He argued in favour of listening within two-way interaction, rather than simply listening in to other people's speech events.

Some of the speakers were particularly concerned with the listening development of learners of English as a second, as opposed to foreign, language. Sheena Gardner (University of Warwick) examined a mainly EAL (English as an Additional Language) environment, focussing on the listening demands of the final, plenary stage of the literacy hour (a literacy-focussed daily lesson in all UK primary schools), and how teachers encourage primary school children to engage in active listening when other children hold the floor. Dawn Daley (Loughborough College) evaluated an intensive ESOL (English as a Second Language) listening programme. Her findings suggested that there was a need to teach microskills overtly and also that students benefitted from work which raised their phonological awareness. Goodith White and James Simpson (University of Leeds) were interested in listening in two-way interaction, noting that this is not well-catered for in the new Standard National Curriculum for ESOL. Some of the points raised in these sessions accorded with the observations of the plenary speakers, for example the importance of phonology in listening skills development, as discussed by John Field, and the benefits of involvement in two-way interaction, as mentioned by Tony Lynch.

The role of interaction in conjunction with the use of technology was considered by John Roberts (CELTE, University of Warwick), who discussed his experience piloting long-distance conversations between a native speaker and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners, and Jeremy Cross, who presented his work on EFL learners' dyadic interactions while listening to TV news broadcasts. A rather different approach to the use of technology was taken by Myriam Pereiro and Alex Boulton (CRAPEL, Université Nancy2), who talked about learners using DVD-ROMs and Internet sites to develop listening strategies in a variety of European languages.

Other papers examined the problems and strategies of university students listening in English. Alaa Mohamed al-Musaali evaluated the effectiveness of Omani students' note-taking methods, while Richard Badger (University of Leeds) focussed on the effect of Powerpoint and other presentation devices on listening success. Richard Pemberton (University of Nottingham) addressed word recognition issues, showing how, in their transcriptions and self-reports, his Hong Kong subjects revealed that they had difficulty recognising many very common English words, even at relatively slow speech rates. Almut Koester, Jeanette Littlemore (both of the University of Birmingham) and Graham Low (University of York) took a more text-based approach, considering the use of figurative language in lecture transcripts and discussing how this might affect international students' comprehension. One further paper, by Suzanne Graham and Denise

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Santos (University of Reading), examined research methodology issues, concerning the use of self-reporting in the identification of learner strategies.

The seminar was welcomed by all participants as a rare opportunity to discuss key issues and share methodologies for investigating the role which listening plays in learning.

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Language, migration and the re-theorization of sociolinguistic space: Towards a research agenda for applied linguistics

University of Leeds, UK, 15–16 June 2006

This seminar was hosted by the Centre for Language Education Research (CLER) at the University of Leeds' School of Education. The organizers were Mike Baynham (University of Leeds), Stef Slembrouck (University of Ghent) and Jim Collins (State University of New York at Albany). It was the first activity of the newly-created AILA Language and Migration Research Network, convened by Mike Baynham and Stef Slembrouck, whose objectives are as follows:

(i) to bring together scholars in applied linguistics and related disciplines to explore new theoretical perspectives on language and space, in relation to migration and diaspora;
(ii) through on-line and face-to-face means to articulate an agenda for applied linguistic research in multilingual settings, sensitive to the material and cultural flows and hierarchies characteristic of globalization.

The rationale of the Leeds seminar was to engage with pervasive phenomena of migration and diaspora in the context of globalization and population flows and to explore the consequences for applied linguistic theory of the now widespread de-centring of powerful conceptualizations of settled space and place. This is seen as a central rather than a peripheral issue, posing a number of challenges to existing accounts in sociolinguistic theory – for instance, rendering problematic modernist linguistic notions such as 'the speech community'. In this seminar we set out to explore the implications of a more dynamic and reflexive conceptualization of space, spatial occupation, and scale as a theoretical framework for re-imagining key applied linguistic concerns such as language socialization, language education, interpreting and translation, and institutional service encounters in multilingual contexts. To engage with these issues we drew on theoretical frameworks from social and cultural geography, linguistic anthropology, metaphor and narrative studies, the challenge being to develop a framework for understanding applied linguistic concerns which have typically been addressed in rather piecemeal ways.

We asked our invited participants and those who submitted abstracts to respond to the following questions: What are the theoretical tools for engaging with the pervasive spatialization of language practices and the discursive construction of space? How are spatial metaphors built into our linguistic theories in taken-for-granted ways? How can they be unpacked and rearticulated in more dynamic ways which shed light on some of the key social processes in the present era? How can we develop an applied linguistics agenda in areas such as interpreting and translation studies, language education and institutional encounters which is sensitive to and informed by these 'new' understandings of language and space?

Invited keynote speakers at the seminar were Anna de Fina of Georgetown University, who spoke on the move 'From space to spatialization in narrative studies', Joan Pujolar of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, who spoke on 'Immigration in Catalonia: Marking territory through language', and Gill Valentine. We were keen in the seminar to open a dialogue with cultural geography, and the cultural geographer Gill Valentine of the University of Leeds presented a paper, jointly with Deborah Sporton (University of Sheffield), reporting on their research with Somali refugee and asylum seeker children funded as part of the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council, based in the UK) Identities programme, their work demonstrating many interesting points of connection with applied linguistic concerns, which were taken up in the seminar. These invited contributions along those submitted in response to our call for abstracts produced a lively seminar with international contributions from Spain, Germany, Belgium and the USA. Gabi Budach (University of Frankfurt) talked about identities of *canadianité* and *francité* and the ways in which they are reshaped by transnational migration and the circulation of Canadian products in global economic exchanges. Olga Kozłowska and Aleksandra Galasińska (University of Wolverhampton) spoke of the changing concept of living space among Polish post-communist immigrants to the United Kingdom. Drawing on the results of field-work conducted with African migrant musicians in France, as part of the EU framework project Changing City Spaces, Ulrike Meinhof (University of Southampton) analysed transnational flows, networks and 'transcultural capital'. Her paper provided conceptual and methodological reflections on researching migrant networks through linguistic ethnography. Jim Collins and Stef Slembrouck used Goffman's participation framework as a starting point in engaging with the notion of scale. Drawing on fieldwork in the USA and Belgium, they analysed multilingual language hierarchies of interaction in situations of migration-based

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multilingual contact in domestic, institutional and civic settings.

Sadly, Cecile Vigouroux (Simon Fraser University) was not able to attend as planned and Jan Blommaert (Institute of Education London) was unavoidably absent, but his paper on sociolinguistic scales was read in his absence and was part of the general discussion. Abstracts for the seminar are posted on the CLER website at http://www.education.leeds.ac.uk/research/language.

The Leeds seminar was the beginning of a conversation that will hopefully be taken forward by the AILA Language and Migration ReN. We are grateful to the British Association for Applied Linguistics and Cambridge University Press for their support. A second meeting was held at the Sociolinguistics Symposium in Limerick in July. Further meetings are planned in 2007 and 2008, including a symposium at the AILA Congress in Essen.

If you are interested in finding out more about Language and Migration Research Network activities, contact either Mike.Baynham@education.leeds.ac.uk or Stef.Slembrouck@ugent.be, or visit the Language and Migration Research Network website on http://www.personal.leeds.ac.uk/~extcmh/ReNLM/index.htm.

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