



LP3 VOLUME 4 APRIL 2014

*THE BULLETIN OF RESEARCH, TEACHING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY
FROM THE SUSSEX CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX, UK*

Developing employability skills through tandem projects in foreign language learning

**Veronica Colwell, University of León, Spain (ULE) and Silvia Taylor,
University of Sussex**

One tried and tested, small-scale, international project aimed at developing the employability skills of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) for professional purposes at undergraduate level is the job application process (Colwell 2013). The project sets out to encourage and motivate learners to rise to the challenge of taking important qualitative steps forward in their target language (TL) development. Teamwork forms an integral part of the project design, as does the integration of all language skills and sub-skills. Theoretical input, critical inspection and solutions are provided from other team members. Students are encouraged to work collaboratively and cooperatively to learn from others within virtual and real teams and emphasis is placed on the development of: i) existential competence; ii) intercultural awareness; iii) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. The project culminates in synchronous communication via video conference which requires use of the TL in a formal scenario with peers abroad who meet online for the first time.

An important spin-off from this on-going project has resulted in a new slant in the project design. Whereas hitherto the project work (with EFL students in Spain, Poland and China) has involved the use of English as a *lingua franca*, this time a tandem learning approach is used wherein learner groups of two languages, EFL at ULE, and Spanish as a foreign language (ELE) at US, are interviewed in the TL by teams of three (mostly) mother tongue (L1) peer interviewers. In their endeavours to include stimulating projects that include

relevant communication and language learning tasks and activities, such a tandem approach could be incorporated by language centres in higher education in course design for a wide range of languages. Results reveal that development in competences (individual, communicative and key) is promoted through such collaborative projects that engage learners in consciousness-raising activities and cooperative team-work with peers abroad.

Objectives for the project include the development of students know-how and ability to: (i) write effective job advertisements, CVs, letters of application and formal e-mails in the TL; (ii) anticipate and answer questions asked by job interviewers; (iii) present themselves — talk about their strengths and weaknesses, experience and future plans; (iv) interact in formal settings, paying attention to politeness, requesting and providing clarification; (v) cooperate with peers, work together as a team; (vi) cooperate in peer assessment and engage in self-assessment. One added value of the ULE - US tandem approach was particularly evident during the interviews when spoken interaction not only required the negotiation of meaning but also involved mediation in terms of (re)processing for the members of teams of interviewers who worked together to resolve difficulties in interpretation. Feedback from participants suggests that this aspect was perceived as novel, engaging and enlightening for the language learners on a number of counts. Results also suggest that bringing such learner groups together in tandem as outlined here is indeed very positive and even desirable; post-project feedback also included calls for more opportunities to engage in similar projects.

Reference

Colwell, V. (2013) Engaging L2 undergraduates in relevant project work and interaction: A role for video conferencing. *Language Learning in Higher Education Journal of the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS)*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Narratives and accounts: “Post-crisis” narration in annual company reports

Jules Winchester and Simon Williams

Published in *Language Learning in Higher Education* 3(2): 207-229 (2014).

Abstract: This paper aims to provide Business English and EAP practitioners with a rationale for including the analysis of narrative elements in business addresses in their language teaching in order to encourage critical thinking in learners. By studying these elements, and the rhetorical function of the narrative in particular, students can become more aware of how the use of narratives can be part of a strategy to convey a particular message in order to influence perceptions and to enact change in a company (Moon 2010: 133). This is especially the case when the company has undergone a crisis (Hearit 1995).

The business addresses chosen for the study are the annual reports of two global companies, BP and Toyota, both written post-crisis. According to a narrative analysis of both reports, outlined in the paper, there are significant differences between the two papers in the use and effect of rhetoric. The findings of a quantitative study show that Business English students are able to identify differences in rhetorical functions and corporate identity construction within the texts, suggesting that such a contrastive analysis can develop students’ critical thinking skills. These findings are supported by a further small-scale study assessing potential classroom applications of the reports in which example activities and tasks were piloted with small groups of EAP students.

References

- Hearit, Keith. 1995. "Mistakes were made": Organizations, apologia, and crises of social legitimacy. *Communication Studies* 46(1-2). 1-17.
- Moon, Jenny. 2010. *Using story in higher education and professional development*. Abingdon: Routledge.

A language for your eyes: BSL

Juan Moreno

Edited extracts from his blog *ideasdepapel*:

http://www.ideasdepapelcrep.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/bsl_22.html

(accessed 29 April 2014)

BSL stands for British Sign Language and is the official Sign language used by the Deaf in the UK. The teaching of BSL at the University of Sussex was first introduced in 1995 when the Centre for Community Engagement (CCE) offered a course on creative writing and creative BSL. The course 'created an interest for several members of staff to learn the language' John Walker (BSL module convenor) tells me. 'In turn, the tutors, who were teaching elsewhere, approached Pam Coare', then CCE's director, 'to set up a BSL course there. That is how it started.' It was around 2006 when John joined Sussex; 'it was soon after that that I struck a conversation with Maria Greco to set up evening courses for BSL'.

Research on Deaf studies at Sussex began in 1969 with the establishment of the Reginald M. Phillips Laboratory and Research Unit. Working in collaboration with other educational institutions, the Unit led to important changes in the curriculum, developed new learning materials and novel approaches to Deaf education. Though now closed, the works and achievements at the Reginald Research Unit were liberating because for the first time they intended to depart from the old doctrine of *oralism*; 'a time when children were punished for using their hands to express themselves', as John Walker states. Despite more than 35 years of research in the UK, BSL became recognised as an official language only 10 years ago. I can't help but to ask why? The answer is not clear. Despite repeated calls from the EU to promote the use of Sign languages in the fields of education and employment, there had been little advance in the UK to give BSL official status. The lack of recognition led to a campaign initiated in April 1999, led by the Federation of Deaf People (FDP), which led to BSL being recognised as a language in its own right by the British Government on 18th March 2003.

There is a language, BSL, and behind that language a community with its culture, its own identity. The reality of BSL and that of the Deaf community today is perhaps better than it was 10 years ago, but it remains a challenging one. The lack of a clearly defined legal framework from which to implement changes has serious consequences for the lives of deaf people. Any language, including BSL, is more than a tool for communication. There is a whole creative side to BSL that remains invisible to many of us and which includes poetry, music, films, sports, etc. These are the spaces where the Deaf come together as a community.

For further information on BSL courses at Sussex:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/ml/opencourses/bsl>

Radio Broadcasting in a Target Language: An interdisciplinary approach through an exploratory task-based learning project for students of French as an elective.

Patricia Couturas; edited by Belinda Hackney

Following an appeal for collaborative content by [French Radio London](#) in August 2013, a group of first-year language students at the University of Sussex volunteered to participate in a small scale radio production project. In return *French Radio London*, an award-winning digital radio station based in London, agreed to broadcast a selection of the students' productions. Under the guidance of their [SCLS](#) language tutor - Patricia Couturas - fifteen students from an elective module of French for Professional Purposes engaged in the extra-curricular activity over a series of weeks during the 2013 autumn term. Briefed to plan a five-minute radio show, the students formed three working groups each collaborating on the design and production of their own micro show. Alongside basic training in radio technology and editing techniques, generously offered by the [School of Media, Film and Music](#), the students wrote their scripts, recorded, and edited their radio shows in French.

The **action-oriented** project put the students at the heart of a **social learning process** and provided them with an opportunity to use their creative and critical thinking skills, as well as acquire adequate knowledge of radio technology for the purpose of completing their project. In addition to the **learning outcomes** achieved through traditional language class teaching – such as practice, and improvement of oral and written communication – students were able to demonstrate further outcomes incorporating commitment, planning and **collaboration**, with this holistic **task-based** method.

Feedback from the students was generally very positive, such that in the 2014 spring term, the radio project was broadened to another group of first-year students learning French through the Modern Language degree pathway. Under the title: 'The Sussex Show' *French Radio London* broadcast in December 2013 all three episodes produced in the autumn. *French Radio London* plans to transmit a further four Sussex students' fiction stories in May/June 2014. Given the interest and motivation generated through the project, the partners will explore further avenues for collaboration, and consider incorporating a similar project into the curriculum, designing further action-oriented tasks for formative and, eventually, summative purposes.

For further information on this project contact Patricia Couturas: P.Couturas@sussex.ac.uk

Further reading and links

Council of Europe (2001) Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press. Available from:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp (accessed 10 April 2014).

Coste, D (2014) 'An action-oriented perspective on language teaching and learning', in *CEFR Web Conference: The CEFR 2001 – 2014*. 28 March 2014, 11am-12.30pm. Available from:

<https://lancelot.adobeconnect.com/a875817169/p9hrfutz7w/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal> (accessed 10 April 2014).

Curriculum Services Canada (post-2012; *no date specified*) FSL: A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers: The action-oriented approach. Available from:

<http://www.curriculum.org/fsl/projects/a-guide-to-reflective-practice-for-core-french-teachers> (accessed 10 April 2014).

Ellis, R (2003) Task-based language learning and teaching. Oxford: OUP. *Review and summary*. Available from: <http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume7/ej27/ej27r5/?wscr> (accessed 10 April 2014).

The FRL Interviews: *Les Interviews et reportages de FRL*. Available from: <http://www.frenchradiolondon.com/emissions/les-interviews-et-reportages-de-frl?page=4> (accessed 10 April 2014).

The Sussex Show: Episode 3 Interviewing 'freshers' at the University of Sussex [17/12/2013] Also available from: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/about/showcase> (accessed 10 April 2014).

“I don’t mind”: Affective positioning and English in Higher Education.

« Ça ne me dérange pas » : Le positionnement affectif et l’anglais dans l’enseignement supérieur.

Alexandra Reynolds

**Centre François Viète, université de Nantes & Sussex Centre for Language Studies,
Sussex University (PhD student)**

Colloque sur l’AFFECT du 18.10.2013 au LAIRDIL, Nantes. Proposition d’article pour *Études en didactique des langues* n° 23 qui doit paraître en juin 2013.

This study, conducted in the Nantes science faculty, aimed to gather attitudes of French-speaking academic staff to their professional use of English. These academics who use English at work, spoke about their language learning histories, and described how they used English for research purposes. These responses were gathered as the Fioraso Act (2013) was debated and passed. This act has had an impact on academics who are being encouraged to extend their use of English to teaching, and not just for specialist research purposes. How these speakers describe using L2 English professionally is key to this study. The affective responses to this institutional transitional period in France have given rise to rich qualitative data. The methodological tools used for this study were 118 pre-interview questionnaires, 17 semi-directed interviews and their associated mind-maps as well as teacher diaries. How researchers relate to the use English at work has been analysed according to a framework of positioning in relation to master narratives and the strength of their sense of belonging within to a community of practice.

Lors de cette enquête menée à la Faculté des Sciences et des Techniques de Nantes, des enseignants-chercheurs francophones ont partagé leurs sentiments vis à vis l’utilisation professionnelle de l’anglais. Ces enseignants ont pu décrire un passé d’apprenants d’anglais, de producteurs d’anglais pour leur recherche et réagir à la Loi Fioraso (22 Juillet 2013) lors d’entretiens semi-directifs. Cette loi a eu un impact sur les enseignants-chercheurs puisqu’ils sont désormais encouragés à enseigner leur spécialité en anglais. La relation affective avec l’anglais, dite langue L2 prend donc une place de plus en plus importante dans la vie professionnelle des chercheurs en sciences. Un tel positionnement affectif par rapport à un contexte institutionnel en pleine transition est un terrain riche en termes de données qualitatives. Les outils méthodologiques ont été 118 questionnaires, suivis de 17 entretiens semi-guidés ainsi que des *mind-maps* et des journaux de bords. Les réponses nuancées (tels que « ça ne me dérange pas ») mettent en évidence ce positionnement affectif par rapport à une certaine obligation d’utiliser l’anglais

professionnellement. Ces interactions ont été analysées par rapport à un positionnement et à une échelle d'appartenance à une communauté de travail.

[SCLS supervisor Jules Winchester: J.Winchester@sussex.ac.uk]

Research on ELT Open Talk (March 2014)

Reading, literacy and literature: L2 intersections

Dr Amos Paran, Institute of Education, University of London

Abstract

The fields of research known as reading research and literacy research have often taken very different approaches to issues of teaching and learning. Within L1 educational contexts, the field is even more complex in that teaching literacy and teaching reading are often conducted within what may be thought of as literature classes. This is less true of L2 contexts, though literature still has an important role to play in L2 learning as well. In this paper I examine the ways in which these three areas interact in L2 contexts, articulating the contribution of using and teaching literature to the development of L2 literacy and L2 reading.

For further details contact: A.Paran@ioe.ac.uk

Details of future *Research on ELT* and other talks available on the SCLS website:

Sussex Centre for Language Studies: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/>

For contributions or ideas for future editions of the LP3 bulletin please contact:

Andrew Blair: A.M.Blair@sussex.ac.uk

Jules Winchester: J.Winchester@sussex.ac.uk

Jeremy Page: J.N.Page@sussex.ac.uk

Webmaster: Matthew Platts: M.R.Platts@sussex.ac.uk
