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*THE BULLETIN OF RESEARCH, TEACHING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY
FROM THE SUSSEX CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE STUDIES
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Editor's note:

This extended volume of LP3 focuses primarily on reports from recent language-related conferences and events, and provides an illustration of the range and diversity of topics currently receiving attention in the field. The Association of University Language Centres (AULC) annual conference held in Belfast is reviewed by colleagues from both pedagogic and technical perspectives. Further reports come from an International Association of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) Pronunciation Special Interest Group event, and a symposium for teachers of Spanish in the UK hosted by SCLS.

AULC Conference 2017: A Selection of Talks (part 1)

Reviewed by Deirdre McKenna and Laura Mark

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The AULC (Association of University Language Centres) conference was held in Queen's University, Belfast on 12th/13th January 2017, focusing on the topic of '**The Multilingual University: Inspiring teachers, transforming learners.**' The conference was extremely well-organised, offering a wide range of stimulating talks and fantastic evening entertainment and hosting. We have outlined below a selection of talks we found particularly pertinent.

Meaning and Understanding: Translation and Translation Studies in the Foreign-Language Classroom

The opening keynote was given by Professor David Johnston, an award-winning translator and leading figure in PG training in translation and interpreting in Northern Ireland. In his passionate and thought-provoking talk, Professor Johnston highlighted the role and responsibilities of language teachers in the current social and political climate. He warned against the 'instrumental method' of teaching translation which suggests that there is a correct method and one true translation, arguing that this feeds 'error terror' among learners and promotes the essentialised views of cultures and linguistic practices. Instead, he advocated a 'hermeneutic method', one in which students engage in trying to understand. He views translation as a cultural practice of "travelling towards the Other" and an ethical regime of "showing respect for the Other, not reducing otherness to categories of difference". He suggested that this approach fosters 'translational awareness', an antidote to the tendency to demonise the Other which results from the discourses surrounding ethnic, cultural, national and linguistic identities. The talk highlighted the need for language teachers to reflect on our own professional practice and how we contribute to our students' understanding of and approaches to cultures and otherness. How do we move away "from essentialised notions of national identity and towards patterns of relatedness"? What practices can we adopt to foster a global understanding of the "risks, challenges and benefits of intercultural living"?

Reference

Johnston, D. (2017) 'Meaning and Understanding: Translation and Translation Studies in the Foreign-Language Classroom' AULC Conference 2017, Belfast 12 & 13 January 2017. Available at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/LanguageCentre/AULC2017/Presentations/> (Accessed 21/04/17).

Multilingual and Creative: Rethinking University Language Classrooms

Another keynote talk given by Libor Stepanek presented a Creative Approach to Language Teaching (CALT), and shared his practice in promoting peer-collaboration in a student-centred classroom. One such approach involved using Edward de Bono's (1999) '6 Thinking Hats' to enable students to analyse a task from different perspectives and thus develop critical thinking skills, in this case discussing a video clip of a collapsing bridge. Indeed, the talk suggested a variety of uses for video such as the basis of group projects, and in asking students to collect samples of grammar points from their favourite shows to generate their own teaching materials. As well as this, the speaker utilised conference call technology for projects with other institutions, providing opportunities for authentic discussions between the learners and helping to develop intercultural awareness. This talk clearly outlined that there are many opportunities for us as teachers to approach our lessons in a more innovative manner in order to facilitate learning through creativity.

Reference

deBono, E. (1999) *Six Thinking Hats*. London: Penguin Books.

Facing the 9k Generation Challenges Online: The Network of Student Projects at Exeter

A project shared by Dr Juan Garcia Precedo and Jordina Sala-Branchadell from Exeter University showed how virtual learning resources and student-led projects can be successfully combined to increase student motivation and engagement in learning. The Network of Projects is a collaborative online space created by and for Year 2 Spanish undergraduate students. In this virtual learning environment, students share self-created learning materials (e.g. reading/listening comprehension tasks, grammar tasks, vocabulary quizzes etc.) to boost their classmates' linguistic and intercultural competence. Although tutors are often consulted

when designing the tasks, the maintenance and development of the online space is left to the students. Through working in groups, students gain team-working experience and develop employability skills that include the design and promotion of a website (one of the tasks involved using the Target Language to compete for the ‘best website’ prize) and development of learning materials. The level of student engagement in this extra-curricular activity was impressive, and highlighted the potential for such creative projects to unlock enthusiasm and promote skills development. The presenters are currently exploring how the project can be integrated into the curriculum and become credit-bearing. Given the increased focus on employability and innovative, inclusive teaching methods within Higher Education, such new approaches to assessment are likely to become more commonplace. This type of project and assessment is not limited to Modern Language teaching and could be adopted in a variety of teaching contexts, including academic and study skills development.

Using student-centred assessment to inspire learners and evidence their learning & Fostering Learner Engagement and Autonomy through Assessment

Approaches to assessment and student engagement were the focus of both Caroline Campbell from the University of Leeds and Christine O’Leary from Sheffield Hallam. At Leeds, the assessment for the language modules at CEFR B1-B2 level consists of an in-class written task (30%) as well as two speaking components: a semester 1 group presentation project (35%) and a semester 2 individual response to a listening task (30%). For the group project, students are encouraged to use digital media (such as ‘goanimate.com’) which can be linked to their CV or digital profile, thus motivating students by developing their employability skills. This use of technology was also found to be motivating in that students could pre-record their presentation, and avoid the difficulties faced by performance anxiety. From Sheffield Hallam, research on assessment was discussed in terms of developing both learner engagement and autonomy as part of a BA International Business + Language course portfolio project. Learner autonomy was defined as the development of: (1) emotional intelligence (affect), (2) metacognition (learning to learn), (3) the ability to reflect, and (4) attention (active engagement with linguistic input). The research showed that the assessed portfolio project led to a development in learner autonomy in terms of raising awareness of effective strategies,

strengthening peer-collaboration, and reducing reliance on the tutor, all of which increased learner engagement.

AULC Conference 2017: A Selection of Talks (part 2)

Reviewed by Matthew Platts, Chris O'Reilly and Phill Bowles

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I have been attending this conference for many years, and this was one of the best, both in terms of the quality of the papers, presentations and workshops, and the organisation that had gone into it – not to mention the conference dinner! It was also the largest to date, with 140 delegates attending from around 40 institutions. Nine of us went from Sussex, but I would say it represents unbeatable value in terms of professional development and team-building. AULC is growing in importance as well as numbers; since the demise of LLAS this is now the sole best practice forum for language teaching, and alongside UCML plays a part in government consultations and promoting language in Higher Education.

The conference started strongly with an inspiring paper by **Professor David Johnston of QUB on *Translation (and translation studies) in the foreign-language classroom.***

Although there has been a fall in ML enrolments in schools and university departments, there has been a RISE in translation studies. The contours of our multi-ethnic society have shifted, yet the curriculum does not necessarily reflect this. David sees translation as the 5th skill – what will students gain from the study of translation once we go beyond the pedagogical? ‘Translational awareness’ can confer broader skills: just as there is not a single correct translation of a text, so we should question the correctness of interpretations, the rightness of assumptions. Translation, as a cultural practice, can help us to question representation.

In literary translation, there is no such thing as a ‘full account of the original’, rather a representation, which is always skewed. Traduttore, traditore: to translate is to betray, literally so in terms of Italian city states, giving away secrets and opening them up to invasion, but

nowadays it is [hopefully] a good thing to open up to the world, to be open to persuasion. Pushkin likened translators to horses changed at the post houses of civilisation.

Without culture, David explained, the tendency is to fix meaning in the foreign language, leading to fear rather than understanding, to provinces bounded only by silence. When we struggle to understand, we tend to place fixed meanings. Last year's Reith lecturer, Kwame Anthony Appiah talks of shifting identities, through contact with the Other; it is not meaning that interests us in translation; that is hardly ever the first step towards understanding. Teach hermeneutic rather than instrumental methods of translation, making an effort to understand, to interpret, in a systematic way. This skill needs teaching; it is a learnt thing: 'stranger danger' is the more natural. We need to beware the pre-disposition towards culture shock as an expectation.

Translators should be seen as creative: new generators of texts rather than mere second-order scribes. There is no such thing as a 'correct' translation of Shakespeare; necessarily, each is an adaptation, characterised by decisions and processes. We will always need new translations of texts for 'special purposes'. David believes that we should view translation as a cultural practice: the Self must travel toward the Other, an ethical regime especially when translating into English. We should educate our students towards uncertainty, for the portfolio careers many will have. Not to trust only in language, but to look at the intention behind the translation.

I also wanted to draw attention briefly to Unilang, an AULC initiative to develop a shared CEFR-aligned certification scheme for (predominantly non-specialist) language learning in higher education. This is now calling for participating institutions, as well as more examiners, and is perhaps something to consider at Sussex. See www.unilang.website for full information.

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The conference was held at the impressive Riddel Hall, with around 140 people attending, the largest AULC attendance to date. There were two particular sessions that stuck out for me, and this is what I would like to focus on below.

Donata Puntil (KCL) talked about *The International Classroom Project*. This excerpt from the abstract highlights the key issues of her talk and project:

The Modern Language Centre at King's College London offers an ongoing internal Professional Development (CPD) Training Programme for its language teachers across different languages and addressing different career stages. The Programme comprises pedagogical training focused on exposing teachers to new approaches and methodologies, as well as training on intercultural competence and specific professional skills. The MLC staff is broadly multi-skilled and equipped to face the challenges and opportunities deriving from working and adjusting to a highly differentiate and international student population, presenting specific needs and frameworks.

Apart from the training, Donata and her colleagues arrange and organise various 'culture' evenings. This involves bringing in external speakers on key areas of learning, not just for the staff but also for the students. I think bringing students and staff together in this way is a great way to motivate both, and to help encourage good practice in sharing and learning. They also arrange cultural evenings in various languages showing contemporary films, where students and tutors discuss the main idea of the film and its merits in terms of relevant culture. Again, a positive way of bringing staff and students together; a very forward thinking approach to modern learning, sharing and more importantly integrating. Staff are also encouraged to gain further qualifications during this time and to promote their CPD. [Access the presentation here: <http://www.slideshare.net/LanguageCentreQUB/the-international-classroom-project>]

Dr Juan Garcia Precedo and Jordina Sala-Branchadell (Exeter) presented *Facing the 9k Generation Challenges Online: The Network of Student Projects at Exeter*.

[see also the review of this talk by McKenna and Mark, above.] The strange thing in this case is that I did not feel the abstract gave a good outline of what they were trying to do:

The use of the Internet as a learning resource has not only altered our teaching practices, but also shaped the way language learners access knowledge nowadays. Online resources have fostered a solid sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency that occasionally puts the role of the teacher at stake. Nevertheless, the socioeconomic intricacies triggered by the consolidation of a self-aware 9k generation have returned the attention to the role of the tutor. The amount of resources available online may feel unmanageable, and the figure of the tutor has emerged again to filter and facilitate adequate online learning tools addressing learners' increasing preference for independent study.

Fundamentally they were getting their students (of Italian and Spanish) to derive academic questions from a pre-selected text (2-3 paragraphs). The students of course would have to completely understand the text in order to carry out the task. They also had to develop a web page using WIX (a free resource), and they far exceeded the brief, in most cases producing in-depth learning web pages of the highest order. This process has many benefits – above all for me enabling students to be more creative, which in turn drives their motivation. They were also asked to present their work to other students, encouraging presentation skills, and then asked to peer-assess the work of others. This whole process encapsulates so many learning skills and to my mind the way forward in learning and teaching. The only issue for me is the assessment: this at the moment is formative, but they have now been encouraged by their university to start the process of summative assessment, which is fantastic.

The last thing to mention is the **tour of the Language Centre**. The library which houses the centre was really impressive, one of the best I have seen. On reflection, however, the language area was just two large computer rooms at the back, with the odd language poster on the wall, and a couple of book shelves with dictionaries. People were commentating on how good the resources were, but I was in disagreement: there was no communal space for students to relax, or talk or look at newspapers; the language materials were scattered all over the large library and there were not any staff immediately at hand to help or resolve queries. There was not an associated learning area or lab, and it was all a little anonymous. This of course compared unfavourably to ours here at Sussex - I really do think ours is becoming more inviting and communicative, which is the way forward for good Language Centres.

Overall, the positive experience of the conference was meeting other people from different institutions and talking about what they do and how they do it. This sharing of knowledge can only be a good thing for language learning more generally: the sharing of ideas and good practice.

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Online tools and technologies for Language Learning and Teaching - Liza Zamboglou (Queen's University, Belfast; Language Support Officer). Liza ran through various free online tools which Queen's have successfully utilised in their teaching practices, and a selection are briefly reviewed below:

Canvas VLE platform is basically a paid alternative to Blackboard or Moodle, although teachers can use it for free. It seems to be a feature-rich environment which integrates with lots of different types of media. If we were starting off a VLE from scratch this would be a good system to look at; however, as we have Moodle currently in place and it is being developed all the time by our in-house designers, I would give this a pass.

Quizlet: Queens use Quizlet to make visual online flashcards, used for learning new vocabulary, as the student can see and hear the words at the same time. TELL have run some workshops using this software and the uptake from tutors has been good.

Soundcloud: Tutors can upload sound clips to the Soundcloud website, as well as create playlists for students to work through. This system works quite well for Queens university as it allows them to embed this site into their VLE environment; at Sussex we could also embed this into Study Direct if we chose to. To stop the general public from accessing the files and playlists you can make your uploads private by hiding the URL and only giving it out to your students.

Videoscribe: took my interest the most. I have seen other content creators on YouTube create videos using it and never worked out how they did it until now. It's a very clever website which allows you create animated videos, where you provide the voiceover and the website draws the animations for you.

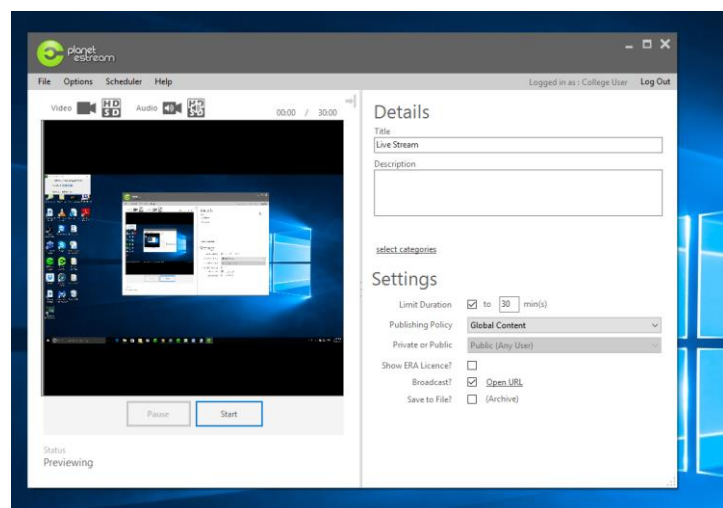


These can then be viewed online in YouTube or downloaded for PowerPoint presentations. They can also be embedded into a VLE. It is a pretty unique tool that I have not seen replicated anywhere else online.

Screencast O matic: This tool allows you to capture your desktop in real time, and lets you provide an audio description to what you are doing. It is excellent for demonstrating activities to both students and staff.

Providing Languages for all and much more through digital media - Andrew Grenfell (Newcastle University)

This talk was the highlight of the conference for me. The speaker has successfully managed to blend Newcastle's current Satellite system with emerging IPTV technologies. To do this he has used a company call Planet Estream, which takes the feeds from Newcastle's existing satellite dish setup and outputs their multiplexed TV signal over the campus network. Initially it was to be used for just language centre students to view satellite channels on their computers. However, the positive uptake has meant that other areas of the university have requested to use the system. An example of this has been the streaming of the Vice-Chancellor's speeches. Because the system is not just limited to languages, they have managed to gain funding and got Newcastle's IT services to purchase and run a dedicated media server. This allows them to stream and store their DVD collection more



efficiently and make it easier and more convenient for students to access language learning anywhere on campus. Something similar to this would benefit Sussex as we have an existing satellite setup which could be potentially modified into an IPTV setup. The cost to Newcastle of the system which does the converting and streaming is £3000 a year. I plan to investigate whether we can do it cheaper, using the existing technology we already have, or if not, whether we can purchase a converter which will do it the same job rather than rent one. I have a few ideas around which area to start my investigations, and hopefully I can improve the current system, making it easier for students to use and also raising our profile, therefore making it an attractive feature for future students.

Different voices

A one-day pronunciation event organised by IATEFL PronSIG

hosted by the University of Brighton, October 8th 2016

Reviewed by Jennifer Book j.b.book@sussex.ac.uk

John Wells, Emeritus Professor of Phonetics at UCL gave the opening plenary on Intonation, an area that both teachers and learners can find daunting. Whilst intonation has conversational patterns with fixed intonation patterns, there are deviations to be found in many regional variations. Wells implied that tonality is the most important factor, i.e. the accentuation or the placement of the nucleus/tonic in a sentence. He talked about where intonation boundaries go (which are largely universal) and what tones we use – high, low, rise and fall (which are partly language-specific). In terms of tonality, we need to understand which items are accented and which are de-accented. For example, in the questions, ‘Who is it?’ and ‘How are you?’ The verb ‘to be’ is accented and this tends to work across all Germanic languages. With selective de-accentuation, Wells suggested experimenting with the nucleus by moving it around, thereby changing the focus and altering the information structure. Take the sentence ‘She was trying to lose weight.’ Focusing on the nucleus ‘weight’ shows us that this is the key information in the sentence. Moving the nucleus back, one word at a time, alters the focus. In English, the nucleus goes, by default, on the last content word of the sentence to add new information. One useful approach is to start at the end of the intonation phrase (chunk) and assume that every lexical stress will be accented unless there is a reason to de-accent it.

Whilst Wells pointed out the difficulties and finer details of intonation, he did recommend that we try and teach what both is useful and true, as well as making it fun and enjoyable for teachers and learners alike.

Adrian Underhill (ELT author) gave the second plenary on proprioception, i.e. how we can get learners (and teachers) to understand the internal workings of parts of the body, namely the mouth, by working on muscle control to form new sounds. Many of us fall into the trap of telling a class to copy what we are saying when it comes to pronunciation, without actually explaining the inner workings of the mouth. He asked us to close our eyes and take a journey in our mouth, exploring the different parts, thinking about where our tongue, teeth, lips, roof of mouth, etc. were in relation to a visualisation of a jungle. He then focused on a sound, for example, /f/ and demonstrated how we could form /θ/ (from /f/) by just moving the tongue, before showing us how other sounds could be formed in similar ways.

Michael Vaughan-Rees gave an engaging workshop on how to use poetry in class focusing on stress and weak forms, an activity taken from his book (*Rhymes and Rhythm: A poem-based course for English pronunciation*. 2010, Garnet). The idea is taken from traditional tongue twisters which, he argued, are very difficult for learners to use and not very worthwhile pedagogically. Instead, he asked us, in groups, to make our own alliterative sentences. He wrote three sentences on the board and asked us to identify how they were different:

Kenneth bought some carrots

Cathy bought some carrots

Carol bought some carrots

The first sentence has the same first sound (for the person and product), the second has the same first two sounds and the third has the same first three sounds. In our groups we then had to write our own pairs of people and products on the board before working out how many similar sounds they had. One point was awarded if the person and product had one similar sound, two for two similar sounds, etc. We had to listen out for schwas, and not be misled by spelling. One rule was that names had to be English. The game could be extended by adding containers or quantities (Kenneth collected a kilo of cabbage) which practises strong and weak forms. Vaughan Rees asked us to read these sentences aloud, accompanied to music, to focus on the beat and rhythm of the sentence. The activity was great fun and extremely useful,

and can be used with all levels. It not only practises rhyme and rhythm, but also stress, intonation and ear-training.

The one-day event was enlightening for many reasons. Pronunciation is an area that is neglected by many teachers (and trainers), who tend to focus on grammar and lexis due to a lack of knowledge or awareness of the subject. If we are teaching English communicatively, then surely phonology should be integrated more regularly into our classes.

IATEFL Pronunciation Special Interest Group: <http://pronsig.iatefl.org/>

Jornada Didáctica para Profesores de Español de UK

This CPD event for Spanish language teachers was hosted for the second time by SCLS in January 2017, and attended by approximately 35 participants. The following short abstracts summarise two of the presentations; for further details or correspondence please contact the speakers, or the event organiser Silvia Taylor: s.taylor@sussex.ac.uk.

Scribing in seminars: an integrated skills approach to content courses in the target language / El uso de escribas en seminarios: como activar todas las habilidades lingüísticas en clases de contenido en la lengua meta

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In the last couple of years, I realised that many content lectures and seminars in the target language expected students to listen and speak, but assessment was then entirely based on writing and reading. I introduced ‘scribing’ as a mandatory and whole-class activity in seminars, and this not only led to more focused development of the themes of the lectures and seminars, but to engaging students’ all four language skills in order to ultimately support improve their overall competence and support them in assessments.

The Inverted Classroom in Spanish Language and Cultural Content Modules

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The Inverted or Flipped Classroom method involves student exposure to information before class so that contact time between teacher and student can be maximized. Students receive tuition, normally in the form of online content, for which they do not necessarily need to be present at any place or at any time. Rather, class time is dedicated to processing the information and applying it to module content. I co-teach a module on Spanish Cinema, with me teaching the first six weeks and my colleague the second six weeks of term. I employed the Inverted Classroom method, while my colleague did not. Based on information collated from questionnaires before and after term, I have concluded that the method has the potential to be highly successful in the language and cultural content modules we offer; however, this presentation will also address the limitations of this method.

From our students

An investigation into teacher awareness of, and attitudes towards, English as a Lingua Franca within Business English instruction in the UK

Gemma Williams

MA ELT Dissertation abstract (2016)

This dissertation documents the research into Business English (BE) teacher awareness of, and attitudes towards, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Given that English has become the international language of global business and trade, used widely to communicate across linguistic and cultural borders, the argument is made that ELF is the most relevant paradigm for BE instruction, in contrast to the still currently dominant English as a Foreign Language (EFL) paradigm that has housed most English Language Teaching (ELT). A further argument is made that a number of what the author refers to as core ‘ELF competences’, primarily Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), accommodation strategies and aspects of the

phonological Lingua Franca Core (LFC), are the most relevant and teachable aspects of ‘ELF-talk’ to BE learners.

The research took the form of a small Mixed Methods Research (MMR) case-study of a group of BE teachers based in the South of England, UK. Twelve participants completed questionnaires, modelled loosely on that used in Dewey’s (2012) research into teacher awareness of ELF and ELT teacher training. A further two participants were selected for follow-up classroom observations and interviews.

A review of the literature indicates that teachers often possess limited awareness of the constructs of ELF or ICC and when there is awareness, demonstrate a conflict between their beliefs surrounding the relevance of these constructs to their teaching and their willingness or ability to apply those beliefs in practice. The findings from this research, however, do not support those claims and instead indicate relatively high levels of applied ELF awareness in practice. Due to the small-scale nature of this investigation it is impossible to infer that this difference in results emanates from the fact that the subjects in this research were BE as opposed to General English teachers, as has been the case in previous research, therefore implications for further research indicated by this study include a more widespread investigation into BE teacher awareness and attitudes towards ELF.

Reference

Dewey, M. (2012) Towards a post-normative approach: learning the pedagogy of ELF. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* 1/1; 141-170.

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Details of future *Language and Culture* talks are available on the SCLS website:

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

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