

UK Linguistic Ethnography Forum: One Day Seminar

University of Bristol, Graduate School of Education
18th June 2005, 10.30 am – 4.00 pm

Programme (abstracts are given below)

10.30	11.00	Arrival, coffee and tea
11.00	11.50	Francesca Bargiela <i>Ethnographies of closed communities: Issues, challenges and provocations from visiting a monastery</i>
11.55	12.45	David Poveda <i>Studying children's language practices and cultures outside of school: An example with Gitano children</i>
12.45	1.40	Lunch
1.40	2.30	Barbara Majer <i>Researchers and Researching: Dealing with Uncertainty: Insider researching - is an identity crisis inevitable?</i>
2.30	2.45	Tea and Coffee
2.45	3.35	Melanie Cooke, Celia Roberts, Mike Baynham and James Simpson <i>Ethnographic-style bilingual interviews: practical concerns and implications.</i>
3.35	4.00	Open discussion

Attendance information

Location: University of Bristol, Graduate School of Education, 35 Berkeley Square,
Bristol BS8 1JA.
For directions, visit <http://www.bris.ac.uk/education/contact/find>

Cost: BAAL members - £15
Students - £10
non-BAAL members - £20

A buffet lunch and refreshments are provided.

Please send your cheque, payable to 'UKLEF' to Richard Barwell at the above
address

Abstracts

Ethnographies of closed communities: Issues, challenges and provocations from visiting a monastery

Francesca Bargiela (Nottingham Trent University)

A monastery is a segregated community that seeks to value and develop each and every member within its bounded spatial and temporal frames. This is achieved over the members' lifetime and through the practice of daily routines governed by the rhythm of a tradition emanating from the interpretation of a written Rule. 'In-flexible' is a descriptor that comes readily to mind in connection with this life-style and its inhabitants.

The study of a monastic community poses ontological and methodological challenges even to the qualitative researcher with previous experience in other organisational environments. The paper documents my initial contact with a local monastery and the methodological and ethical challenges that such an encounter has raised. In my talk, I hope to continue the approach that I have adopted for this study which is broadly one of an ongoing 'conversation' with all the participants involved. Here 'conversation' is understood as a relational and existential approach to situated understanding, which includes the possibility of misunderstanding and the risk of confusion and uncertainty about oneself and the Other.

Studying children's language practices and cultures outside of school: An example with Gitano children

David Poveda (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)

The purpose of this session is to present a series of arguments in favor of studying children's language practices and cultures outside school and institutional settings (in communities, peer groups, parks, etc.), even if this option may present more practical problems when conducting fieldwork. These arguments will be illustrated with two sets of Gitano (Spanish Gypsy) children's linguistic practices stemming from a research project on the topic conducted for several years in different community settings. A first set compares jokes told by children in a school context during research interviews and jokes told outside of school by children in a peer group from another community. The second example centers on children's talk about their neighbors and surroundings during a 'night stroll' of this second peer group. The discussion will focus, on one hand, on the analysis and discussion of the linguistic data and, on the other hand, on the gains and challenges that stem from moving research outside of schools and institutional settings.

Researchers and Researching: Dealing with Uncertainty: Insider researching - is an identity crisis inevitable?

Barbara Majer (University of Birmingham)

In this presentation, I will look at how the insider researcher has to negotiate identities during the research process. For those of us who have embarked on research within our own institutions, all kinds of uncertainties present themselves. Boundaries often become blurred, which can lead to conflicts and heart-searching, professionally methodologically, and personally.

Our research role, when combined with our practitioner role, seems to plant uncertainty in the minds of others: for example, senior management wonder how much a teacher is being distracted from her work or other teaching staff might feel uneasy about a peer requesting to do classroom observations of a participant in their classroom. Moreover, in our own minds, away from the supportive atmosphere of the university where we are registered, we begin to question whether we will be able to produce research that meets with the approval of the researching 'elite'. Indeed, we may also wonder if the findings will have been worth the months and years of dedication alongside one's full-time teaching post.

My EdD is exploring the shaping of identity of bilingual students on mainstream courses at a large FE college in Bristol. By joining a new learning community, students often see themselves in a different way from before as they progress on their courses. Their positioning by others is one of the salient factors in their developing learner identity. It is evident to me, as I undertake the research, that shaping of identity takes place for the researcher as well as the researched.

Ethnographic-style bilingual interviews: practical concerns and implications.

Celia Roberts (King's College, London)

Melanie Cooke (King's College, London)

Mike Baynham (University of Leeds)

James Simpson (University of Leeds)

This discussion of research processes focuses on one aspect of a multi-method research project, the ESOL Effective Practice Project (EEPP), a large scale study of adult ESOL classrooms in the UK. As part of this project 80 adult learners of ESOL were interviewed in a language in which they are expert. Each interview was about an hour long and, on a scale of interview types, was more conversational than interrogational. They were conducted by bilingual interviewers and translated into English.

In this session we will discuss some of the practical implications and issues arising from bilingual work of this kind. We will present extracts from the interviews to open discussion on the following points:

- the advantages of ESOL learners using an expert language in an ethnographic-style interview
- the ethical issues which arise when interviewing people from ESOL classrooms (many of whom are refugee/asylum seekers)
- the problem of recruiting and training suitable interviewers, from a linguistic, an ethnographic and a practical point of view.
- the issues of power between interviewer and interviewee.
- the issues of "sameness" and "difference" between interviewer and interviewee: making "the familiar strange" for the benefit of the wider research team.

We will draw some conclusions and lessons from our experience so far and end with a discussion of "what works" in bilingual interviewing.