RESEARCHING LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION: POLICY AND PRACTICE

Ethnography of language policy: Theory, method, and findings
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Much of the current work on language policy can be characterized by a tension between structure and agency: between critical theoretical work that focuses on the power of language policy to disenfranchise linguistic minorities, and, ethnographic and other ‘on-the-ground’ approaches that emphasize the powerful role that educators play as creative actors in language policy processes. I argue that this tension in language policy research is benefited by ethnography of language policy (ELP), a methodology that combines critical analysis of language policy power with ethnographic and discourse analytic data collection in schools and communities. In this paper, I discuss the origins and evolution of ELP, its theoretical orientation, and I review some of the major findings, drawing from others and my own research in Pennsylvania and Washington state. ELP is particularly well suited to make connections between policy texts, discourses, and practices across multiple layers of language policy activity. I argue that such research is vital if our goal is to protect the educational rights of minority and Indigenous language users and promote a multilingual agenda of social justice in language policy research.

Doing the ethnography of language-in-education policy: theory and method
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Developments over recent years in language-in-education (LIE) policy research start from an acknowledgement that a top-down view of policy as authoritatively formulated centrally, or even locally, fails to capture more complex educational and social realities. The attempt to build a more multi-dimensional picture entails ethnographic engagement with actors at different levels within education, as evoked by the layers of the ‘onion’ metaphor for language policy and planning (Ricento and Hornberger 1996, Hornberger and Johnson 2007). This reorientation allows a range of sometimes disregarded voices to be heard, and it serves to uncover human agency on the part of different actors in the processes of policy interpretation and implementation. In this paper I discuss ethnographic data collection and analysis in two different contexts. In the first of these, a language history approach was adopted in interviews with teacher educators in Ghana, thus obtaining insights into the biographical shaping of stances towards the goals and pedagogies embodied in official LIE policy (Arthur Shoba 2013). In the second context, interaction in a Scottish primary
classroom (Arthur Shoba 2010) showed teachers and learners creatively exploring ideological spaces for the legitimate use of Scots. These observational and interactional data were complemented by analysis of online discourses which demonstrated attempts to secure greater space for Scots at the level of national policy formation.

References


In and around the school: documenting students’ plurilingual practices
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This paper will present the methodological challenges and dilemmas encountered, as well as some relevant findings, in carrying out collaborative sociolinguistic ethnography in a secondary school in Catalonia (DECOMASAI, SEJ2007-62147-EDUC; PADS, EDU2010-17859). The main objectives were to investigate multilingual practices in the school through audio-visual recordings - especially of the students - and observe the ways in which the participants understood their own communicative practices, through the design and implementation of a didactic unit on multilingualism. The implementation of this unit allowed us to approach different situations, common within the Catalan education system, involving the tensions between the official language / variety of the school and the languages / varieties used by participants in the school, inside and outside the classrooms, as well as beyond the school boundaries. It also confronted us with the challenges and dilemmas of mounting a cooperative research project that involved the students themselves as researchers of their own practices.

Interacting with indigenous teachers: supervising research “done from within”
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Supervising the research work done by indigenous teachers in a multilingual teacher education course in the northwestern part of the Brazilian Rainforest has been a permanent challenge and a continuous learning process because it necessarily meant having to find a balance between the mainstream way of producing knowledge and local ways of understanding/explaining the world. Each of us, as non-indigenous researchers, knew it would be very easy to get enmeshed in the so called "scientific mode of thinking" thus not taking into account the ancient knowledge of the peoples we have had the privilege to work with. In order to avoid getting enmeshed in a ‘scientific mode of thinking’, new methodological strategies had to be thought of. In this presentation, drawing from data generated in two ethnographic research projects, one focusing on language policy and the other on classroom observation, we intend to present two of these strategies, emphasizing the difficulties found in their implementation due to differences of expectations and of what, in fact, constitutes "local knowledge".

RESEARCHING MULTILINGUAL COMMUNICATION ON-LINE

Methodologies for researching multilingual practices online
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Investigating multilingualism and multisemioticity as resources for (dis)identification in social media
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Our paper discusses the role of multilingualism and multisemioticity as key resources for identity work in social media. Our analyses focus on social media as arenas for social interaction and cultural activities (Leppänen 2009, 2012; Peuronen, 2011; Jousmäki 2012; Kytölä, 2012, forthcoming) which complement and intertwine with offline activities in different ways. In particular, we focus on how research on identity work – or acts and processes of identification and disidentification – may benefit from a multi-dimensional framework drawing on linguistic ethnography, the study of multimodality, and research in computer-mediated discourse (CMD).

In this discussion we highlight how communication in social media involves not only resources provided by language(s), styles and genres, but also other semiotic resources – textual forms and patterns, visuality, still and moving images, sound, music, and cultural discourses – as well as their mobilization in processes of entextualization and resemiotization. We explore the ways in which the ‘language’ of social media can be a tapestry of multiple, intertwined semiotic materials (Leppänen et al., forthcoming) which are socially significant and culturally valuable to the participants and groups involved.

References


Virtual linguistic ethnography – investigating corporate multilingualism online
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Despite initial concerns about the dominance of English on the Web, particularly in corporate domains, multilingual provision has in fact become a key strategy for many online brands. Companies, groups and media organisations are now competing to increase the number of language options offered to users and, due to technological developments, linguistic glocalisation online is now expected and demanded by a growing number of consumers. In addition, increasing personalisation on the Web, through the use of profiles and filters, means that individuals can be assigned to a linguistic category based on factors such as location and certain choices and transported in a monolingual bubble through the Web (cf. Pariser 2012). Given the complexity of the processes involved and the challenge of constant change presented by the Web, investigating multilingualism in new media environments thus requires an adaptable multi-methods approach. In this paper, I explore how virtual ethnography (Hine 2000) can be usefully combined with linguistic landscape analysis (Landry and Bourhis 1997) in what I term ‘Virtual linguistic ethnography’ as a way to investigate corporate multilingualism on the monologic Web. As well as describing a number of studies, I will also include examples from the application of this method to teaching with advanced undergraduate students.

References

RESEARCHING TRAJECTORIES, IDENTITIES AND MULTILINGUAL REPERTOIRES

Biographical approaches to research in multilingual settings: exploring linguistic repertoires
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In multilingualism research a shift of paradigm can be observed: the idea of conceiving languages as distinct categories is being abandoned in favour of the notion of linguistic repertoire which seems more apt to grasp the complexity of heteroglossic practices. Whereas Gumperz's (1964) original notion of linguistic repertoire takes the outside perspective of the observer, biographical approaches to repertoire aim at bringing back the experiencing and speaking subject into sociolinguistics. Over the last decade, biographical methods have been developed in the German-speaking scientific space in particular, benefiting from a strong tradition in phenomenological thought.

In this presentation, I will give an overview of different orientations within biographically oriented research. Studies draw on different kinds of data such as diaries, autobiographical texts, language memoirs, biographical interviews as well as on multimodal representations. Biographical approaches seem particularly productive in addressing topics such as language and emotion, language and subject positions or identity constructions, or language attitudes linked to language ideologies and discourses on language(s) and languaging. Whereas, in some studies, biographical data are considered as reconstruction of remembered and lived reality, poststructuralist approaches rather take into account the performative dimension of biographical narratives and understand them as technologies of the self (Foucault 1988).

Researching identities and researcher identities: The politics of negotiating the field
Frances Giampapa
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Critical sociolinguistic and applied linguistic researchers have employed a variety of ethnographic methodologies to investigate multilingual and identity practices within macro-social/political processes. Recently within these research fields, there has been a growing interest on the impact of researcher identities, positionality, power and agency on the process of conducting, and interpreting research across linguistic and cultural contexts (Giampapa & Lamoureux, 2011; Norton & Early 2011).
Drawing from my critical ethnographic research on Italian Canadian youth’s constructions of Italianness in Toronto (Giampapa, 2001, 2004, 2010), this presentation explores the ways in which my researcher role, identities and positionings were reframed within discourses of authenticity, legitimacy and power within the field. These discourses framed the interactional practices and the crossing of diverse sites in which I was positioned as an insider/outsider.

What I hope to make visible and underline from this discussion is the complexities of being in the field and the importance and impact of critically reflecting on the multiple positions that we claim and are assigned throughout the research process.

Catching the stakes of language and identity: Trajectories of multilingual Montréalers through time and space
Patricia Lamarre
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Language in Quebec is a politically charged and much researched issue, but most research has heavily focused on language dominance, relying on census data and on surveys in which people are asked which language they use the most often in the home, public places, and the workplace. There has also been an inability to think in terms of a blurring of linguistic categories and the hyphenation or hybridization of linguistic identity (e.g. being French-English). In a place where language politics colors most everything, there is very little data on the complexity of linguistic practices of young Montrealers, the majority of whom are bilingual or multilingual.

This instigated a new approach to data collection to examine how language repertoires are drawn upon as people move through their daily lives and what lies beneath choices made about language use. More specifically, why does a speaker choose to use French in one situation, English in another, choose heteroglossic ways of speaking (parlers bilingue et multilingue) among friends or even customers and coworkers, and then adopt much more conservative unilingual practices in other settings or interactions? How are the stakes underlying these situations understood and what is being negotiated by speakers? And finally, are traditional conceptions of language and identity salient to these young multilingual Montrealers? The study contributes to the growing academic interest in multilingualism, bringing to the fore constraints to heteroglossic ways of speaking, but also how heteroglossia challenges traditional politics of identity and ethnolinguistic nationalism.

This non-static approach to data collection allows us to follow young adults through their daily lives in the city, through social networks and a range of sites and activities, including in virtual space. The approach is inclusive, bringing participants into the analysis of data and engaging them in a reflexive process. A dynamic dimension to the case studies has been added in the past year. More specifically, participants in the original study were contacted and interviewed on how their lives have evolved, looking at language and identity issues as they move out of postsecondary education and into the workplace. In conclusion, I will discuss how this methodology responds to the growing need for a mobility paradigm in research and theory (Sheller 2010).

RESEARCHING INTERACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF SUPERDIVERSITY

Ethnographic monitoring as a method for observing change
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In studies on superdiversity, it becomes increasingly clear that language, as an object of analysis, appears to be the most sensitive and accurate index of larger sociocultural shifts, and a concerted effort is underway to provide the study of superdiversity with a firm and reliable sociolinguistic foundation. Two major forces underlie this effort, and both will be at play in the specific project we document in this paper. One: a major effect of superdiversity is the drastic reduction of what can be presupposed and assumed about people, places and social processes; consequently, approaches in which an a priori sharedness of norms and sociocultural resources is posited can no longer be seen as unquestionably adequate, and every form of analysis must engage with the ‘pretextual’ conditions under which human interaction takes place. We need to examine the ‘stuff’ people bring to contact and communication, and the conditions that shape what can happen in such events. Two: we know that superdiversity creates forms of sociocultural complexity hitherto either unknown
or neglected in analysis. The complexity presents itself as a set of rapidly, and relatively unpredictably, changing contextual conditions at several scale-levels, in which interaction can and does take place. And change itself - its dynamics, its patterns and features - becomes the object of analysis, replacing the more traditional 'synchronic' objects of structuralism.

This object demands a longitudinal approach in which change can be effectively observed, and a methodology focused on elucidating the detailed interplay of structure and agency in complex superdiverse settings. Ethnographic monitoring (EM) offers itself as a ready candidate. EM has its roots in the Hymesian paradigm of studies on language in education, and it provides a layered approach in which the observer becomes a participant (not a 'participant observer') and in which epistemic solidarity becomes the key to investigating the fine fibre of sociocultural processes.

We will outline the theoretical rationale for EM, its basic assumptions and its design, though an account of an EM project that has run for over a year now in Antwerp (Belgium), where a 'researcher in residence' has become a member of the team in a welfare organization addressing 'victims' of globalization.

MULTILINGUALISM IN RESEARCH PRACTICE: VOICES AND IDENTITIES

Responding to the challenges of superdiversity and multilingualism in research practice
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Over the past two decades societies all over the world have encountered the forces of globalisation resulting in demographic changes that have transformed the social, cultural and language diversity of our communities. Birmingham, as one of the UK’s most superdiverse cities, exemplifies these changes. Superdiversity presents a number of challenges as well as opportunities to researchers from a range of different disciplinary backgrounds. By reflecting on the experiences of working with multilingual community research teams in Birmingham, this paper raises a number of methodological, epistemological and ethical concerns. It draws on examples from a community research project, focusing on English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision, to consider how working with multilingual research teams impacts on research practice, the quality of data as well as the power dynamics in the research process and what the overall learning from these experiences can tell us about multilingualism. It will then conclude with a discussion on how methodological advancements in research can be made within multilingual settings by highlighting the type of strategies that would help researchers respond to the challenges of multilingualism in research practice.

Field narratives and faith communities: the interaction of views from within and views from without
John Jessel and Ana Souza.
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As a result of patterns of migration over the latter part of the twentieth century, faith communities have become important in offering support to newcomers to the UK. Through this, a range of activities take place that provide a bridge between heritage and new languages, literacies and cultural traditions. In order to investigate literacy learning in four such communities (Polish Catholic, West African Pentecostalist, Tamil Hindu and Bangladeshi Muslim) that have recently grown in importance in London, a collaborative ethnography was carried out*. Four researchers, who prior to their role were each already closely connected with one of the communities, acted as ‘insiders’. However, this presentation focuses on the roles of the researchers who, in addition to working within their own settings, visited the other faith settings thereby also acting as ‘outsiders’. A central methodological feature was the ‘field narrative’; an in-depth personal account of each visit produced by each researcher. Through examining perspectives on the same setting made available through the narratives to the different researchers we will not only consider the impact of the array of interpretations offered to a wider audience but also how this process may impact upon each researcher’s reporting of their own setting.

* Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC project RES-062-23-1629, 2009-2012) ‘Becoming literate in faith settings: Language and Literacy learning in the lives of new Londoners.’ Directors: Prof Eve Gregory (principal), Dr John Jessel, Dr Charmian Kenner, Dr Vally Lytra and Mahera Ruby. Researchers
“It’s a very difficult question isn’t it?” Exploring voices in a multilingual education research dialogue: researcher, interpreter and research participant negotiating meanings

Jane Andrews
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Writers within applied linguistics and beyond have argued for research studies using interview to acknowledge all participants’ contributions to that data e.g. Mann (2011), Kvale & Brinkmann (2009). When research encounters involve multilingual participants who do not share each other’s languages interpreters are brought in as mediators and the issues of how to represent the research encounter and the data transparently are particularly significant. Temple & Edwards (2002) have called for interpreters to be recognised as co-researchers within research projects, given their impact on co-constructing the interaction. In this presentation, data from a single education research interview is explored using insights from sociocultural theory and interactional sociolinguistics in order to develop understandings of how knowledge was co-constructed in this instance of a multilingual research encounter.

Establishing methodologies for researching multilingually
Prue Holmes, Durham University
Richard Fay, The University of Manchester
Jane Andrews, The University of the West of England
Mariam Attia, Durham University

Many sites of (social science and other) research demonstrate considerable linguistic and intercultural complexity, a condition of the late modern world. Managing this complexity requires skilful linguistic flexibility among researchers and researched and appropriate multilingual research practice. Whilst there are many opportunities for such multilingual research practice, there are also many constraints; the research training provided for scholars researching where more than one language is present tends to overlook or discount the possibilities for and complexities of researching multilingually. This paper reports on the findings from an AHRC-funded project* that sought to explore how researchers develop awareness of researching multilingually, and the methodological complexities and opportunities this awareness creates. Data drawn from 35 seminar presentations and 25 researcher profiles indicated researcher need to negotiate complex practices and processes: institutional practices, multilingual interviews, language choices, cross-linguistic data-analysis concerns, interpretation and translation, language politics, and researcher flexibility. However, researchers also identified opportunities that afforded rich insights, and the potential to navigate power imbalances. Our analysis of data enables us to propose an emergent theoretical framework for researching multilingually, which includes researcher intentionality, relationality, and research spaces. The project outcomes offer support for researchers for whom researching multilingually is a possibility and often a necessity.

*Project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), January – December 2012. The title of the project was “Researching multilingually” and the members of the research team were Prue Holmes, Durham University, Richard Fay, The University of Manchester, Jane Andrews, The University of the West of England and Mariam Attia, Durham University