

BAAL/LAGB COMMITTEE FOR LINGUISTICS IN EDUCATION

Minutes of Meeting 26 held in Room 415, University of London Institute of Education, on Friday, 15th May 1987.

26.1 Attendance

26.1.1 Present at the meeting: Colin Biggs, Tom Bloor, Jill Bourne, Peter Gannon, Vee Harris, Dick Hudson, Joyce Morris, Bryan Newton, Katharine Perera, John Rudd, and Mike Stubbs (in the Chair).

26.1.2 Apologies were received from Gillian Brown, Mahendra Verma and Michael Hammond.

26.1.3 Mike Stubbs reported that John Trim was retiring from his position as Director of CLIE and would be taking the opportunity to withdraw from a number of other commitments, including membership of CLIE.

26.1.4 Peter Gannon informed the Committee of the sudden death of Geoffrey Thornton. The Committee wished to record its deep regret at the news and its appreciation of his considerable contribution to English studies and to the work of CLIE itself.

26.2. Minutes of Meeting 25

The minutes of meeting 25 were amended to take account of the misspelling of Katharine Perera's name.

26.3 Matters arising

26.3.1 It was agreed that Jill Bourne (BAAL) would replace Mike Stubbs (LAGB) as chairperson of the Committee, and Colin Biggs (LAGB) would replace Tom Bloor (BAAL) as its secretary. In this way, the posts would continue to rotate between BAAL and LAGB members. The change would come into effect at the first CLIE meeting of 1988. Tom Bloor agreed to become the new editor of the CLIE working papers and Mike Stubbs thanked Dick Hudson for the significant amount of work he had undertaken in that post.

26.3.2 Mike Stubbs tabled a revised version of the paper he had drafted on behalf of CLIE for submission to the Kingman Committee. He summarised the changes he had made in the light of the proposals received from various members of the Committee and agreed that additional amendments could be made to take into account the suggestions made during the meeting itself. It was noted that the CLIE submission and those from BAAL and LAGB had reached similar conclusions.

26.4 LAGB Educational Linguistics Section: future topics

It was agreed that possible future topics might be (in order of interest): the linguistic profile of a typical 5 year-old, grammatical functions, and diatypic variation regarding school leavers' competence.

26.5 GCSE oral assessment schemes

Bryan Newton had already circulated sample materials from the examination boards. He described some of the difficulties teachers were currently facing in implementing the examination and explained that they had been considerably exacerbated by the failure to provide adequate in-service training. Practical problems included coming to grips with the very complex marking schemes but questions had also been raised as to whether the criteria provided for oral assessment could be used to reach the objective judgement the boards required. During in-service sessions, teachers had found it difficult to reach a consensus about how they would grade a particular performance. The Committee then discussed at some length a range of problems posed by oral assessment. Social, cultural and personality factors are likely to influence perception of language skills. The question of gender had also to be considered, since, for example, men may place a greater emphasis on the ability to argue forcibly, and women on the ability to listen sensitively. Since the Committee wished to respond in a practical way to the current situation, it was agreed that members would view a video of pupils talking and attempt to assess their performance according to the criteria laid down by the boards. It was felt that should these prove impracticable or inappropriate, the Committee might usefully make a statement to that effect. It was also suggested that it might be helpful to describe some of the assumptions about language that might interfere with teachers' attempts to assess pupils objectively. Members of the Committee might work individually on a specific area, outlining, for example, what teachers need to know about regional accents and dialects in order to be fair to pupils. The statements might then be collated by the summer of 1988 to form the basis of a CLIE working paper to be submitted to the examining boards, the various associations involved in the teaching of English and the recently established National Oracy Project.

26.6 Any other business

26.6.1 Mike Stubbs explained that both BAAL and LAGB would be holding their conferences in Exeter in September, and that there would be one day when the two conferences would overlap. It had been suggested that it might be useful if some provision was made in the two timetables for members of both associations to share common interests. Jill Bourne and Colin Biggs agreed to explore the suggestion.

26.6.2 John Rudd invited members to send unwanted books to the Ranfurly Library Service, which distributes books and journals to institutions in the Third World.

26.7 Date and Venue of next meeting

Meeting 27 will be held on Friday, November 6th at 3.00 p.m. at the London Institute of Education.