

COMMITTEE FOR LINGUISTICS IN EDUCATION
Minutes of Meeting no. 58

Monday 16 February 1998

at The University of London Institute of Education

(Minutes taken by Dick Hudson and developed by Roz Ivanic)

Glossary of Acronyms:

ALA	Association for Language Awareness
ALL	Association for Language Learning
BAAL	British Association for Applied Linguistics
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
CSaLT	College of Speech and Language Therapists
DfEE	Dept for Education and Employment
ESL	English as a Second Language
GEST	Grants for Educational Support and Training
LAGB	Linguistics Association of Great Britain
NAAE	National Association for Advisers of English
NALDIC	National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum
NATE	National Association for the Teaching of English
NATECLA	National Association for the Teaching of English and Community Languages to Adults
NCMTT	National Council for Mother Tongue Teaching
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
UKRA	United Kingdom Reading Association

1. Attendance

Present: Richard Aplin (ALA), Greg Brooks (BAAL), Henrietta Dombey (BAAL), Charlotte Franson (NALDIC), Annabel Hemstedt (BSA), Richard Hudson (LAGB: acting Secretary), Pam Hulme (UKRA), Roz Ivanic (BAAL: acting Chair), Alison Sealey (BAAL).

Apologies: Tom Bloor (BAAL), Jenny Cheshire (LAGB), Kersti Borjars (LAGB), Gunther Kress (co-opted), Brian Street (co-opted), Helen Sunderland (NATECLA), Larry Trask (LAGB), Nicola Woods (LAGB)

2. Minutes of Meeting 57 on 12 Nov 1997: any amendments

Attendance: add Pam Hulme

Format: add a glossary of acronyms (as above). Include details of discussion, but without names.

Item 13: Annabel Hemstedt was present and gave suggestions for amendments which would more correctly represent the work of the BSA in the minutes. A revised version of Item 13 from the previous minutes, with added or changed wording in italics, is attached. This is the version which will subsequently be taken as the official record.

3. Matters arising

Item 5. Three books for teaching Knowledge About Language to trainee teachers are worth considering:

- D. Wray and J. Medwell, (?details?). This is weak on syntax but covers other topics O.K.
- G. Barton and D. Crystal, *Discovering Grammar*. Good, but only about syntax.
- R. Carter et al. *Working with Texts: A core book for language analysis*. Routledge.
A good general book.

Item 13. It was noted that the B.S.A. is currently commissioning research from the N.F.E.R. into its Family Literacy initiative - see 6c below.

4. Future meetings

Wednesday 17 June 1998 (instead of 22 June as in the last minutes):

we will invite Greg Brooks to give his postponed talk about standards of literacy.

Wednesday 4 November 1998,

Nicola will invite John Stannard, or someone else from the Standards and Effectiveness Unit to talk about the National Literacy Strategy and its relation to the National Curriculum (he couldn't manage the June data);

ACTION. Roz to get hold of copies of the National Literacy Strategy to be distributed in advance. Even though JS can't speak until November, we should discuss the NLS as an agenda item at the June meeting.

Future dates: a preference for Wednesdays: 17 February 1999
16 June 1999.

5. Publications

We deferred discussion of the future of the CLIE Working Papers

6. Basic Skills Agency: a presentation by Annabel Hemstedt

Background

Basic Skills = literacy, numeracy and communication

The BSA is an agency of the DFEE which was originally set up to develop teaching of basic skills among adults but is now concerned with the full age range. It has a small research budget of its own but commissions large-scale research from e.g. City University, Thames Valley University, the Institute of Education and NFER.

Report on recent projects

a. BSA continues the analysis of the two large cohort studies (originally 15-17,000 in each cohort):

The National Child Development Study (cohort born in 1958)

The British Cohort Study (cohort born in 1970)

The BSA has commissioned research from City University (John Bunner) on the life circumstances of those with weaknesses in basic skills.

Findings:

- A cycle of disadvantage. Such people disproportionately:
 - risk unemployment;
 - had parents who lacked interest and involvement in the local community.

- Re literacy, BSA has found that it can deteriorate after school: 'Use it or lose it!'
- Weak adult writers tend strongly to have been weak writers at Year 1; the most important influences are the parents' social background.

- b. In 1997, 106 secondary schools (15,000 young people) were involved in a project on compensatory measures, with pre- and post-tests by NFER/Nelson ('Progress in English' tests).

Findings:

- Best results were produced by 30-60 hours of intensive structured work in Year 7.
- Benefits declined after 60 hours.
- Involvement of parents or of IT in itself, without structure, made no difference.

The most successful schools will now be funded to train other schools.

- c. A study by NFER of family literacy (= teaching aimed to improve literacy of the parents as well as of the children). This study was done in 94-5, with a follow-up in 96-7.

Finding: It works!

Family literacy is now built into GEST (now replaced by the Standards Fund). Originally it was aimed at ages 3-6 English speakers but it has since been extended to Years 4 and 7, and to some minority communities. NFER is evaluating these extensions as well as the effectiveness of the adult literacy programmes.

7. Reports from member organisations

- 7.1 BSA may start to study the literacy of young people who are 'looked after' by the Local Authority (in care), and ESOL provision for young adults.
- 7.2 NFER is starting a longitudinal study in Oxford of 0-5 year olds, focussing on language and early literacy.
- 7.3 UKRA is running three national conferences linked to the National Year of Reading.
- 7.4 ALA has an international conference in Quebec. Its bibliography on Language Awareness produced a few months ago has sold out already.
- 7.5 BAAL has its annual conference in Manchester 10-12 September, with the theme 'Languages and Literacies'.
- 7.6 There will be a conference at the University of Warwick of the International Federation for the Teaching of English (7-10/7/99).
- 7.7 There will be a Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Conference 26 - 27 June in Derby on the Theme 'Celebrating Literacies'.

8. The TTA Consultation document on the Initial Teacher Training National Curriculum for Secondary English

This document is freely available from the TTA (<http://www.teach-tta.gov.uk> or 0845 6060323). Comments were solicited with a deadline of 3/4/98.

After some discussion which revealed differences of opinion among CLIE members the following points were agreed:

- a. The document badly underestimates the task of preparing trainee teachers in the study of language, for which most of them have had virtually no prior training, either at school or at university. They need to learn a great deal of technical terminology and concepts, but more importantly they need to learn a new attitude to language: to look *at* language rather than *through* it. This learning is not a matter of filling 'gaps' by 'supported self-study' (p. 20, #25), but of quite fundamental learning from scratch; it needs systematic guided study, with practice and time for discussion.

- b. There should be more explicit recognition of the distinctive status of students whose mother tongue is not English. Some of these need special teaching provision, but they should not all be seen only as a source of problems. They are an important resource for teaching about language.

9. **Discussion on the place of linguistics in education.**
This item was deferred for lack of time.

10. **AOB.**
None

11. **NALDIC: Presentation by Charlotte Franson**

Background

Founded about 1992 as a professional organisation for teachers of ESL in schools, it now has about 500-600 members, and is aiming to grow further. It is generally recognised as the professional body for ESL teachers and works (hard!) to promote ESL teaching as a profession with its own body of expertise.

About 7% of pupils are from minority communities.

In 1992, about 11,000 ESL teachers were employed by LEAs.

In 1998 the number was down to between 4,000 and 5,000.

ESL teaching tends to be heavily influenced by cultural and equal-opportunities considerations rather than by actual language needs.

There are very few courses on ESL teaching: Birmingham, Thames Valley University and maybe Southampton, all at MA level.

Other related associations:

National Council for Mother-Tongue Teaching and Association for Language Learning (which promotes use of Mother Tongue in teaching)

NATECLA (which promotes ESL for adults)

Activities

- An annual conference for practitioners, with invited visiting speakers (e.g. Fillmore, Brice Heath, Tosi)

- A book: C. Leung and C. Cable (eds.) English as an Additional Language (9.99 + 1.50 p&p from NALDIC, South West Herts LCSC, Holywell School Site, Tolpits Lane, Watford, Herts WD1 8NT)

- Interest groups: research; early years; L2 Acquisition

- A newsletter

13. Reports from representatives of organisations

There was considerable discussion about the B.S.A.'s *role with respect to consultation meetings in relation to including the adult sector in plans* to develop a national language policy over the next five years, including a strategy for ESOL. Consultation has focused at schools level, few consulted colleges; Individuals were being consulted, but not organisations such as NATECLA.

- Important not to take for granted what is considered effective practice.
- Communities need to be identified and consulted; research needs to be commissioned.
- In an earlier meeting Ali Houas had pointed out that people don't know what is happening from one region to another, nor do they know exactly what is needed.,
- Bookmarks with keywords *from the framework of the National Literacy Project* on them are being distributed by B.S.A. It was noted that these embody a quite different philosophy of reading development from the one promulgated by the *Read and Write Together* booklets for parents which were previously available.
- *It was suggested* that the B.S.A.'s justification for *some* approaches is self-referential - not taking account of research by others in the field.
- *Funding is available* for family literacy based on the BSA model *via GEST*.