

COMMITTEE FOR LINGUISTICS IN EDUCATION
Minutes of Meeting no. 61 (DRAFT)

Wednesday 17 February 1999

at The University of London Institute of Education

1. Attendance

Present: Richard Aplin (ALA), Tom Bloor (BAAL), Charlotte Franson (NALDIC), Pam Hulme (UKRA), Roz Ivanić (BAAL: Secretary of CLIE), Ewa Jaworska (LAGB), Gunther Kress (co-opted), Brian Street (co-opted), Alison Sealey (BAAL), Nicola Woods (LAGB: Chairperson of CLIE).

Apologies: Greg Brooks (BAAL), Kersti Borjars (LAGB), Jenny Cheshire (LAGB), Henrietta Dombey (NATE), Richard Hudson (LAGB), Joe Reynolds (RCSaLT), Helen Sunderland (NATECLA).

2. Minutes of Meeting 60 on 4 November 1998: amendments

2.1 Brian Street was present

2.2 *Item 3 and 5.5:* The journal is called 'Language Awareness', not 'The Journal of Language Awareness'

2.3 *Item 5.12* Should be cut, as uninformative.

2.4 *Item 7.3:* The sum being made available by the ESRC is £10,000,000, not the lower figure.

2.5 It was agreed that minutes to be circulated to CLIE members should continue to contain details of discussion, but that a shortened, more impersonal version of them should be produced for publication on the web. !! Nothing since '97 !!

We should also publish dates and agenda for future meetings on the web.

ACTION: Roz and Nicola to arrange this.

3. Matters arising

3.1 *re: Item 5.8:* Katharine Perera was not able to contribute to the LAGB meeting planned for April 1999

3.2 *re: Item 5.9:* We have missed the deadline for a BAAL/CUP seminar proposal for this year, but might try again next year/

3.3 *re: Item 5.15:* Some of these weblinks are in the process of being made.

3.4 *re: Item 7.2:* Details of the QCA National Curriculum Review process, with details of the consultation process and dates, are available on the web (search: QCA). Printoffs were circulated.

3.5 *re: Item 7.3:* The guidelines for applying for ESRC funding of research projects within their Teaching and Learning Initiative will be ready in the autumn. Meanwhile send in proposals for research in this area in the normal way.

4. Dates of future meetings and choice of speakers

16 June 1999: we'll try to get someone from QCA to talk about revisions to the English (? + Languages) National Curriculum. ?

The dates of meetings beyond this are:

3 Nov. 1999

23 Feb. 2000

21 June 2000

and suggested speakers for whichever of these dates they can manage:

: Elizabeth Attenborough: The Year of Reading (but we may have missed the moment for this, as it ends soon)

: Laura Huxford to talk about new developments in relation to Word Level Work in the National Literacy Strategy - Pam Hulme is the contact for Laura.

: Ron Carter to talk about The Definition and role of 'grammar' in the school curriculum.

5. CLIE Membership

5.1. We will receive an updated list of members and contact details for the June meeting.

ACTION: Nicola

5.2 We need to clarify who are BAAL reps and how long they serve for.

ACTION: Alison and Roz

5.3 We need to identify organisations whose representatives are not attending, and ask if their organisations could nominate a different rep. to replace them.

ACTION: Nicola

5.4 We need to decide which 'dyslexia' organisation to invite to attend.

ACTION: Alison, Charlotte and Pam to investigate and let Nicola know.

6. Reports from Representatives

6.1 We are sad to hear that the UKRA president Helen Arnold has died and Greg Brooks, vice-pres. has taken over her responsibilities.

6.2 The UKRA Annual Conference will be in Chester this year. Flyers were circulated.

6.3 Books by Eve Bearne were recommended:

The use of language across the primary curriculum

The use of language across the secondary curriculum

- a course in English language for KS 3

6.4 The next ALA Conference will be in Leicester 26 - 29 June, 2000

6.5 The Sociolinguistics Symposium 2000 will be 27 - 29 April at The University of Western England

6.6 Kings' cross-London *Language and Education Seminars* continue:

The next will be given by David Barton 13 May 1999

ACTION: Nicola to send Brian the CLIE e-mail list so we all know the up-coming programme for this seminar series.

- 6.7 The next NALDIC Conference will be in Leicester 20 November 1999.
Joe Lo Bianco from Australia will be the key speaker on Language Policies for EAL.
- 6.8 There will be a formal launch of The British Institute for English Language Teaching (BIELT) at the IATEFL conference in April.
- 6.9 The next BAAL conference will be in Edinburgh 16 - 18 September.
- 6.10 The National Year of Reading has produced some special 'Literacy' themes on soap-operas such as Brookside.
- 6.11 There will be a special issue of the journal *Language Awareness* on the theme of Critical Language Awareness in June.
- 6.12 The papers from the seminar on *Rethinking Language Education* edited by Constant Leung and Arturo Tosi, will be out soon, published by CILT.
- 6.13 This Year's RaPAL conference will be on the topic *Powerful Literacies*, in Edinburgh 15 - 26 June.
- 6.14 Two events in Lancaster in July:
6 July: Seminar on *Reconciling Language Research with Social and Political Commitments*.
10 - 11 July: Conference: *Discourses and Learning: Theoretical and Applied Perspectives*.
- 6.15 A brief written report was received from Dick Hudson on the one-day conference organised by the QCA which he had attended, on the theme:
The teaching of grammar in English and Modern Foreign Languages
There was particular concern at the statement 'everyone there agreed ... The main block in teaching grammar is teacher ignorance', because a) the NLS framework itself creates ignorance by presenting information about language without references to sources, and by being fraught with linguistic misunderstandings, and b) this sort of statement devalues what teachers do know. //
- 6.16 There was a long discussion about the National Literacy Strategy, stimulated by notes from Dick Hudson on the above, and on a workshop he had attended on it. Some of the points made were:
a) The NLS Glossary contains many linguistic errors and urgently needs to be revised. All members of CLIE were adamant that it was not only inadequate but damaging. There is no strategy for publishing a revision, but Dick Hudson and David Denison have offered to ^{in hand} advise on necessary revisions.
b) Teachers would like to be able to see the wood for the trees in relation to language description, but the NLS framework doesn't help them do this.
c) The NLS is presented as 'facts which everyone knows', and does not contain references for its content, so no-one knows its sources. However, Alison mentioned a publication by Roger Beard which is due out soon which is intended to present the research base for the NLS.
d) The National Numeracy Strategy is actively working to avoid falling into this trap of unreferenced 'facts'.
e) The NLS is masquerading as a definitive descriptive statement in order to function as a prescriptive document. This is the inevitable consequence of focusing on 'correctness' in language description. | ?
f) The requirement to assess learners and teachers on factual knowledge gets in the way of actually understanding about language to help learners learn. | ?

g) It's not just a question of the information (about how language works) but the pedagogy that goes with it. At the moment it's a pedagogy of transmission and surveillance, both for teachers in Initial Teacher Training and for learners in the NLS.

h) The next big move within the NLS is to be an elaboration of what should be involved in Word Level work.

i) Linguists must be showing the government how to do what they want to do better, rather than criticising what they want to do. We identify fundamentals which we all agree on. It was suggested that we CAN agree :

- on certain useful terms and definitions

- that there are several different frames and paradigms which might all have something to offer;

- that linguistic theory should not be taken as a metaphor for pedagogy.

j) We must make our contribution useful, butHOW?

ACTION: - Nicola to co-ordinate the writing of a letter from CLIE to TES about the linguistic errors in the National Literacy Strategy glossary, to be sent for approval to chairs of BAAL; and

- Dick is sending a letter on behalf of LAGB;

- Alison has written an article for English in Education:

NLS in search of a theory of language which will reach teachers:

please send a draft to Pam? + bring to next meeting for everyone.

k) Something we can do is ask questions.

l) British linguists might follow the example of LSA (The Linguistics Society of America (?)) - see their website.

m) The TES is a good forum: CLIE could offer a 'Language Column' in which different associated organisations could take turns to give teachers info.

n) The TES has a regular slot called 'English in Focus'. We could encourage them to focus on sentence level work in one of these slots.

o) There are different metaphors for the relationship between linguistic theory and language pedagogy, for example the latter is often thought of as a watering down of the former.

p) what teachers learn about language should include theory and references, and is NOT likely to be the same as what they teach children: NLS conflates these.

7. Raising the profile of Linguistics in Education within BAAL and LAGB

7.1 There has been a good deal of interest in the colloquium Alison Sealey is putting together, entitled: *Relationships between Applied Linguistics and Current Developments in English Language Teaching in English Schools.*

We discussed the possibility of a shorter title, but felt that the current title does signal all the important elements we hope to be included in the discussion.

7.2 The LAGB session is scheduled to take place at the April meeting of LAGB in Manchester: *Language at School: A Place for Linguists.*

The speakers would be Alistair West from the QCA and Chris Brumfit.

8. Insights from linguistics which we consider to be of use to education

In summary, we proposed that language study can be of use for understanding:

1) the characteristics of language, some of which may be taught implicitly and some explicitly;

2) how language is learnt and the nature of language development;

3) the role of language in learning;

4) the discourse about language and education in policy documents and media coverage.

9. **Recommendations for action**
These had been discussed at 6.16

10. **A.O.B.**
None

11. **Speaker and discussion:**

Brian Street:

**NEW LITERACIES IN THEORY AND PRACTICE:
What are the implications for Language in Education?**

The talk was accompanied by a summary handout.

The presentation and discussion raised the following issues:

- 11.1 Why has the government selected particular things to include in the curriculum (and in the NLS Glossary) rather than others?
Particularly, the curriculum doesn't focus on language in **practice** - when and how it's used, as identified in the ethnography of communication.
- 11.2 What conception is the government working with of the relation between schooling and social effectiveness?
- 11.3 The epistemological frame of the NLS document is of knowledge being 'downloaded' and 'retrieved'
- 11.4 There is an unstated assumption that illiteracy = deficit ?
- 11.5 How much should be learnt and known at what ages needs to be addressed more seriously.
- 11.6 It is important for us to be reflective about the rhetorical structures we are embedded in.
- 11.7 At least the NLS brings the topic of understanding how language works back onto the agenda
- 11.8 The NLS document claims to be different from what went before, but isn't. ?