

Tentative content of lectures:

Lecture 1

The English language today: What should we teach?

English has now established itself as a language learnt predominantly for interaction with other *non*-native users. We will interrogate the concept of a native speaker (NS) as well as the reified notion of ‘proper’, ‘Standard English’, examining whether it is an appropriate model and objective for most students. We will discuss how non-native users adapt and variably alter English *ad hoc* to suit their communicative purpose, thus preserving their identity without striving to mimic NSs’ conventions. These considerations will steer us towards a discussion of the implications for language pedagogy, with special attention devoted to Chinese-L₁ learners, and the assets of non-native speaker teachers. We will also look at the profile of a typical plurilingual speaker in order to reflect on the realities of language use vis-à-vis current language testing practices. Indications will also be provided for academic instruction and the translation and interpreting profession.

Lecture2

Bi- and multilingualism and bilingual education: Overview of the field

Multilingualism is a natural potential available to every normal human being. Despite the attention it has attracted among researchers over the past few decades, many of its complex mechanisms still remain a mystery.

Following an overview of research, I will commence by dispelling the most frequently encountered misconceptions and prejudice surrounding the notions of bi-/multilingualism and bilingual education. Although several stereotypes have been debunked by a bulk of research, some of the myths still linger, and the harmful aftermath of some early (methodologically unsound) studies purporting that growing up with two languages ‘rattling around’ the head is detrimental to both linguistic and cognitive development persists even today in folk psychology, and could become a self-fulfilling prophecy when multilinguals begin to perform worse than average as a result of stigmatisation (Tong *et al.* 2008; Conger 2010; Oades-Sese *et al.* 2011; Peukert 2015:2). For instance, even very recently insistence on acquiring the heritage language by children in immigrant families was considered an obstacle to learning the language of instruction in the new environment (Hopf 2005; Esser 2006). This is why I will then move on to an exposition of the benefits brought about by speaking two or more languages, in terms of both verbal and non-verbal abilities, including the most

recent discoveries that bilingualism brings long-term neurological benefits which may significantly stave off the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

In the last two years, this idyllic image has been marred by a spate of studies questioning the 'bilingual cognitive advantage' – the idea that, just as other exercise such as musical training or juggling enhances 'executive control', so does lifelong practice of managing two or more active languages and the constant need to select one while actively suppressing the others. The debate has swept through the front pages of scholarly journals and science columns in the popular press. This battlefield landscape will be portrayed, and the reasons for the disagreement explicated (Paradowski 2017). I will conclude the second part of the talk with a mention of the few areas where bilinguals do perform lower than matched monolinguals, although most of the differences are only detectable in laboratory settings and do not affect daily functioning.

Two languages in the mind not only affect the cognitive structure and functioning, but also have subtle—and sometimes non-trivial—influence on the speaker's decisions. In the last minutes of the talk I will report the results of our study investigating the hypothesis that when bilinguals use their first language, they are being more personal and subjective, whereas use of their second language renders the content more distanced and objective. The findings of our experiment into bilingual emotions (Gawinkowska, Paradowski & Bilewicz 2013) suggest that there is more to the story than a simple emotional distancing explanation; instead, switching into one's non-native language seems to liberate the speaker from social norms and political correctness. Subsequent studies by other researchers have offered further support for the hypothesis, showing how language choice impacts moral decision-making.

Lecture 3

Embodiment and language

In the 'orthodox' view, cognition has been seen as manipulation of symbolic, mental representations, separate from the body. This dualistic Cartesian approach characterised much of twentieth-century thought and is still taken for granted by many people today.

Language, too, has for a long time been treated across scientific domains as a system operating largely independently from perception, action, and the body (articulatory-perceptual organs notwithstanding). This could lead one into believing that to emulate linguistic behaviour, it would suffice to develop 'software' operating on abstract representations that would work on any computational machine.

Yet the brain is not the sole problem-solving resource we have at our disposal. The

disembodied picture is inaccurate for numerous reasons, which will be presented addressing the issue of the indissoluble link between cognition, language, body, and environment in understanding and learning. We will talk about the discoveries in neurolinguistics since the identification of Wernicke's and Broca's areas, and the complex yet fascinating nature of the localisation of language processing. The awareness-raising talk will conclude with implications and suggestions for pedagogy, relevant for disciplines as diverse as instruction in language, mathematics, and sports.

Lecture 4

Languages within and without: How the languages we know and our social interactions influence second/foreign language development

Familiarity with more than one language and contact with speakers of other languages have a pronounced effect on second/foreign language (S/FL) acquisition. We will commence by looking at the cross-linguistic interactions that take place in the mind of an individual going through the process of SLA.

Cross-linguistic influence (CLI) – the transfer of features from a language already mastered to a new one – is one of the key factors in—if not the prime and defining characteristic of—second and third language acquisition (SLA/TLA). The class will start off by tracking the rollercoaster character of modern transfer research from the incipient conviction in the 1950s that L1 was the dominant if not sole factor shaping the acquisition process, through a pendulum swing to the marginalisation of the issue, on to its 'rehabilitation' with a concurrent recognition of several putatively modulating factors.

The discussion will then proceed to the various manifestations of CLI as well as the its multidirectionality, since it is not only the earlier-acquired tongues that have bearing on the new one, but all the speaker's languages influence one another. I will describe five competing perspectives that have informed current investigations into morphosyntactic CLI in TLA contexts.

While investigations of CLI usually take a cognitive perspective, the learner never functions in a vacuum. Barring hermits studying on their own from textbooks, dedicated software, or smartphone apps—which already constitutes a form of interaction, however indirect—most language learners have opportunities to use the language with others. Accordingly, an increasing number of SLA models and theories have been taking social factors into account. The second part of the talk will adopt such a view of language acquisition from the prism of social networks. A number of recent studies have shown that social contacts (friends, family, etc.) determine our behaviour more than previously thought. Research has suggested that the network of

acquaintances has more impact on whether a person is going to smoke, become overweight, or come into conflict with the law than individual variables postulated before (such as e.g. mother's education).

We will discuss the results of an empirical project employing the innovative methodology of social network analysis (SNA) to an investigation of the influence of peer interaction dynamics and social graph topology among foreign exchange students on measurable SLA/TLA outcomes. The study provides new insight into the link between social relations and language acquisition, showing how social network configuration and peer interaction dynamics are stronger predictors of L₂/L₃ performance than individual factors such as attitude or motivation, and offers a novel methodology for investigating the phenomena as well as practical recommendations for teachers preparing their students for overseas sojourns.