

## DOCTORAL SEMINAR ABSTRACTS

### 1. KNIGHT, Janine

Elena Barberà (UOC) and Melinda Dooley (UAB)

*Dimensions of learner agency in online spoken interaction tasks and the effect on time in the target language*

Spoken interaction is central to language gains in second language acquisition theory. Tasks are often used by teachers and designers so that time interacting in the target language is guaranteed. For online courses, time spent in spoken interaction in the target language (henceforth TL) is desired by learners, teachers and designers alike therefore how to achieve and maintain it is a priority. Learner choices and how they intersect before and during a task may impact on time spent interacting in the TL

The purpose of the study is to analyse learner choices and how learners act on these choices as an expression of learners' agency and how these relate to time spent in the TL. We explore three dimensions of learner agency relating to 1) language choice (inferred and explicit); 2) technology for synchronous online interaction and 3) learner time mode preference and how they intersect during in a task-based synchronous computer mediated communication (SCMC) event for spoken interaction.

The research questions are:

- 1) *How do learners exercise their agency in a synchronous online spoken interaction event in relation to a) choice and control of technological task features; b) choice and control of language used; c) choice of time modality and how do these choices intersect?*
- 2) *What affect do these choices and control have on time spent in the target language?*

Based on peer-to-peer audio recordings of four dyads in an English as a Second Language online course, and confirmation of 'offscreen' behaviour from learner questionnaires, a mixed-method case study approach was employed incorporating a semi-ecological approach during data collection.

The participants are students in English as a Foreign Language class (level B2.1 CEFR) part of their degree programme, at a 100% virtual university. There are 8 adult students: 3 male and 5 female, 26-55 years old. Students are bilingual (Catalan and Spanish) with English as an additional language.

Results suggest that 1) in online tasks use of the L1 can occur in task management (Macaro, 2005) which leads to optimal time in the TL or it can occur in management of task performance which leads to minimal interaction time in the TL; 2) affordances of technology can support language choice as avoidance as part of a wider learner avoidance strategy (Musk, 2012) during ‘off-screen’ behaviour or can support language choice as conscious language transfer; 3) one plurilingual trajectory leads to extended time in the TL whereas another plurilingual trajectory does not.

Findings highlight that plurilingual practices can be detrimental or instrumental to time spent in the target language. Learners can be multilingual subjects (Kramersch, 2009) who have control of their two (or more) languages in authentic communication or learners’ can be subjects that avoid initial TL use as a response to antecedents to choice they make such as anxiety. In addition, the results suggest a reconfiguration of how language choice is studied from a sociocultural perspective, to include avoidance strategies as choice as well as conscious language transfer as choice.

## **2. LOHE, Viviane**

Supervisor Daniela Elsner

### *Developing Language Awareness in Primary School Children through Multilingual Virtual Talking Books*

The research project is embedded in the EU-funded project MuViT (Multilingual Virtual Talking Books). Multilingual Talking Books are computer based storybooks for young learners in five different languages (English, German, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish) with corresponding tasks. The stories as well as the tasks aim at language sensitivity and the development of Language Awareness. The study analyses if and how the software MuViT (independent variable) fosters the development of Language Awareness (dependent variable). Language Awareness is defined as “explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use” (ALA 1992). It is believed that the MuViT Software can enhance Language Awareness on both the cognitive and the affective level. To evaluate the hypothesis, a pre-post-comparison design has been elaborated. The test is divided into two parts:

1. A performance test that assesses the cognitive level of Language Awareness (awareness of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, lexicology and orthography, as well as metalinguistic competence)

2. A questionnaire that evaluates the affective level of Language Awareness (attitudes towards languages and multilingualism, interest in languages and language learning).

Eventually, the pre-test and post-test results of both the experimental and the control group will be analyzed and compared.

The pilot study place from January 2013 to June 2013. The population that was investigated consisted of 27 pupils, ages 8 to 10, in the fourth grade of an elementary school in Moers, Germany. As for the results of the pilot study, the experimental group (EG) showed recognisable tendencies to answer more questions in the post-test. The reason for that probably is that the work with MuViT including several languages took away the fear to deal with the languages. For the affective level, there are not as many differences between the EG and the CG. Nevertheless, the experimental group's attitudes towards the sound of English and Turkish are more positive than the attitude of the control group. Interestingly, the opposite is true for Russian and Spanish. Having worked with the software, the experimental group tends to judge the sound of these languages more negatively than before. For the cognitive level, it can be reported that EG shows better results with regards to recognition of lexical items. In English, for example, EG lists more words. It is assumed that this is either because they actually learned the words with the help of the software or because they are more courageous to write down the words after having received the treatment.

The main study took place in the first half of 2014. The study was conducted at a primary school in Frankfurt/Main, Germany. 49 pupils were tested, many of them having other linguistic backgrounds than German. The study was conducted with same procedure as the pilot study. During the main study, it could be seen that the work with MuViT triggers communication about the languages the pupils read the stories in as well as about language in general. However, the results are still in the process of being analyzed and final results will be expected in September 2015.

### **3. SUGRANYES ERNEST, Caterina**

*A Plurilingual Approach to Language Teaching in Catalonia: Using Heritage Languages in the Additional Language Classroom*

Dissertation Supervisor: Dra Maria González Davies

The proposal 'A plurilingual Approach to Language Teaching in Catalonia: Using Heritage Languages in the Additional Language Classroom' wishes to establish whether

using heritage languages in the language classroom, that is, adopting a plurilingual approach to language teaching and learning, improves reading skills, writing skills and attitudes towards languages by using translation of children's literature.

### Research questions

1. To what extent can a plurilingual approach to additional language learning and teaching through translation and children's literature improve reading and writing skills?

1.1 Does the use of heritage languages help improve pupil's reading skills in the primary language classroom?

1.2 Does the use of heritage languages help improve pupil's writing skills in the primary language classroom?

2. To what extent can a plurilingual approach to additional language learning and teaching through translation and children's literature affect pupils' attitudes towards learning languages?

2.1 Does the use of heritage languages affect pupil's attitudes towards languages?

3. Are translation projects useful to explore questions 1 and 2?

4. Is children's literature useful to explore questions 1 and 2?

### Aims

1. Establish a theoretical framework and a rationale to include the plurilingual paradigm in Additional Language and Teaching in primary schools in Catalonia

2. Analyse the approach towards the teaching and learning of languages adopted by the Catalan education system according to official government education decrees.

3. Observe the languages at the chosen school and at the pupils' home

3.1 Observe and record the beliefs, experiences and perceptions of pupils and teachers regarding how their own languages and the languages they are teaching and learning at school are used.

3.2 Observe what role heritage languages play within the chosen school context

3.3 Observe pupils and teachers attitudes towards language learning

3.4 Observe pupils and teacher's attitudes towards language learning using all the language repertoire to learn an additional language (translation)

3.5 Observe pupils and teacher's attitudes towards using language learning through children's literature.

4. Design learning materials based on a plurilingual approach to additional language learning and teaching according to the theoretical framework.

### Methodology

The research paradigm is quasi experimental, interpretative and sociocritical and is based on grounded theory. The study is developed over a 6 month period and in two differentiated phases: Phase I is exploratory (observation and analysis of learning situations). Phase II is experimental. Both qualitative and quantitative will be collected. All data will be used comparatively in order to triangulate the results.

In order to gather the data mentioned above, the following Instruments have been used:

1. Perception and belief questionnaire (González Davies, 2014)
2. Language use questionnaire (Ng Bee Chin & Wigglesworth, 2000)
3. Attitude and Motivation Battery Test (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008)
4. Continuous assessment of activities, tasks and projects in all school languages
5. Researcher and teacher's diary
6. Recording of class situations
7. Semi-structured interviews

### Context and Participants

The study has been developed in 2 fifth year primary school classes in a state school in Barcelona with approximately 50 students.

### Results and conclusions

Initial results seem to suggest the following:

- Pupil's writing and reading skills seem to improve through the use of children's literature as focus is on content more than on form
- Pupils are more relaxed in class as they are able to use their own heritage languages and therefore self-esteem increases through the use of heritage languages
- Pupils have different competences in heritage language and read their own language through English (spontaneous translation).
- Teachers need intercultural competence in order to act 'plurilingually'.

These results are drawn from the researcher's diary and are preliminary as the study finishes this week.

#### **4.XUE, Lin**

##### *Teaching practice in the field of language teaching: stabilization, evolution and interpretation*

Supervisor: Francine Cicurel and Jean-Paul Narcy-Combes

This presentation aims to discuss how foreign language teachers view the phenomena of multilingualism, that is, the presence of non-targeted languages in class. By following two teachers of French as a foreign language and one teacher of Chinese as a foreign language during one semester, we try to see, on one hand, their beliefs concerning the function of non-targeted languages in language learning and teaching, and on the other hand, if their beliefs coincide with their effective teaching practices and the factors that could possibly intervene in their decision-making.

The term of *teacher cognition* involves practically all the elements related to teaching that teachers possess: knowledge, representation, experience, personal theories, etc. (Borg, 2003, Cicurel, 2011). Teacher cognition is not constructed just at the starting date of teacher-training or the teacher's career. "Teachers teach the way they were taught" (*apprenticeship of observation*) so that teachers' personal pathway and their cultural background may (or, more definite "pervades") pervade their way of thinking (Heaton and Mickelson, 2002: 51, Lortie, 1975, Johnson, 1994: 450). In an exolingual context in which learners interact with a native-speaker teacher, if learners share the same first language, they may communicate spontaneously in this language other than the targeted one. Thus, the way that the involved teachers perceive and view this phenomenon can in a certain way be explained by their previous learning and teaching experience. Furthermore, language teachers always work in a certain institution. The local educational constraints, at nation, community and institution levels, also shape teaching practice.

The three participating teachers work in different contexts and all face a relatively homogenous targeted public. Two of them are native speakers of French and teachers of French as a foreign language: Godwin works in an Alliance Française in China while Noémie teaches French to a group of Chinese students who are entering a master's program in Paris. As for Liu, native speaker of Chinese and teacher of Chinese as a foreign language, he teaches Chinese to undergraduate French students in France.

Each participating teacher was followed for one semester through classroom observation and different kinds of interviews based on one course. First, two kinds of semi-directive interviews were implemented. The pre-semestral, narrative interview aimed to reconstruct biographically the participating teachers' teaching and learning pathways, in order to reveal their understanding of the various issues regarding teaching practice. Further, what we named post-class interviews, were short interviews conducted immediately after every class with the participating teacher in order to have their

spontaneous reaction to the class just ended. Stimulated-recall in the form of an interview of self-confrontation was also conducted with each teacher. Teachers were invited to interpret their actions by visioning the video recording of classes at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the semester. All the interviews were conducted in the participating teacher's first language and transcribed. The excerpts related to phenomena of multilingualism in class were then selected for further discourse analysis.

We could see, by the first approach of the corpus, the three participating teachers' view of the presence of non-targeted languages and their attitudes of these languages in class were contextually.

## **5. Martínez Ortega, Francisco Javier**

### *Acercamiento etnográfico a prácticas letradas digitales en el aula de inglés ESO 1x1*

Supervision Daniel Cassany

Actualmente se hacen esfuerzos por aprovechar las Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación (TIC) en la educación básica principalmente por dos motivos: la incorporación de los alumnos a la sociedad del conocimiento y la mejora de los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Aunque la tarea es muy general, una parte importante de ésta se relaciona con el uso de la lengua escrita en TIC. Llámense *prácticas letradas digitales*, *literacidad digital*, o incluso, desarrollo de *competencias digitales*, el objetivo es el aprovechamiento de “maneras de hacer” con herramientas digitales. Por ello nos hicimos las preguntas: ¿cómo se concibe la tarea de la incorporación de TIC en las aulas ESO 1x1?, ¿qué prácticas letradas digitales están implicadas?, ¿cómo se apropian estas prácticas tanto profesores como alumnos en diferentes asignaturas?

Puesto que el uso de una herramienta no se puede concebir sin una necesidad específica en circunstancias específicas, los fenómenos que nos conciernen deben ser investigados en el contexto y circunstancias donde se desarrollan (perspectiva sociocultural). Por lo anterior exponemos la noción de *acercamiento etnográfico* como una importante aportación de la etnografía al estudio de prácticas letradas. Si una etnografía implicaría el abordaje de las prácticas culturales de un determinado contexto, un acercamiento etnográfico se limita a abordar un conjunto de éstas; en nuestro caso nuestro contexto de estudio es un instituto de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, la asignatura de inglés de 1º y las prácticas que nos conciernen serían letradas y digitales.

Los conceptos *emic* y *etic* sirven como ejes de indagación y recopilación de datos: por un lado los discursos de los actores implicados brindando indicios de cómo conciben sus prácticas (entrevistas, comunicación escrita, etc.), y por otro lado la actividad de éstos observada y documentada gracias a la inmersión en el contexto (diario de campo,

registros de observación, grabación de audio o video, etc.). Así discurso y actividad se complementan (aun siendo discordantes) integrando un objeto de estudio de mayor concreción. La triangulación de los planteamientos institucionales, los discursos y prácticas de los profesores, las circunstancias del contexto y la perspectiva del investigador brinda una retroalimentación significativa para la práctica educativa.

## **6.WALTER, Rebecca**

*The plurilingual language use in an immersion context. A qualitative study*

Supervision Olga Esteve Ruescas