

School of Language and Communication Studies

Autumn 2011

Research Seminar Series



Monday 17 October: 5.30 to 7.00 pm – Room Arts 0.30

Museums and their international visitors – what might linguists contribute to their experience?

Robin Cranmer, University of Westminster

One aspect of globalisation is a significant increase in international tourism. At the same time, both practitioners and theorists working for or with museums and galleries frequently engage in forms of discourse emphasising their sensitivity to the varied experiences of visitors and their desire to respond to them. Yet whether the medium of communication with international visitors is web-based, an audio-guide or a leaflet, it is rare in the UK for them to find information in foreign languages which is anything more than a relatively literal translation of an English source text. The focus on the needs of international visitors is, therefore, limited to their linguistic needs, quite narrowly defined, whilst ignoring the crucial broader cultural needs which many strands of research in the Humanities and Social Sciences would predict international visitors to tend to have.

This paper argues that this situation is unsatisfactory and explores how it might be improved and what role linguists, in collaboration with museums and galleries, might play in moving things forward. It reports on and evaluates an AHRC project involving major museums and galleries in London and linguists from the University of Westminster whose aim was to produce welcome leaflets fully recognising cultural as well as linguistic difference. The outcomes of this collaboration are then used as a starting point for a more theoretical discussion of the roles linguists might play in these contexts.

Robin Cranmer is Senior Lecturer in Intercultural Communication and Language Teaching Methodology at the University of Westminster. As well as teaching and doing research into Intercultural Communication he jointly co-ordinates an EU project in this area.

Monday 7 November 5.30 to 7.00pm – Room Arts 0.30

Metaphor, creativity and reconceptualisation

Elena Semino, Lancaster University

The aim of this talk is to show how metaphor can be used creatively to express and encourage new thinking in a wide range of domains of activity. I begin by briefly introducing the theory of metaphor that has been developed over the last few decades within cognitive linguistics. I then place the notions of 'conventional' and 'novel' metaphors within this theory, and focus particularly on how novel metaphors have the potential to foster new ways of thinking about familiar topics. I then provide examples of the reconceptualising potential of novel metaphors in different domains of activity, including literature, politics, music, and health and illness. I hope to show that metaphor 'matters' well beyond the specific concerns of scholars in particular fields, such as cognitive linguistics.

Elena Semino is Professor of Linguistics and Verbal Art in the Department of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University. She works in the areas of stylistics, corpus linguistics and metaphor studies. She is author of *Language and World Creation in Poems and Other Texts* (Longman, 1997) and *Metaphor in Discourse* (CUP, 2008), co-author (with Mick Short) of *Corpus Stylistics: Speech, Writing and Thought Presentation in a Corpus of English Writing* (Routledge 2004), and co-editor (with Jonathan Culpeper) of *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis* (John Benjamins, 2002). Email: e.semino@lancaster.ac.uk

Monday 28 November: 5.30 to 7.00pm – Room Arts 0.30

Societies of Intimates and Mature Linguistic Phenomena: Languages in Contact and Isolation

Peter Trudgill, University of East Anglia

According to R.M.W.Dixon, "the most complex grammatical systems are typically found in languages spoken by small tribal groups". Is it possible, therefore, that with the gradual disappearance of such societies, we will also see a worldwide reduction in linguistic complexity?"

Peter Trudgill has been Professor of Linguistics at the University of Reading; Professor of Sociolinguistics at the University of Essex; Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland; and Professor of English Linguistics at the

University of Fribourg, Switzerland. He is currently Emeritus Professor of English Linguistics at Fribourg University; Honorary Professor of Sociolinguistics at the University of East Anglia; Adjunct Professor of Sociolinguistics, Agder University, Kristiansand, Norway; and Adjunct Professor in the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

He is a Fellow of the British Academy and has honorary doctorates from the University of East Anglia; the University of Uppsala, Sweden; and La Trobe University. He is the author of over 30 books, including *The Norfolk Dialect*. His latest book is *Sociolinguistic typology: the social determinants of linguistic structure and complexity* (Oxford).