LDG Biennial Report 2010-2011

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The Literacy and Development Group: an introduction

Formed in 2003, the Literacy and Development Group (LDG) at the University of East Anglia has established a strong reputation for its cutting edge research and original contributions to policy. Researching literacy practices in schools, adult learning programmes, development organisations and universities (in a range of country contexts, including the UK), we focus particularly on issues of power, inequality and social change.

LDG aims to combine theory and practice, to engage actively with key policy institutions in the UK and internationally and to encourage cross-cultural interaction between literacy researchers and practitioners in countries of the North and South. We promote inter-disciplinary perspectives and methodologies, particularly collaboration between anthropologists and economists.

LDG has strong links with development agencies and organisations, including UNESCO, ASPBAE and various NGOs in South Asia. Our regular conferences have brought together researchers working in this area from across the world to debate issues around education, literacy and development, including: ‘Literacy Inequalities’, ‘Gender and Adult Education’, and ‘Literacy, Identity and Social Change’. We have conducted commissioned research for major development agencies, including the mid-term review of the UN Literacy Decade and UNESCO’s Global Monitoring Reports on Education For All.

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Enhancing the research environment
Events and conferences 2010-11

The Literacy and Development Group plays a key role in developing opportunities for UEA staff and students to engage in discussion about education and development issues, through interaction with researchers, policy makers and practitioners from around the UK and worldwide.

Public seminar series on Education and Development

Our regular Education and Development Seminar Series at UEA (established as a cross-school EDU/DEV initiative in 2002) has continued to attract a wide audience of research students, faculty and taught Masters students from across the University. As in previous years, we have invited high profile seminar speakers from a range of institutions working in international education and development, as well as encouraging UEA colleagues to present on their research in this area. During 2010-11, several of the seminars were intended to develop critical debate around the concept of ‘culture’ within development (see presentations by Adrian Holliday, Brian Street). Seminars were also given by two visiting academics attached to LDG: Shirin Zubair (from Pakistan) and Mikko Perkio (from Finland). Seminars during 2010-11 included the following speakers and topics:

- Dr Chris Williams (University of Birmingham), ‘Education and emergencies: wars, disasters, and the end of the planet’
- Prof Rosaleen Howard (Chair of Hispanic Studies, University of Newcastle), ‘Education Reform, Language Policy and Decolonisation in Bolivia under Evo Morales’
- Dr Shirin Zubair (Baha-ud-Din University, Multan, Pakistan) ‘In the Name of Love & Revolution’
- Alan Pagden (UEA School of Education and Lifelong Learning), ‘Drawing Children’s Geographies’
- Mikko Perkio (University of Tampere, Finland) ‘Can active civil society compensate for weak female education? Analysing social development in Bangladesh’
Prof Adrian Holliday (Canterbury Christchurch University), ‘Cultural difference, barrier or opportunity’

Prof Isabel Santaolalla (Roehampton University), ‘Cinema and Technology for Development: an Audiovisual Project in the Saharawi Refugee Camps’

Dr Theresa Lillis (Open University), ‘English, scientific publishing and participation in the global knowledge economy’

Prof Brian Street (King’s College, London and Visiting Professor UEA), ‘The Academic Literacies’ approach to writing support in Universities

One day workshop: cultural diversity, indigenous political organisation and the state in Latin America

This workshop on 12th November 2010 was organised by Sheila Aikman in collaboration with the University of Newcastle and the Latin American Research Programme. There were speakers from Newcastle University and from Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, including the following presenters: Jose Antonio Flores Farfan, Centre for Research and Higher Education in Social Anthropology, Mexico, Cwetipe Yeti Cagua, Provincial Directorate of Intercultural Education, Waodani Region, Pastaza Province, Ecuador and Rufino Choquemamani, Language planning specialist, formerly of the Ministry of Education, Peru. This seminar is linked to the British Academy Latin American and the Caribbean Link Programme with the University of Quito which continues until 2012.

Continuing debate through publications based on earlier workshops and conferences

LDG continues to work with participants from our previous conferences in developing high quality papers for publication.

Following the conference on ‘Literacy Inequalities’, we edited a Special Issue of the International Journal of Educational Development, edited by Bryan Maddox, Sheila Aikman, Nitya Rao and Anna Robinson-Pant (to be published later in 2011). Bryan also recorded a pod cast
setting the context and introducing the special issue, which is available on the journal website. The papers include:

- Editorial on ‘Literacy Inequalities and Social Justice’, by Maddox, Aikman, Rao and Robinson-Pant
- ‘Changing Policy Discourses: constructing literacy inequalities’, by Mary Hamilton and Kathy Pitt
- ‘Inequalities and crossings: literacy and the spaces-in-between’, by Cathy Kell
- ‘State literacies and inequality: managing Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic’ by Lesley Bartlett
- ‘(Un)veiling desire: re-defining relationships between gendered adult education subjects and adult education programmes’ by Priti Chopra
- “‘Do you want me to translate this in English or in a better Mandinka language?’ Unequal literacy regimes and grassroots spelling practices in peri-urban Gambia’ by Kasper Juffermans
- ‘Literacy as social reproduction and social transformation: the challenge of diasporic communities in the contemporary period’, by James Collins
- ‘Confronting poverty and educational inequalities: madrasas as a strategy for contesting dominant literacy in rural Bangladesh’, by Nitya Rao
- ‘Literacy inequalities in theory and practice: the power to name and define’, by Brian Street
- ‘Reflective Endpiece’ by Virginia Zavala and Malini Ghose

**Expanding research dialogues beyond UEA**

During 2011, members of LDG were invited to give presentations for the Norwich branch of the United Nations Association:

Sheila Aikman on ‘Gold Exploitation and the Indigenous Peoples of the South-eastern Peruvian Amazon’

Anna Robinson-Pant on ‘Women’s Literacy in Nepal’

Nitya Rao on ‘Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment’

Members of LDG have also presented on their work at international conferences, policy meetings and at other universities (see list of conference papers below).
Research themes
Projects, publications and policy links 2010-11

In 2010-11, LDG members developed research projects, publication and policy initiatives around five major themes (see below). During this period, links were established with the School of Language and Communication Studies, pointing to possible new directions in our research on intercultural education. We have also recognised that several LDG members have a strong interest and profile in gender, education and development. A half-day meeting was held in June 2011 to discuss how to take this forward and the group is now working on a collaborative research proposal. LDG members have continued to contribute to policy-making processes in the area of literacy and international development, working in particular with UNESCO through commissioned papers.

Our key research themes are outlined below, with details of related activities and publications during 2010-11.

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Literacy Measurement and Development Policy

Through introducing an ethnographic approach to researching the benefits and measurement of literacy, we have become recognised for adopting an alternative stance within development policy. Our inter-disciplinary collaboration has integrated an anthropologically informed social practice model of literacy into large-scale statistical literacy measurement, bringing economists and anthropologists together in a sustained programme of research. An initial phase of collaboration (Maddox 2007, Maddox 2008, Basu, Maddox and Robinson-Pant, Eds. 2009, Palmer-Jones and Iversen 2009) has led to research that integrates a social practice model into statistical analysis of literacy in economics, with fieldwork in Mozambique and Nepal (Maddox and Esposito 2011, and Esposito, Kebede and Maddox 2011). This theoretical and methodological interdisciplinary collaboration represents a new departure in literacy research (see Street in the forthcoming IJED special issue on Literacy Inequalities). Further papers are

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under preparation that discuss the methods we have developed, and that apply them to areas such as literacy values and mediation.

This interdisciplinary collaboration has extended to other areas of enquiry. Bryan Maddox has published a paper exploring ethnographic perspectives on Human Capital (Maddox 2010), and has applied anthropological theory and methods in collaboration with the UNESCO Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (UNESCO Institute for Statistics), a large international programme of ‘direct’ literacy assessment. This included fieldwork examining the LAMP assessment process in Mongolia, and on-going involvement with LAMP as a member of their advisory board. Again this reflects a commitment to integrating ethnographic insights and methods into statistical analysis.


**Intercultural education**

Our group brings a diversity of perspectives to the burgeoning arena of intercultural educational research. We are working conceptually as well as practically with colleagues from around the world to take forward our understanding in this area.

**Indigenous peoples and intercultural education**

Through qualitative and ethnographic research in Latin America we explore and investigate the complexities and fluidity of the changing realities of indigenous peoples lives. Drawing on developments of the concept of intercultural education as well as the challenge of intercultural
educational practice in schools, we are investigating ethnic marginalisation and linguistic change and the dynamics of social movements and their educational demands in countries such as Peru and Mexico.


**Intercultural education and language pedagogy**

Through collaboration with language specialists in Uzbekistan, we are investigating how universities can integrate intercultural education into foreign language curricula and the implications for the internationalisation of higher education.


**INSPIRE Research Project**

In 2011, Leticia Yulita (LCS) has been directing a British Council funded research project, INSPIRE (International Strategic Partnerships in Research and Education). The project aims to integrate intercultural education into the foreign language curriculum in the university sector in both Uzbekistan and in the UK. A strand of the project involves an Uzbek student visit to UEA in the 2011 Autumn Semester with the aim of internationalising the Russian language curriculum at LCS. The Uzbek researcher team spent a week in UEA during July 2011 to plan and scope the project activities.

**Academic literacies**

With PhD students and their supervisors, we are researching how literacy practices in the university can both reinforce and challenge existing power relationships. With an international journal, we are developing a programme to help tackle inequalities in academic publishing. We are exploring how theoretical understanding within academic literacies and intercultural communication can contribute to internationalisation strategies within UK higher education.


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Addressing the needs of first year international research students and their supervisors: an academic literacies approach (UEA Teaching Fellowship follow-up activities)

In 2010, Anna Magyar and Anna Robinson-Pant developed materials based on research with doctoral students (as part of an earlier UEA teaching fellowship) to facilitate discussion and critical reflection about intercultural learning and academic literacies within PhD courses. This research has fed directly into training sessions for supervisors across the university. They have also presented on this research in other UK universities and internationalisation networks during 2010-11 (including invited seminars at the University of Oxford, University of Bedfordshire and UCET International Committee). They plan to take this work further at UEA, in relation to developing a stronger internationalisation policy across the university.

As part of the project, a DVD was planned and developed with doctoral students from across UEA (many of whom feature in the film): International Research Students: reflections on PhD supervision. The DVD has a double purpose in terms of introducing new doctoral students to UEA supervision and research practices (through the students’ perspectives on their experiences), and it can be used as a training resource for doctoral supervisors. The DVD is divided into nine separate sections addressing key issues and questions raised by the group of doctoral students who were involved in the project. These themes included: expectations of supervisor and supervisee; differences in academic research cultures; researching and communicating across cultures, disciplines and methodologies; and researching and writing in a second language.

A resource booklet was also produced to accompany the DVD, which incorporates other data from the research project and introduces supporting activities for training
sessions. International students involved in the project have also produced two DVDs to introduce new doctoral students to the practical issues around living and working at UEA that they encountered in their first few weeks. These DVDs have been produced in collaboration with the Dean of Students Office and will be available to international students before they arrive.

The DVD and resource booklet are available on the UEA portal or as hard copy for £10; please contact A.Robinson-Pant@uea.ac.uk.

**COMPARE/BAICE Writing for Publication Programme**

During 2010-11, the Compare Writing for Publication team (Anna Magyar, Theresa Lillis (Open University), Anna Robinson-Pant and Nitya Rao) have been evaluating and finding ways to take forward the BAICE/Compare Writing for Publication Programme. Compare, a leading journal of international and comparative education, established this mentoring programme four years ago as a strategy to address the discursive and practical barriers faced by writers in the South. The process was evaluated in 2010 through feedback from participants, mentors and journal staff, and the findings also analysed in relation to academic literacies debates (see Lillis, Magyar and Robinson-Pant 2011).

Since starting the programme, Compare has had many enquiries from people who wanted to attend the writer’s workshop but were unable to travel to the UK for a face-to-face workshop. The journal decided to develop an on-line version to be launched this year. Once registered, participants will be able to log in to the on-line workshop and follow similar activities to those in the face-to-face workshop. During 2011, Anna Magyar developed the original workshop activities into on-line version, with inputs from Theresa Lillis and video interviews with former and current Compare editors, Anna Robinson-Pant and Nitya Rao. The on-line version includes DVD and audio materials where editors, former workshop participants and journal reviewers explain more about the journal and the programme. After completing the tasks on-line and receiving feedback from the academic literacy facilitators, participants will be offered the opportunity to develop their article for Compare through follow-up mentoring by email with a specialist in their area. The on-line workshop
will run for two weeks from September 12th and is available only for a limited number of people during the pilot phase. Compare will be prioritising registration for the on-line version of the writers’ programme for those based outside the UK, particularly those in developing countries without access to this kind of support. For UK-based participants, there will be the option to attend a day’s workshop in Oxford on September 12th, followed by email mentoring support. Please contact compare@uea.ac.uk for further details.

‘New’ academic literacies and doctoral programmes: a UEA study

During 2011, Anna Robinson-Pant has been conducting interviews with SSF faculty and doctoral students for a small study with Brian Street (Visiting Professor UEA) on ‘Students’ and tutors’ understanding of ‘new’ academic literacy practices’. The aim of the research is to explore how students and faculty view, learn and use some of the ‘new’ university procedures that have been introduced in recent years – such as research ethics forms, progress monitoring forms and minutes of supervision meetings. Anna is currently working on a policy-focused report for UEA based on analysis of the interview data. The research has contributed to a chapter in a forthcoming book: Robinson-Pant, A. and B. Street (2011) ‘Students’ and tutors’ understanding of ‘new’ academic literacy practices’, in Castello, M. and C. Donahue (eds) University writing: selves and texts in academic societies, in G. Rijlaarsdam (series ed.) London: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.

Plagiarism awareness research and tutorial

Through a UEA teaching fellowship in 2006, Anna Magyar conducted a small-scale research project exploring international SSF Masters students’ understanding of plagiarism and attribution in academic writing. Based on this and thanks to another teaching fellowship (and the help of an internet designer), she created an interactive web-based tutorial for DEV, NBS and NAM to help students gain a better understanding of why we reference, what needs to be referenced and what constitutes ‘appropriate’ paraphrasing. The feedback from students confirms that home and international students find them very useful. The tutorials use disciplinary specific texts and anyone interested in having a look at the modules, please contact: A. Magyar@uea.ac.uk.
Literacy, gender and poverty

Within this area, our research seeks to deepen gendered understandings of literacies, including schooled practices, in contexts of poverty and marginalisation. We have conducted in-depth research in South Asia, particularly Bangladesh, India and Nepal. We focus on the ways in which different learning contexts facilitate opportunities for economic security, social mobility and renegotiating relationships of power and authority, in the process reshaping gender and other social identities. By bringing ethnographic research approaches into both practice and policy arenas, we offer new ways of understanding the relationship between literacy, gender and development.

Rao, N. (2012 forthcoming) "I want to be respected": Migration, mobility and the construction of alternate educational discourses in rural Bangladesh, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 43


Children’s participation in educational decision making

Drawing on participatory and action-orientated approaches to research, our group has worked with children, teachers and NGO workers in a variety of cultural contexts (including Norfolk primary schools) to enhance children’s participation in decision making. An ESRC-funded seminar series at UEA in 2007-8 brought together which brought together researchers from around the world to discuss approaches to enhancing children’s participation in educational decision making, both inside schools and within their wider communities. This has led to further publications and research activities during 2010-11, as well as current discussions with development agencies based in the South who are interested in integrating child-led research approaches into their programmes. As well as a strong focus on development and dissemination activities, we have continued to develop theoretical debate around our findings in relation to the concept of literacy as social practice and the methodological issues arising within
action research and within different cultural contexts (see Cox and Robinson-Pant (2010) below).

Doctoral students and LDG

Doctoral students have continued to play an active role within LDG. We would like to thank Antoni Wojcik (DEV) who is currently conducting research in Mozambique for his help in constructing a database of members. Congratulations to Juancho Barron-Pastor (DEV), who successfully completed his PhD in December 2010 on ‘Theorising intercultural relations: reflections on cultural identities, violence and emotional affects in Mexico’. Now back in Mexico, Juancho will continue his involvement with LDG through the BAICE-funded seminar on Inter-Cultural Communication later this year. Several doctoral students will be presenting informally on their research within the reading group meetings during 2011-12.

The following doctoral students are linked to LDG:

- Camilla Addey (EDU): ‘Literacy and the Global Policy Process’
- Maryam Al-Harthi (EDU): ‘The socio-cultural perspective of the introduction of English as an additional language in pre primary education in Al-Madinah, Saudi Arabia’
- Pablo Dalby (EDU): ‘The transformative potential of development education, taking a PAR approach’
- Marta Einarsdottir (EDU): ‘Gender and education in Mozambique’
- Frances Hay (DEV): ‘Mobility strategies of the urban poor in India’
- Clare Meade (EDU): ‘Catching the learning: a case study of a youth and community project’
- Joanna Nair (EDU): ‘An exploration of changing understandings of development and their implication for the wellbeing of individuals, the community and the natural environment in Uchchakot in Far Western Nepal’
- Monika Oledzka-Nielsen (EDU): ‘Learning gender: the link with violence in and around schools in Mozambique’
- Suhaila Bin Rajab (EDU): ‘The role of peer coaching teaching in teachers’ professional development in the Kingdom of Bahrain’
- Beth Titchiner (EDU): ‘Beyond Media Literacy: ‘Educommunication’ and the re-working of perceptions of power, identity and knowledge in Brazilian schools’
- Rosanne Tromp (DEV): ‘Policy Development in the context of Education Reform in Secondary Education in Michoacan State, Mexico’
- Antoni Wojcik (DEV): ‘Education and citizenship in the coastal societies in northern Mozambique’
Future events 2011-12

Forthcoming LDG Events include:

- Our regular public seminar series on Education and Development held at UEA from October to May each year
  Contact Sheila.Aikman@uea.ac.uk for details

- Informal seminars and reading group on intercultural communication
  Contact L.Yulita@uea.ac.uk for details

- BAICE-funded seminar on Intercultural Communication in 2012 to examine the changing nature of multicultural societies in Latin America
  Contact Sheila.Aikman@uea.ac.uk for details

  Contact Sheila.Aikman@uea.ac.uk for details

- We are participating in the British Academy UK Latin America and the Caribbean Link Program entitled ‘Paradigms of diversity and social cohesion: language and education planning among Latin American indigenous peoples in the 2000-2012 period’ run by the University of Newcastle
Papers and presentations at conferences and external events 2010-11


Publications by members of the Literacy and Development Group 2010-11


Rao, N (2012 forthcoming) ‘“I want to be respected”: Migration, mobility and the construction of alternate educational discourses in rural Bangladesh’, Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 43


