Linguistic Ethnography Forum : One-day seminar

School of Education, University of Birmingham
Saturday 16th June 2007
10.30 a.m. – 3.30 p.m.

Bourdieu and Linguistic Ethnography

This seminar invites discussion of the application of the work of Pierre Bourdieu to the field of linguistic ethnography. The day will be structured around four invited papers, which engage both with the application of Bourdieu's theoretical principles in understanding language in use and action, and the extent to which ethnography and linguistics feature in Bourdieu's work. Papers will each be twenty-five minutes, allowing fifteen minutes' discussion.

Programme:

10.30 – 10.45   **Arrival and tea/coffee**

10.45 – 11.00   **Introduction** *(Adrian Blackledge)*

11.00 – 11.45   **Bourdieu, Linguistics and Ethnography** (*Michael Grenfell*)

11.45 – 12.30   **Translation, politics and the ethics of communication: A Bourdieusian perspective** (*Moira Inghilleri*)

12.30 – 1.30   **LUNCH**

1.30 – 2.15   **Researching Post-Compulsory Education and Training: social narratives, habitus and recursive methodology** *(Simon Warren)*

2.15 – 3.00   **Negotiating identities in complementary schools: Multilingual habitus in contemporary social spaces** *(Adrian Blackledge and Shahela Hamid)*

3.00 – 3.15   **TEA/COFFEE**

3.15 - 3.30   **Closing discussion**

Cost: **BAAL members**   **£20**
       BAAL non-members   **£30**
       Students   **£15**

To reserve a place, please complete the booking form by 1st June, and send a cheque (payable to University of Birmingham) to: Maureen Fellows, School of Education, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT.

Contact: Maureen Fellows M.E.Fellows@bham.ac.uk Tel.: 0121 414 4439

ABSTRACTS

Bourdieu, Linguistics and Ethnography

Michael Grenfell, University of Southampton

This paper initially addresses the extent to which linguistics and ethnography features on the work of Pierre Bourdieu. It refers to Bourdieu's early studies in the Béarn and Algeria as a way of tracing out the routes of his ethnology. It then considers education and culture as a series of studies that offer an 'anthropology of contemporary France'. It is argued that Bourdieu's method is inherently a philosophy of language; both in the way language features in this range of field work and the development of a Bourdieusian language as a series of conceptual 'thinking tools'. The paper contrasts Boudieu's own theory of language with conventional linguistics; and his ethnology with conventional ethnography. From this discussion, the paper addresses the rise of 'linguistic ethnography' itself as an academic field. What it is and the tensions inherent in it are considered in terms of Bourdieu's theory of practice as a superior methodological approach.

Translation, politics and the ethics of communication: A Bourdieusian perspective

Moira Inghilleri, Goldsmiths College

This paper examines the relationship between the ethical and the political in translators' work in the context of the 'war on terror', based on military translators' accounts of their work in Guantánamo and in Iraq. It discusses the political and legal fields in which translators working in Guantánamo and in Iraq can be situated and the social conditions that contributed to the construction of an 'ethics of the translator' in these contexts. The paper demonstrates how the convergence of distinctive fields and habitus precipitated reflection upon the limitations of the translators' habitus, providing them with greater distance from the process of being produced and spoken by the fields in questions. It discusses how changes to the "objective structure" of the legal and political fields triggered a disturbance, or break with illusio, in the translators' relationship to these fields. It also introduces a number of relevant philosophical theorisations of human rights, politics and the law to explore the complex nature of the ethical in relation to habitus and field.

Researching Post-Compulsory Education and Training: social narratives, habitus and recursive methodology

Simon Warren, University of Sheffield

This paper explores the question: how can we adequately capture the formation of adult learner identities in a context of rapid social, cultural and economic change? We are particularly concerned to address one further, and related methodological problem – in researching adult participation in formal education and training how can we move beyond individual decision-making stories and tales to an empirical understanding of the immanence of structure in practice? In other words, how do we empirically research habitus? We explore this question in the context of a small empirical study of adults choosing to return to formal education, and more specifically upon the decision-making process of one adult learner. This case study is used to explore the potential of our methodological and analytical framework in addressing this methodological problem.

Negotiating identities in complementary schools: Multilingual habitus in contemporary social spaces

Adrian Blackledge and Shahela Hamid, University of Birmingham

This paper reports on linguistic ethnographic research which investigates the multilingual practices of young people as they engage discursively in and out of complementary schools and domestic settings (RES-000-23-1180). The paper proposes that the multilingual habitus of the young people enables them to negotiate identities differently in different fields, or social spaces. The young people adopt practices which appear to be at odds with orthodox beliefs about minority languages constructed in political, media, and other public and private discourses. At the same time, the diversity and range of the young people's linguistic practices is more complex and flexible than the complementary schools' insistence that knowledge of the standard community language is crucial in the transmission of heritage, nationality and culture. The young people perform a range of linguistic practices in negotiating identities which are multilingual and contemporary, enabling them to inhabit a broad range of subject positions in different social spaces, and to exploit their symbolic capital differently in different fields.