



2009 Annual Seminar

Friday 13th November 2009

Seminar Abstracts

Dr Amos Paran

Mind the gap – again.

In an MA dissertation entitled 'Mind the Gap', which focused on international students on the MA TESOL at the IOE, Ji (2005) suggested that there was a gap between tutor and student agendas. The former saw the course in terms of theory and research, whereas students had a strongly practical agenda. In this talk I shall report on a small scale survey study which attempted to find out whether this gap still exists, focusing on recent cohorts of graduates at the IOE, and comparing the views of international and home students. Overall, the dissatisfaction that was expressed by the students in Ji (2005) does not characterise all students, with most of them accepting the research element of the course and understanding its relationship to practice.

Dr Amos Paran (a.paran@ioe.ac.uk) is a senior lecturer at the Institute of Education, University of London, where he is the programme leader for the MA TESOL and MA TESOL by Distance Learning.

Dr Richard Smith

ELT Teacher Education and Research Training at UK Universities: Of What Value, to Whom?

Making reference to materials in the Warwick ELT Archive (www.warwick.ac.uk/go/elt_archive) and to my own experience as a lecturer and external examiner, I shall take a historical look at the changing nature and 'culture' of university level provision for ELT teacher education (at MA level) in the UK, identifying trends, characterizing the present situation, examining some challenges and suggesting some possible directions. I shall also make reference to the British Council's recently published Directory of UK ELT Research, 2005-08 (www.teachingenglish.org.uk/elt-research) in order to discuss aspects of the current situation where doctoral level studies and ELT research more generally are concerned. In particular, I shall be hoping to generate debate around the question 'What has been and what is currently the value of UK university-based ELT teacher education, research training and actual research?'. Bearing in mind the day's overall theme, the issue of 'value to international students' will be particularly focused upon.

Dr Richard Smith <R.C.Smith@warwick.ac.uk> is an Associate Professor in the Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick, where he directs the MA in English Language Teaching Studies and Methods programme. For further information, see: www.warwick.ac.uk/go/richardcsmith

Prof Michael Byram and Lihong Wang

'Academic cultures' and students' adjustment to new learning environments.

The purpose here will be to raise the question of whether there are specific 'cultures' in academe – beliefs, values and behaviours – with which students are expected to comply. The question is relevant to all students but has become prominent in the experience of students from other countries, especially those from East Asia.

An answer will be attempted through examining data from research with Chinese students in a British university, data collected using ethnographic techniques and attempting to understand their interpretation of their learning experience.

On the basis of these empirical data and discussions, we will speculate a little on what 'adjustments' might be needed by all concerned and what those specifically invited to aid the adjustment can do. This is therefore a paper about language teaching in a very broad sense – learning the language/interaction modes expected of students in higher education.

Michael Byram and Lihong Wang