

Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching Symposium

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (14:05 – 15:55)

# Pedagogies of the Colloquial Register in Language Teaching and Learning

Building on the '[Embracing Linguistic Diversity](#)' event last April, the Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching is hosting an event on **Wednesday 9th February 14:05 – 15:55** on the theme of 'Pedagogies of the Colloquial Register in Language Teaching and Learning'.

## Introduction

Modern Language teaching can tend towards an emphasis on the 'non-colloquial': literary, poetic, historical or academic varieties of the language of instruction may be preferred over more colloquial registers, forms of language and text types. Defined by McArthur et al. (2018) as 'informal, everyday speech' and by Aarts (2014) as 'belonging or proper to ordinary conversation; not formal or literary', the colloquial register, often characterised by its own distinctive phonology, lexis and syntax and embodied in text-types and discourse from comics and chat-up lines and social media posts to stand-up comedy, is nevertheless as much a part of a living language as is the literary canon or the academic article. Sometimes confined to the study abroad experience (Kinging, 2013) or to seminar-style discussions with language assistants, the colloquial register may be less represented in classroom-based pedagogy than it deserves.

A wide range of scholarship supports this view: with respect to conversation, a proto-typical locus for the enaction of the colloquial register, Thornbury (2006) reminds us that 'socio-cultural theories of learning ... foreground the role of conversation as the medium for all learning' leading him to argue that the nature of conversation is 'essential in the development of a pedagogy for second language-learning'; similarly, Corbett (2003) argues for the importance of authentic interactional conversation in the classroom; meanwhile, Karimi (2021) proposes a much more central role for colloquial language in teaching listening; finally, the role of informal 'social learning' spaces in encountering and activating colloquial language is not to be underestimated (Murray 2013).

# References

Aarts, B. ed. 2014. *The Oxford dictionary of English grammar*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: OUP.

Corbett, J. 2003. *An intercultural approach to English language teaching*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Karimi, L. 2021. Effect of using colloquial versus Standard English to teach EFL listening comprehension. *International Journal of Listening*. **35**(2), pp.100-109.

Kinginger, C. ed. 2013. *Social and cultural aspects of language learning in study abroad*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

McArthur, T., Lam-McArthur, J. and Fontaine, L. eds. 2018. *The Oxford Companion to the English language*. Oxford: OUP.

Murray, G. and Fujishima, N. 2013. Social language learning spaces: affordances in a community of learners. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*. **36**(1), pp.141-157.

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## Preliminary programme

14:05 – 14:15	<b>Welcome</b> Emma Cayley – Head of School of Language, Cultures and Societies Yolanda Cerda – Director of Leeds Language Centre
14:15 – 14:35	<b>From soap operas to real life drama - Bringing everyday language to the writing class</b> Carmem Mackle – Lecturer – SPLAS - LCS
14:35 – 14:55	<b>A delicate balance: navigating register in informal yet professional contexts</b> Lucy Ferguson – MA researcher - LCS
14:55 – 15:05	<b>BREAK</b>
15:05 – 15:25	<b>Colloquial language as a component of EAP in-sessional mathematics provision</b> Deak Kirkham – Lecturer in EAP
15:25 – 15:45	<b>Benefits and challenges of integrating colloquial language in Modern Languages degrees: some reflections from Russian</b> James Wilson - Lecturer in Russian and Language Studies
15:45 – 15:55	<b>Closing remarks</b> Rasha Soliman – Director of Leeds Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching

## **Abstracts**

### **From soap operas to real life drama - Bringing everyday language to the writing class**

Carmem Mackle – Lecturer – SPLAS – LCS

In this presentation, I will share some fun activities I have used in my writing classes in order to provide space for creativity and experimentation with colloquial everyday language in different contexts.

### **A delicate balance: navigating register in informal yet professional contexts**

Lucy Ferguson – MA researcher – LCS

My presentation examines the conflicting levels of value attached to formal and informal modes of speech in a language-teaching context, focusing specifically on my own study of the French language, and the ways in which taught associations between ‘politeness’ and formal language affected my experience when working in a professional context in France. I address the difficulties faced by individuals when navigating interactions in workplace settings, a task which proves especially difficult when conversing in French as a non-native speaker. Combining anecdotal evidence with a consideration of politeness theory and the notion of ‘face’, I hope to underline how issues of politeness and hierarchy are intertwined with language in highly complex ways; rather than separating colloquial and formal language into a rigid dichotomy, we must embrace the need for nuance and flexibility when exploring the colloquial register in pedagogical settings.

### **Colloquial language as a component of EAP in-sessional mathematics provision**

Deak Kirkham – Lecturer in EAP

Academic Personal Tutor (APT) meetings are central to University study. While the motivation for APT meetings is primarily academic, the interactional and relational dynamics imply an element of phatic talk and colloquial language. Embedded in-sessional provision can speak to this linguistic need for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This presentation will discuss both the motivating context for, and the pedagogical approach being taken to, this aspect of in-sessional provision in the School of Mathematics.

## **Benefits and challenges of integrating colloquial language in Modern Languages degrees: some reflections from Russian**

James Wilson - Lecturer in Russian and Language Studies

This presentation focuses on the place of colloquial language (teaching) in Modern Languages degrees. I argue that more training in everyday colloquial language and sociolinguistic variation would benefit our students as well as highlighting some challenges of introducing more colloquial language on our degree programmes within a broader discussion of HE language teaching. While seen in the context of Russian, the issues covered in this presentation are relevant to all LCS languages and serve as a springboard for further discussion.

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