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Introduction: Changing Discourses and Adapting Practice

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COVID-19 has brought about unprecedented change to academia, education and modes of communication. Research projects have undergone major redesign through a forced remote evolution to survive. International collaboration has the potential to be fostered in such environments generating connections beyond the academic world but building online communities is no easy feat. These online communities now aim to embrace both education and research, and inclusive provisions are needed for the dawn of the global campus, no longer an idea of the future but the reality of today (McGrath 2020b; UNESCO 2020b). This crisis is far-reaching, and the idea of 'frontline' is applicable to both eLearning as well as new modes of communication bringing many considerations for new resilient, inclusive and sustainable education and communication modes with new learning dynamics, new capacities and a new vision for such landscapes (McGrath 2020a; UNESCO 2020a, 2020b).....

“What Slowly Kills Me and Frustrates Me is...” Study Abroad during COVID-19: Student Narratives of Space, Language Contact, and Individual Agency

DOI: 10.26379/IL2021002_002

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Abstract

International Student Mobility (ISM) has always been positioned as a desirable element of the student experience and is portrayed as beneficial in terms of the expansion of linguistic repertoires, increased awareness of interculturality, and the acquisition of transferable skills for long-term career prospects. However, while the opportunities for student mobility proliferated over the last three decades (Calderon 2018), ISM has been hugely disrupted by COVID-19 with many programmes pivoting to online, campuses essentially closing and restrictions placed on movement and access to spaces. While the impact of this on the number of students travelling has been negative (de Wit/Marinoni 2021), the pandemic also had repercussions for those who decided to embark on international mobility as it has affected the where, who, why, and how of interaction during the sojourn. In light of this, this study explores, from a longitudinal, narrative inquiry perspective, the experiences of eight Study Abroad/International students for whom language development was a major catalyst for participating in a student mobility programme. Previous research has highlighted that linguistic gains are often predicated on exposure to intense and diverse social interactions while abroad (Dewey et al. 2013; Baten 2020). Given the unique nature of the pandemic, the current study broadens the scope of traditional research by illuminating, following Benson (2021a), how differential interaction with physical and socially-constructed spaces impacted not only language development but also learner agency.

Keywords

study abroad, student mobility, COVID-19, space, learner agency, language, contact

Remote Teaching and Learning Practices in a Heritage Language School during COVID-19: Discourse on Parent Engagement, Collaboration, and Artefacts

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Abstract

This ethnographic study explores remote teaching from a teacher perspective in a complementary community-run Finnish heritage language school in Toronto during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020-2021. This study investigated what kind of creative collaborative learning and teaching practices emerged during the remote pedagogy and how remote learning delivers changes in the heritage language learning community. Several virtual and ethnographic data collection methods were used. The primary data consisted of written field notes based on online observations during virtual classes, written teacher reflections and semi-structured teacher interviews. Discourse analytic approach is used in the analysis of the data and theories of new materialism are also implemented. This study shows that, during this emergency, remote teaching and learning practices enabled communication and collaboration that would not have been present otherwise. Remote pedagogy also allowed families to come together to support the teachers' practices and children's language learning in a creative manner. The analysis also shows that family pets and household artefacts became useful teaching and learning material and, consequently, artefacts became a part of the pedagogic discourse, assemblage, and collaboration. Material world and the human and nonhuman participants collaborated in a shared and authentic virtual and domestic learning environment in a new manner that would not be possible in the class-room environment. This study contributes to the study of children's heritage language learning in a virtual assemblage and parents' roles in it.

Keywords

heritage school, remote language teaching, ethnography, discourse, collaboration, new materialism

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Discursive Attitudes towards Immigrant Populations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted our global community. Due to unequal socio-economic conditions and a dearth of accessibility to healthcare, immigrant communities are placed in a vulnerable position that has resulted in them being greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following Van Dijk's theory on discourse analysis, the present study examines the discursive strategies and language forms employed by Facebook users, in order to analyse those users' perceptions of immigrant populations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this goal, we analyse comments from public Facebook accounts of North Carolina (United States) newspapers.

Comments were published in the weeks following January 14, 2021, when the State Department of Health and Human Services released the statement stating that the COVID-19 vaccine was accessible and free regardless of legal status and health care coverage. Results illustrate how the COVID-19 crisis has perpetuated the discourse of fear among minority immigrant populations in the U.S. In addition, immigrants continue to be blamed for the inaccessibility of the vaccine and other external structural problems. Thus, the present study sheds light on the held system of beliefs about immigrant populations during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, it provides useful data for assessing public attitudes toward immigrant populations in times of crisis.

Keywords

COVID-19, discourse analysis, immigrant populations, attitudes, identities, social media discourse

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“We’ve Been Through Worse”: The Impacts of COVID-19 on LGBTQ+ Jewish Language in Seattle

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Abstract

This paper discusses the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ+ Jewish language in Seattle, Washington, focusing on the challenges and opportunities the pandemic and subsequent virtualisation produced for queer Jewish speech communities and Religious Heritage Language users. The study identified and coded prominent COVID-19-related themes in thirty-four semi-structured interviews conducted in autumn 2020 with LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ members of the Seattle Jewish community. Many queer participants, as well as cis-heterosexuals desiring to ally themselves with the LGBTQ+ community, engaged with expanded opportunities for queer Jewish community and Religious Heritage Language learning through digitised gatherings and social media, although adoption of new behaviours like including one’s pronouns in one’s name on video calls was mixed. Participants also incorporated extant modes of religious and cultural meaning-making, historical knowledges, and inherited trauma in interpreting the pandemic and concurrent sociological and environmental challenges of 2020. Nineteen participants described a perceived negative correlation between age and queer language use, sometimes linking this to negative correlations between age and technological literacy. Both queer and cis-heterosexual participants expressed optimism about increased intergenerational interaction effected by learning-from-home and virtual learning. While much remains unknown, these findings suggest potential integration of creative and resilient queer Jewish adaptations to COVID-19 life and discourse into post-pandemic communities.

Keywords

LGBT linguistics, religioliinguistics, collective trauma, trauma linguistics, Jewish languages

New Practices in Academia: Moving towards Hybridity

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Abstract

Adapting academic practices at a noteworthy pace during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has presented its challenges while also calling on pause for thought on the way in which teaching/learning and research currently take place in university contexts and the potential that is presented. Our study aims to provide a detailed comparative analysis of adapting academic practices in terms of (1) teaching/learning; (2) changes to research methodologies on a national and international scale. In line with ethnographic sociolinguistic practice, a web-based ethnographic poll was designed. The questions were specifically conceived to investigate the impact of SARSCoV- 2 at three months following the declaration of a world health pandemic on the 11th March 2020 and twelve months after the initial poll. The questionnaire investigated eight different lines of enquiry by identifying: 1. the participant cohort; 2. the pandemic phase; 3. impact on workload and identifying the types of remote activities carried out; 4. impressions of remote activities; 5. experience with online assessment; 6. analysis of methodologies for research projects; 7. adapting practice for research projects and future prospects; 8. predictions for best practice in the future. Participation in the poll was global and results indicated that academic practices have now adopted a blended approach (96%) in line with predictions of such 12 months prior (76%). Thus, academic practices have successfully evolved through adapting methodologies and hybridity is likely the new future direction.

Keywords

academia, ethnography, changing practices, pandemic, hybridity

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Spanish in Times of COVID: Lexical and Pragmatic Innovation in Spain

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Abstract

COVID-19 has drastically changed our lives in many ways that impact language use, including how we describe new concepts (neologisms), compare them to existing realities (metaphors), and interact with others (verbally and non-verbally). This study focuses on the transformative effects that the pandemic and resulting government regulations have had on the Spanish language in Spain in terms of verbal and non-verbal communication – neologisms, metaphors, and greetings, which now require more awareness, thought, and negotiation due to changes in everyday life. Drawing from discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, this article contributes to the field in its multimodal methodology and findings. Data come from 160 participants in various cities across Spain via WhatsApp (a relatively untapped resource in applied linguistics studies), semi-informal virtual interviews, and an online survey, revealing how speakers react to changes brought about by the pandemic. Through our analysis of how they refer to the virus and describe their pandemic experiences, articulate their personal COVID protocols, and navigate the speech act of greeting, we offer a window onto linguistic and cultural changes in Spain. The findings speak not only to the language-culture interface in Spain but may also offer insight into pragmatic strategies in other languages.

Keywords

Spanish, greeting, neologism, metaphor, pragmatics

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Linguistic Fieldwork amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: How Social-Distancing is Affecting Data Collection

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Abstract

Linguistic fieldwork can be defined as the examination of language through the collection of primary data. This systematic investigation commonly involves observing/interviewing the speakers of the language examined in close proximity. However, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing and social restrictions abruptly halted the traditional face-to-face fieldwork. The practice of social distancing encourages the use of online communication and thus traditional data collection has also switched to virtual fieldwork. This paper firstly reviews the role of linguistic fieldworkers before the current pandemic; secondly, it discusses the main challenges and benefits of gathering online linguistic data, taking into account online research ethics, and it reviews the use of tools which can be currently employed for online participant recruitment. We suggest that despite the challenges of carrying out virtual fieldwork (e.g. participant recruitment itself, computer-related issues, minimising the Observer's Paradox, recording quality, etc.) using online data collection can help researchers gather larger sample sizes, and that the use of emerging technologies (e.g. MTurk, Prolific, Gorilla.sc, the Twitter API package, etc.) provides high-quality online data collection, which remain in line with the standards for high-quality research.

Keywords

linguistic fieldwork, COVID-19 pandemic, data collection