



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S46. Teaching British (Area) Studies through Analysis of Media Discourses

Wednesday 30 August: 2.30-4.30pm

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Mass media materials are used for various purposes. This seminar focuses on the role of the British media in the shaping and expression of culture, both high and low, in the British Isles, looking at national as well as local aspects, and the areas concerned include periodicals, broadcasts, and Internet. The seminar is intended for both theoreticians and practitioners in the field of British (media) studies in higher education. It hopes to provide a forum for open discussion in order to achieve a panorama of the changes and expansion of the public space since 1945.

Exploring Scotland via the Scots Text Archive

John Corbett (University Of Glasgow)

If nations are discursively constructed, we can study them through the texts they produce. The Scottish Corpus of Texts and Speech (SCOTS) is an AHRC-funded project to develop a freely-accessible, online, electronically searchable digital archive of contemporary language from Scotland - from poetry to parliamentary discourse, in varieties ranging from Broad Scots to Standard English. The archive includes audiovisual materials as well as straight text, and it can be searched in a number of ways. This session demonstrates the SCOTS resource, and considers the way that it can be used by those interested in British Studies with a Scottish accent.

Finding the Target Culture

John Calton (University of Helsinki)

Following on from Durant, Bassnett, Byram, Graff, Kramsch and Warschauer, I would like to examine 'target language culture'. In our work situating sociocultural knowledge in language learning, students need to construct their own nuanced understanding of a chosen topic even if the issue of how to bridge, on the one hand, the abstractions and conjectures of cultural studies discourse and, on the other, the glut of media representations of life in Britain may appear overwhelmingly difficult. Using a set of source websites on a BSCW platform, selected to offer both interpretative and non-interpretative representations, I have begun to make some progress in addressing 'cultural foreground', by accepting that the 'target' in 'target language culture' is a moving

one rather than a fixity. Taking a sufficiently diverse set of sources should encourage them to trace points of contact at an ideational level when there may be relatively little obvious cognate linguistic forms. This gives them the opportunity to refine hypotheses about broad sociocultural dispositions, according to statistical, heuristic, anecdotal, fictional and plain conjectural representations. Their hypotheses, in the best of practice nuanced and therefore stable, bear fruit in the successful establishment of contacts which can be consolidated in a range of encounters –recreational, academic and professional.

Headlines in the British Press

Nuzha Moritz (Marc Bloch University)

This article aims to show how headline writers try to catch the reader's eye in the British Press and to see in what way this use of language can present an obstacle to understanding English-Language newspaper headlines for language students. Our study is carried out on the analysis of:

- 1 A corpus of 30 headlines taken from both tabloid and quality dailies
- 2 A translation class-activity with French students study brings to light two tendencies:
 - a. Aspects related to the use of polysemy, and cultural references, sound difficult to overcome.
 - b. Aspects related to the use of stylistic, structural features, and powerful words seem to be less intimidating and quite easy to overcome!

Towards An Anatomy of 21st-Century British Culture: Case Studies from the Newspapers

J. Rubén Valdés Miyares (University of Oviedo)

The paper offers a framework of analysis to encompass the variety of contemporary British culture in newspapers, drawing attention upon its *ordre du* “discourse within the history of the present.” It proposes ten often overlapping categories: British national identity; local identities; ethnicity and religion; social classes; war and peace; work; leisure trends; the body; gender; home and family. These combine variously and change across the periods 1901-1945, 1946-1964, 1965-1979, and since 1980. The resulting grid, applied to news case studies, suggests the warps and wefts within the fabric of British culture, and a blueprint upon which 21st-century paradigms may rest.

Culture Beyond Borders

Fewzia Bedjaoui (University Of Sidi Bel Abbes)

Media responsibility is to help strengthen and support democratic processes. Although it is a subjective notion, i.e. based on individual judgement or discretion, hard to define, arguments have been made for newspapers, television, radio, and probably internet communication. In multicultural societies as in Great Britain, ethnic minorities increasingly challenge the idea of English monoculture, particularly in cinema, in other live performance arts, in radio and T.V.: Meera Syal among others represents just a recent example. Such developments in cultural representation have challenged dominant notions of British cultural identity and prompted a shift in critical discourse from Indian

cultures to cultural diversity in British cultural institutions. Huntington's Clash of Civilizations between Western exceptionalism and anti-Westernisation of Indian / Asian / Oriental culture and power is no more relevant. Intercultural understanding is specifically simplified when people do not try to change but to understand intercultural reality.

The Voice and Views of Ethnic Minorities through their Newspapers

María José Coperías-Aguilar (University of Valencia)

Our paper focuses on the analysis of newspapers published in Spanish in the area of New York in order to study some identity features of the Hispanic population of this city. However, this methodology could be applied to many other contexts, for instance the periodicals addressed to and made by the members of the different ethnic minorities in Britain. The kind of research described could perfectly be used as part of the syllabus of a course in British (Area) Studies or a course of ESP since students will have to analyse aspects such as sociocultural and linguistic issues or the evolution of their media; they will also need to put into practice critical reading or fieldwork.