ABSTRACTS

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Benjamin Breggin
Intercultural Language Trends at a Quadriethnic English-medium University in the Baltics

Abstract

This article examines intercultural communication in the context of student social life at the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga. The undergraduate students at this institution represent all four major ethno-linguistic groups of the Baltics, their native languages being Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and/or Russian. All of them are also fluent speakers of English, the only study language of the university. Through the analysis of survey and interview data, their trends in language choices and perceptions are established with an eye towards possible future developments in the increasingly English-savvy Baltics. A sociocultural synopsis of the Baltics is provided at the beginning of the article to aid readers not yet acquainted with the region.

Keywords: Baltics, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, intercultural communication, English, Russian, lingua franca

Howard Davis & Anna Sosnovskaya
Representations of otherness in Russian newspapers: the theme of migration as a counterpoint to Russian national identity

Abstract
This article examines the coverage of migration topics in a selection of Russian newspapers with nationwide circulations in the first six months of 2005 and tries to answer to the question: how does the Russian national press represent people and features which are significantly different from so-called Russian character and national identity?

The analysis is based on three main themes: immigration, the national project, and Russians abroad. The coverage of immigration addresses issue of Russian and Russian-speaking minorities in the former Soviet republics; immigrants, refugees and displaced persons on territories of Russia; and labour force decline and ‘brain drain’ from the Russian Federation. The discourse on migration is conducted within the framework of the developing national project on construction of a new identity for Russia and Russians. The national project is expressed in terms of the consolidation of Russian society and creation of unified values.

The conclusion is that representatives of ‘others’ who differ from Russians significantly in terms of language and culture or who are territorial outsiders are represented in the press in three main ways. Firstly, there is a benevolent attitude expressed in terms of traditional ties to sisters and brothers from the fifteen Soviet republics. Secondly, there is a predominantly aggressive stance towards those who are seen as not wanting to assimilate or not wanting to engage with Russia and regard it as the older brother. Representations of the Chinese and the Baltic states fit this category. Finally, there is an ambivalent response, mainly in relation to stories of Russians abroad in Europe or North America, toward the interactions between Russian and non-Russian attitudes, values, etc. When the question of Russian national identity surfaces, there is a consistent message but it is differently articulated according to the diversity of the Russian press.

Kjetil Fretheim
Witnesses of Wealth. Development Workers, Intercultural Communication and Norwegian National Identity

Abstract

In this article the broader topic of communication and identity is addressed through a discussion of intercultural involvement and national identity in the case of Norway. The main research question is how Norwegian expatriate development workers discursively sustain, challenge and (re)construct Norwegian national identity. Discussing this I draw on material from a recent study where I interviewed twenty-three development workers (). In the analysis I identify three main types of contributions development workers make to the construction of a Norwegian national identity and label them according to three priestly roles: the prophet who criticises the powerful, the counsellor who comforts and strengthens his flock, or the priest as a unifying symbol of the group.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, national identity, development aid, development workers, Norway
Abstract

Befriending is commonly regarded as a purposive form of relationship designed to benefit the befriendedee. Little research has examined experiences of befrienders. We report findings from a study of the experiences of volunteer befrienders to children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 volunteers. Participants described benefits of the relationships, acceptance by befriendedee’s families, and social links and cultural factors relevant to the relationships. Befriending relationships should be viewed as more reciprocal than is often assumed. The mutual construction of meanings, and reciprocal outcomes, suggests that such relationships can engender positive intergroup relations.

Keywords: befriending; cross-cultural; young people; relationships; friendship

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Abstract

Focus of this article is communicative challenges in multinational project work as well as how such challenges can be managed. By analyzing their communication in so called reflective dialogues and email correspondence the discussion sheds light upon how the participants of one such project talk about the meaning and pedagogical fruitfulness of horizontal classroom dialogue, and the degree to which they themselves actually communicate in a horizontal fashion within the project group.

Drawing upon the discourse on classroom communication and intercultural communication data was subject to a qualitative analysis. Among other things, different aspects of horizontality in the dialogues were discerned but no significant differences in terms of indexicality were found. It was also shown that variations in the degree of horizontality-verticality in the dialogues and email correspondence may originate in different views on gender, project management and relationships between colleagues.

Moreover, it was shown how reflective dialogues can be a useful tool for arriving at a common conceptual framework within a crossnational collaborative project. This said, the results can presumably be transferred to multicultural, and monocultural classrooms, to teacher teams analyzing problematic (or successful!) learning situations before 'taking measures’, or in order to raise teachers’ intercultural awareness.

Keywords: Horizontal – vertical dialogue; moral mediation; classroom interaction Back to start
Xiaohong Wei
On Negative Cultural Transfer in Communication Between Chinese and Americans

Abstract

Different nations in the world have their own cultures, and these cultures are characterized by both universality and particularity. The former provides a foundation and guarantee for intercultural communication, while the latter often leads to negative cultural transfer in communication if the speakers are unconscious of cultural differences. This paper makes a comparative study of negative cultural transfer in communication between Chinese and Americans from two aspects: the negative transfer of surface-structure culture in language forms and speech acts and the negative transfer of deep-structure culture in values, thought patterns, religious beliefs and ethics. It holds that failure in intercultural communication will occur if inadequate attention is paid to cultural differences in the process of language and culture learning.

Keywords: negative cultural transfer; Chinese and Americans; surface-structure culture; deep-structure culture

Mahdi Yaghoobi
A critical discourse analysis of the selected Iranian and American printed media on the representations of Hizbullah-Israel war

Abstract

This study examines the relationships between language and ideology and how such relationships are represented in the analysis of texts, following Systemic Functional Linguistics and transitivity analysis developed by M.A.K. Halliday. In this study, it is tried to show that news structures are working apparatuses of ideology and store meanings which are not always obvious for readers. Through a comparative analysis of an Iranian newspaper and an American magazine with opposing ideologies, the researcher attempts to reveal how these ideologies are represented differently in these printed media with regard to Hizbullah-Israel last war in 2006. It also suggests that these printed materials mystify the agency of processes by using various strategies such as passivization and nominalization. In other words, critical text analyses reveal how these choices enable writers to manipulate the realizations of agency and power in the representation of action to produce particular meanings which are not always explicit for all readers.

Keywords: CDA, transitivity system, ideology, power, Hizbullah-Israel war