

Praxis Proposal (Language Centre)

Discipline: TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)

Department and School: UCC Language Centre (Sally Orren, Sanaa Khabbar, Aoife Ní Mhurchú)

Research

Title of Research Project

Native speakerism in higher education in Ireland (UCC Case Study)

Description of Research Project

This will be an exploratory study to examine the attitudes towards and perceptions (self-perceptions & perceptions by others) of speakers of English as an additional language in UCC.

Existing GCDE aspects of the research project

(e.g. themes, theory, skills, values, student actions, global/local links, root causes of injustice): See below.

Plan for integration of GCDE into your research project:

Global Citizenship and Development Education Research Objectives

- To raise awareness of native speakerism in UCC. Native speakerism is defined as "a pervasive ideology within ELT [English Language Teaching], characterized by the belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 2006: 385).
- To create a more inclusive and just space for UCC students and staff whose first language is other than English.

Methodologies

(What GCDE research methodologies will you use in the research project?)

- A constructivist approach that 'requires that we not remain straitjacketed by the conventional meanings we have been taught to associate with the object. Instead, such research invites us to approach the object in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new or richer meaning. It is an invitation to reinterpretation' (Crotty, 1998, p.51).
- The workshop we propose as the action of this project will be reflective, participatory, and experiential in nature.

Methods

In order to survey the landscape, we propose two data collection methods:

- Survey: We will administer an online anonymous questionnaire to all UCC staff to ascertain their attitudes towards and perceptions (self-perceptions & perceptions by others) of speakers of English as an additional language. This will provide an overview of the current situation in the research field. It will also help to verify our assumptions

- and hypotheses and identify the extent to which native speakerism affects staff in their daily working lives.
- Semi-structured interviews with a sample of UCC staff: This will provide a deeper understanding of staff experiences, attitudes and perceptions.

Content

(what GCDE themes or knowledge will you include in your research?)

As mentioned above, as much as GCDE is about the student, it is also about the educator, the institution and in particular the institutional culture. We believe that, in tandem with focusing on pedagogy for students, we also need to provide training for staff that is underpinned by GCDE values. The action we suggest below will be a first step in addressing this need. In so doing, we believe that this research project will also help to address some of the problems associated with programmes of internationalisation (see for example Khoo, 2014) that are now commonplace in HE in Ireland.

Framing/Positioning

(what GCDE theories, philosophical underpinning or framing will you cover in your research?)

Critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972)

“Paulo Freire (1972) saw praxis as the bringing together of social practice and theorising of the world in order to transform the world into something better for all. Given his experience of oppression in Brazil, Freire had a broad view of knowledge where the continuing process of praxis-assisted groups and communities in developing a critical consciousness so that the forces of oppression could be deposed, social conditions altered and knowledge expanded” (Arnold, Edwards, Hooley & Williams, 2012: 285). Freire emphasised language, literacy and communication as “crucial aspects of critical consciousness.” (ibid: 286). This focus on critical consciousness is reflected in the proposed critical collaborative reflection suggested in the action below. Critical Praxis as defined in Arnold, Edwards, Hooley & Williams (2012) which involves the bringing together of three ideas: ideology critique, self-reflective consciousness and emancipatory action. In particular, the last two are reflected in our chosen methods of survey and experiential workshop. Our aim is to “fearlessly bring[...] current practice and understanding into closer alignment with changing conditions for the public good [...], to create a dignified and socially just existence for all citizens regardless of background.” (ibid: 286).

Postcolonial theory

With internationalisation a key part of UCC’s Strategic Plan 2017-2022, this project will help to ensure that the University’s understanding and culture of globalism is one which embraces difference and does not seek to lay claim to any cultural or linguistic superiority.

Positioning

“Adopting a stance towards the research of ‘critical praxis’ has two main features. First, that research is recognised as taking place within socio-political conditions such that participants are encouraged to act upon and

change those conditions. Second, the researchers adopt a stance of 'critical praxis' towards themselves whereby their understandings, biases and existing practices are challenged and changed. They accept that the research process opens up new understandings of critique, knowledge and society, thereby relationally changing their position in the particular field of activity and changing the field itself." (ibid.)

Local/Global

(how can you make local and global connections, from a global justice perspective, with these themes?)

As this project focuses on linguistic diversity and English as an international language, it encompasses a global reach within a localised higher education institution. As English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) gains traction worldwide, it is imperative that the issue of native speakerism is addressed. We will do this using Kachru's model of 'World Englishes' (Kachru, 1986) and Modiano's model of 'centripetal circles of International English' (Modiano, 1999) as guiding principles in tandem with the principles of GCDE. The main aim of the experiential workshop will be for staff to create an inclusive environment for their colleagues and students.

Values / Ethics

(What GCDE values or ethical approaches underpin this research project?)

- Social justice
- Global justice
- Equality
- Diversity
- Respect for others

Action

(thinking of the change you wish to make, what action/s will you or others engage with as part of or as a result of this research work?)

Based on the study findings, we would like to organize a series of innovative workshops that aim to engage LC staff in a collaborative critical reflection on native speakerism (its root causes/impact on students & teachers/counteracting native speakerism). In a second phase we hope to offer these workshops to the larger UCC community.

Skills

(What skills do you or your participants need to achieve the GCDE research objectives? How will you develop these skills?)

- Facilitation skills - for delivery of series of workshops to LC staff.
- Designing a (visual art) experiential workshop

Practical considerations

(e.g. what resources do you need? How many sections of the research can include a GCDE theme or approach?)

- As we are dealing with potentially sensitive disclosures from staff, we will need ethical approval under the umbrella of the wider GCDE project.
- We will need resources to facilitate the visual art experiential workshop.
- Interview transcription: we may need funding to pay for transcription of interviews.

References:

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- Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research*. Sage.
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- Kachru, B. (1986). *The alchemy of English*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
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