Students in Public exemplar details

Faculty, School and Subject Area: Humanities, SALC, Linguistics and English Language

Course Unit/activity: LELA20102 Societal Multilingualism

Course Unit Director/activity leader: Prof Yaron Matras

What is the assignment/knowledge product?

An original research report, produced by a group of usually up to five students, on any aspect of multilingualism in Greater Manchester. Essays have covered language provisions and practice in public sector institutions, surveys of linguistic landscapes (multilingual signs), analyses of the use of community languages in marketing and media, and more.

Why was it introduced?

There were several reasons: a) To effectively manage assessment in a large group of students (the lecture attracted up to 120 students), b) to offer students an opportunity to make an original contribution by studying local communities, c) to build in an element of social responsibility and unique student experience, by offering students opportunities to interact with various local stakeholders, d) to be able to build an archive of student research that would be accessible to the public and would serve as a source of information on the topic, while at the same time supporting recruitment to the programme by showcasing original student work and student experience opportunities, e) to promote UG student involvement in research and teaching/learning through research, f) to offer students an opportunity to take ownership of their research by publishing it online, with named authors (student may opt out if they wish)

Where is/could it be published?

In a dedication section on Report on the Multilingual Manchester website: mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk

What are the challenges (e.g. copyright)?

Students have copyright over their work and the work is published with their approval, citing author's names. Students may opt out if they wish (but so far one person has done so, from over 500). Once project essays have been marked, they need to be read and checked for data protection (removing names of individuals or individual institutions such as schools, unless permission was given to cite names, in the event that such appear in the text) and putting texts into a uniform format. This is done by MLM staff.

What are the student perceptions/responses/attainment

If published, how do you monitor use of the resource/s?

We receive reactions from readers. Unfortunately the University IT Services have so far been unable to offer direct monitoring of access to online content

Any other comments

The MLM archive of student reports is the largest online research archive authored exclusively by UG students, as far as I am aware, and the largest online research archive on multilingualism in any individual city. The model has been replicated at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, and elsewhere.

Aims

The principal aims of the course unit are as follows:

- To acquire first-hand experience in community-based fieldwork in small research groups, including drafting a fieldwork plan, ethical considerations, data collection methods and data assessment

- To gain familiarity with key concepts from the literature on multilingualism and to apply those in an original essay on new data

- To make an original contribution to data collection and data interpretation on multilingual practices in Manchester, and to give public dissemination to these original research results

- To be able to make direct use of this coursework experience for future career development

Objectives (Learning outcomes)

By the end of this course students will have gained:

- familiarity with theories and methods of analysis of multilingual societies, with special emphasis on the sociology of language and principles of language policy in contact situations

- familiarity with a number of case-studies of language management in multilingual societies, and with current discussions of language endangerment and language death

- first-hand observation and experience in data collection and analysis on urban multilingualism in Greater Manchester

- By the end of this course students will be able to: apply theories and methods of analysis of multilingual societies, to new datasets and ethno-linguistic observations

By the end of this course students will be able to: coordinate tasks in a research team.

By the end of this course students will have acquired the following transferrable skills:

- conducting research based on secondary and published sources

- academic writing and referencing

- compiling a written report

- organisation of practical research

- group work

- conducting fieldwork (interviews)

- collection and written assessment of fieldwork data

- interacting with diverse community and municipal institutions

Assessment methods

Assessment task	Formative or summative	Length	Weighting within unit (if summative)
Fieldwork plan and literature review (groups of 3-5)	Formative and summative	2500-3000 words	50%
Fieldwork report and conclusions (groups of 3-5)	Summative	2500-3000 words	50%

Course unit overview

The unit first introduces students through four lectures to methods of studying language diversity in urban communities and its impact on public service, communities, and civic identity. The focus is on the changes brought about through the complexity of migration patterns, mobility and technology, the concepts of 'super-diversity' and 'trans-nationalism', the value of languages as skills, as indicators of community heritage and of equal access to services, and as marketing tools.

Our attention then turns to Manchester's language diversity. We examine the city's linguistic (and by implication cultural) mosaic, the role of language in access to public services and responses of public services to language diversity (e.g. the structure of language provisions for interpreting and implications for service delivery such as partnerships between public and private sectors), the role of language in marketing and the commercial sector, what we can learn from the city's linguistic landscapes, and what tools can be used to support the planning of language provisions.

Following the introductory lectures, students will work in groups on their own projects, with support from Teaching Assistants and, by appointment, from the course convenor. Suggestions will be made for topics, and students will receive technical and logistic support where necessary from the Multilingual Manchester project staff. For an insight into relevant topics and student coursework carried out in previous years as part of their course unit see the Multilingual Manchester online archive of reports: http://mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/reports/