



Language Centre English Seminar

“I didn't know that we could learn English like this!": Discovering the challenges of critical language learning with popular culture as sustained content for L2 learners

Presented by

Dr. Anne Peirson-Smith
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Date: 26 October 2015 (Monday)
Time: 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
Venue: OEM906, 9/F OEN Hall Main
Ho Sin Hang Campus,
Hong Kong Baptist University

Abstract

This presentation focuses on the use of popular culture as sustained content with second language (L2) learners in a Hong Kong university context. The main premise of this study is that when learners at undergraduate level are engaged with content that interests them they are able to develop their analytical and critical language skills in a grounded and relatable way. By way of a case study, the delivery and learning activities of a General Education course in popular culture is examined. The course uses a progressive pedagogy which integrates both vertical and horizontal learning as a way to engage students with the course material. Data about the students' experience on this course was obtained via focus group interviews, essays, Facebook comments and an analysis of the students' in-class presentations. Although the course content is based on 'safe' or seemingly familiar topics: fashion, food, and sports, students appear to be able to select the global theoretical concepts presented to them as a way of making sense of their local everyday lives within a global frame. This transfer of learning is especially important in the current political and social contexts of Hong Kong and in an increasingly globalised world and in a self appointed creative city. Learners' responses to this course illustrate that they are able to develop critical language competencies within contexts which stimulate them and are relevant to their lived popular cultural experiences.

Bio-data

Dr. Anne Peirson-Smith, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, City University of Hong Kong. She teaches, researches and publishes work on the discourses and pedagogical implications of teaching fashion communication, popular culture, public relations, advertising and branding. She has also published various articles on teaching popular culture.

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