

<b>Institution: The University of Huddersfield</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature</b>
<b>Title of case study: Language in Conflict</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>University of Huddersfield research into the use of language in conflict resolution has resulted in a number of successful initiatives to educate and assist professionals involved in mediation. The work has led to the development and delivery of training materials to enhance linguistic awareness and analytic skills, as well as the creation of a web-based meeting point for linguists and mediation/conflict resolution practitioners. The methods developed have been incorporated by a number of mediation and conflict resolution organisations, while the website has generated interest and debate in several countries. Wider awareness of the research and its implications has also been achieved through media appearances, including on BBC Radio 4.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The University of Huddersfield's Language in Conflict project is a multi-faceted initiative to bring the insights and expertise of linguistics into the fields of mediation, conflict resolution and peace studies. It is based on research carried out at Huddersfield by Lesley Jeffries from 2002 (joined Huddersfield in 1990; Professor of English Language, 2007-present) and by Jim O'Driscoll from 2007 (Senior Lecturer, 2007-present) into critical stylistics and face and politeness respectively.</p> <p>Jeffries' research into the application of stylistic methods to non-literary texts combined with a critical linguistic approach has been a major part of her research in recent years. Beginning with some work looking at the construction of meaning in news texts (2003 and 2007a), she then extended the methodology to an extended piece of research published as a monograph (2007b, entered for the RAE), looking at the role of public texts in constructing a naturalised ideology in relation to the female body. This was followed by a textbook (2010a) [1] setting out a framework for studying the ideologies of texts and a monograph (2010b) [2] developing a particular aspect of the critical stylistics model, namely opposition. The textual construction of opposition is one of Jeffries' contributions to theories of textual understanding and has led to her new theory of text-based linguistics which is being developed currently. Textual construction of opposition has obvious relevance to conflict, though it was developed independently of this application. The tendency of human beings to categorise experience and people into complementary (i.e. mutually exclusive) opposites is clearly an important aspect of how conflicts arise, develop and become intractable. Since 2010, Jeffries has been applying the text-based model that underpins her methodology to different politically sensitive issues, including radicalisation and democracy (2011) [3].</p> <p>O'Driscoll's recent research has focused on the exploration of several aspects of how people get on – or don't get on – with each other through the use of language, with particular reference to interaction across cultures. One of these aspects is the development of the concept of face (2010, 2011) as a way to explain not only motivations for (not) saying things but also the interpersonal effects, both good and bad, of (not) saying things. Another is the development of a framework for considering participation roles in interaction (2010, 2012). Both of these projects explore the significance of aspects of people's identities and roles which, regardless of how they really see themselves or their roles, are contingent on and circumscribed by the circumstances of interaction itself. For this reason, they tend to be deeply and immediately felt and are inevitable and omnipresent in interaction, and for <i>these</i> reasons a great deal of conflict can be caused or exacerbated by ignoring them or transformed by understanding them [4,5]. O'Driscoll has also worked on other pragmatic phenomena relevant to conflict. A study of data from BBC's Question Time, for example, led to the realisation that the notion of 'discursive deictic centre' could throw light on the discursive conduct of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and by extension other conflicts (2009) [6].</p> <p>O'Driscoll and Jeffries have researched the interactional and the ideological aspects of</p>

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

communication respectively, and their research has jointly produced the model of conflict communication which informs the training for conflict resolution professionals and mediators described in this case study.

**3. References to the research**

1. Jeffries, L. (2010a): *Critical Stylistics: The Power of English*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
2. Jeffries, L. (2010b): *Opposition in Discourse*. London: Continuum Books.
3. Jeffries, L. (2011): "Radicalisation' and 'democracy': a linguistic analysis of rhetorical change' In Bryson, V. and Fisher, P. (eds) *Redefining social justice. New Labour, rhetoric and reality*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 2011: 37-56
4. O'Driscoll, Jim (2013): Situational transformations: the offensive-izing of an email message and the public-ization of offensiveness. *Pragmatics & Society* 4.3: 369–387. DOI 10.1075/ps.4.3.05odr
5. O'Driscoll, Jim (2011): Some issues with the concept of face: when, what and how much? In Daniel Kádár & Francesca Bargiela (eds.) *Politeness Across Cultures*. London: Palgrave MacMillan. ISBN 978-0-230-23648-6
6. O'Driscoll, Jim (2009): A viable Israel and a secure Palestine: Textual intervention in a British public debate. In Stefan Slembrouck, Miriam Taverniers & Mieke Van Herreweghe (eds.), *From will to well: Studies in Linguistics offered to Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenberghe*. Academia Press: Ghent, pp. 361-371. ISBN 978 90 382 1496 2

**4. Details of the impact**

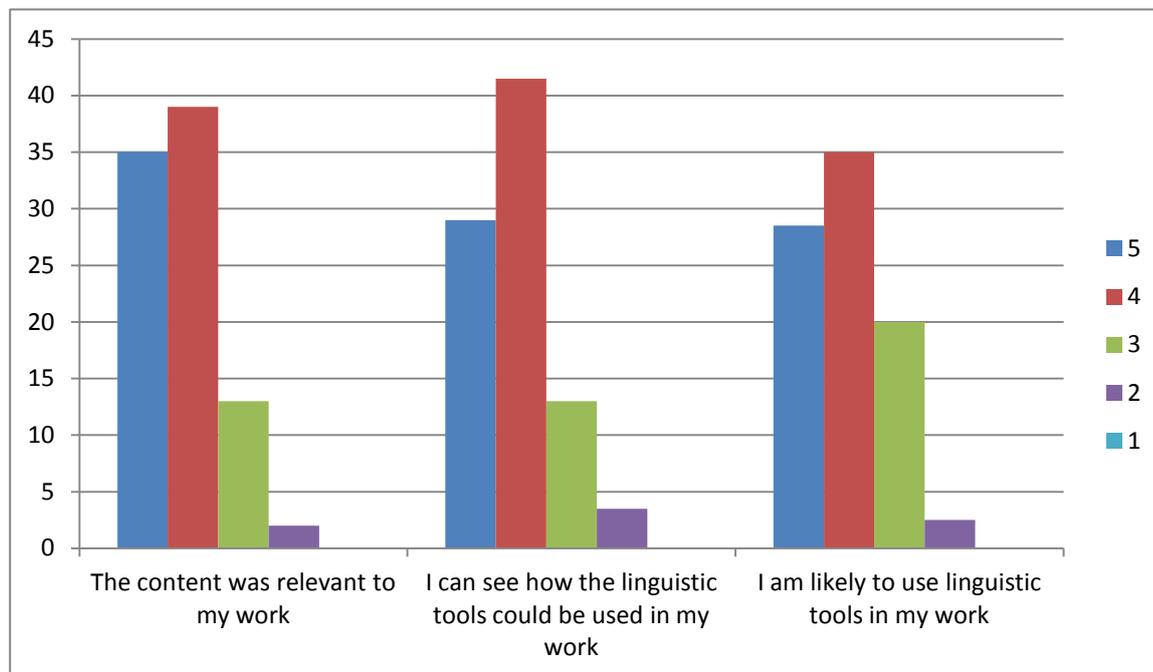
The Language in Conflict team has applied its research to a number of initiatives aimed at bringing linguistic knowledge and understanding to practitioners in the field. The first main activity undertaken was the development and management of a Language in Conflict website intended both as a linguistic resource for mediators and as a meeting point for linguists and practitioners. The other was the development and implementation of a series of linguistic workshops for community mediators around the country.

The Language in Conflict website [a] and Twitter feed [b] have attracted users and followers from the UK and other countries, including Spain and the US. Launched on January 28 2013, the website features a set of learning materials (the linguistic toolbox) and articles written by members of the Language in Conflict team, conflict professionals and students of conflict studies [a]. Twelve articles were uploaded to the site by the end of July 2013, and more continue to be published. The articles published have begun to generate discussion in the comments sections and have been publicised through social networks. To further encourage future contributions to the website and other cross-disciplinary projects, as well as bringing about new interest in training workshops, the research team has tweeted about issues relating to language and conflict on a regular basis and used Twitter as a means of finding contacts and discussing issues with followers from both fields. By the end of July 2013 the website had over a hundred registered users, with the homepage generating over 500 hits and more than 2,000 page views, including views of the linguistic toolbox pages. The Language in Conflict Twitter feed had over 160 followers by the same date and has continued to grow significantly as the team converses with others and receives re-tweets of links to Language in Conflict articles. The project has been recognised at high levels, including the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Conflict Issues, whose advisor has acknowledged the "exciting implications for both the theory of conflict and the delivery of new skills for practitioners and policymakers" [c].

Training workshops have so far been held in Belfast, Cambridge, London and Huddersfield and have involved more than a hundred participants from organisations such as Brighton and Hove Independent Mediation Service, Cambridge and District Community Mediation, the College of

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

Mediators, Common Ground East London Mediation, Kirklees Council, Leeds City Council, Manchester Mediation Services, Mediation Northern Ireland and Yorkshire Mediation Services. Continuing (unsolicited) bookings in South London, Bournemouth, Oxford, Dumfries and Edinburgh attest to the spread from one region to another of community mediators' enthusiasm for the project. Feedback from participants is collected at each workshop, and the following graph demonstrates responses to three questions asked of participants during the impact period.



Feedback from 91 workshop attendees at Belfast, Huddersfield, Cambridge, London and Brighton workshops. (5 = agree strongly, 1 = disagree strongly)

Individual feedback has been extremely positive and illustrates how workshop participants have gone on to apply Language in Conflict's methods in their own work. For example, a representative of Mediation Northern Ireland has remarked: "Since the workshop I have been more alert to the use of phrases such as 'protestant unionist loyalist', a commonly used phrase here in Northern Ireland that we have accepted into common parlance, which labels a group of people in a way that makes assumptions and closes down inquiry." [d] A mediator with Common Ground, a community mediation and conflict resolution organisation in East London, has noted: "I have actively incorporated the notion of 'opposition', as introduced to Common Ground by Language in Conflict, into aspects of my work. The idea... has lent to heightened awareness of choice of words and choice of focus during work with disputes." [e] All of Common Ground's mediator documents now use Language in Conflict's concept of "opposition" to assist in outlining means of conflict resolution. Other organisations have acknowledged Language in Conflict's role in facilitating "all stages of mediation and planning" (Cambridge and District Community Mediation) and as "training material/reading to add to core mediation training" (Brighton and Hove Independent Mediation Service). One independent mediator commented: "I really enjoyed the workshops and the material... It would really help me develop practice to be able to engage with you and gain more understanding in linguistics." A representative of Yorkshire Mediation Services said: "[The workshop] introduced concepts helpful to me as a mediator."

Language in Conflict and the research that underpins it have also been successfully promoted to other audiences. Jeffries wrote an article on the subject for *Babel*, the recently-launched language magazine she co-edits with Huddersfield colleague Dan McIntyre, which has a growing readership around the world [f]. She also wrote a piece on the importance of linguistics in understanding political decision-making, including an analysis of the "skivers versus strivers" opposition, for the April 2013 edition of *Political Insight* magazine, whose readership is made up of academics and

## Impact case study (REF3b)

non-academics with an interest in research with political implications [g]. In July 2013 Jeffries twice appeared on BBC Radio 4's *Word of Mouth* programme, which has an audience of 1.5 million, to discuss ideas related to the project [h, i,]. A *Word of Mouth* producer acknowledged the research's assistance in conveying seemingly complex concepts to a wider audience, remarking: "Some of the analysis is quite sophisticated and harder to explain... [but Jeffries'] explanation was a really useful addition to a programme on political soundbites." [j]

**5. References to corroborate the impact**

a. Language in Conflict website

[www.languageinconflict.org](http://www.languageinconflict.org)

b. Language in Conflict Twitter feed

@langinconflict

c. Adviser, All-Parliamentary Group on Conflict Issues, UK Parliament

d. Mediator, Mediation Northern Ireland

e. Mediator, Common Ground

f. 'Language, ideology and conflict in the modern world', *Babel* magazine, February 2013

<http://languageinconflict.org/90-frontpage/161-language-in-conflict-in-babel-magazine.html>

g. 'Language in Conflict: The Politics Behind the Rhetoric', *Political Insight* magazine, April 2013

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/2041-9066.12009/pdf>

h. *Word of Mouth*, BBC Radio 4, July 22

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b036v89y>

i. *Word of Mouth*, BBC Radio 4, July 29 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0375sfc>

j. Producer, *Word of Mouth*