

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: Middlesex University (UKPRN: 10004351)</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 36 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</p>
<p>Title of case study: Language, Linguistics and Literature at School: Course content, teaching practice and student choice</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This case study reports three specific kinds of impact: on the development of Key Stage 5 (AS and A level) curricula; on the practice of Key Stage 5 teachers; on the choices and interests of students (which in turn contributes to impact on curriculum design). Interventions through publications, workshops, committee membership and consultancy have helped to shape developments for many years. Key beneficiaries of this work are students, teachers, examiners and curriculum designers. The work has had particularly significant impact at Key Stage 5, although some of the activity is relevant at earlier stages.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Researchers in this unit have made significant contributions to curriculum development at school, particularly at Key Stage 5, in a number of areas including creative writing (led by Butt), film (led by Phillips) and work on language, linguistics and literature (led by Clark) which is the focus of this case study. The work is underpinned by individual and collaborative research carried out by Clark on linguistics and English language, particularly his pioneering work on linguistic pragmatics. Clark and others have worked in these areas throughout the period from 1993 (researchers currently working within this unit include Cobley, Farini, Gibb, and Shaw).</p> <p>The indicative references below cover the broader range of work on linguistic semantics and pragmatics, prosodic meaning and phatic communication, all of which feed into work on language and linguistics at school. This research is relevant to work on language in school curricula at all stages. Nicolle (research assistant and lecturer 1996-1998) and Clark's 1999 paper builds on Clark's early research on linguistic meaning (syntax, semantics, pragmatics and meaning change). It presents experimental work exploring how individuals understand utterances in context. The research was carried out between 1996 and 1998. Zegarac (research assistant 1993-1995) and Clark's 1999 paper extends this approach to language with a salient social function: 'phatic communication', traditionally understood as having a primarily social rather than a communicative function. It shows how phatic communication can be understood within the cognitive framework of relevance theory and how this approach can account for social functions associated with phatic communication. This research was carried out between 1994 and 1999. Clark (2012a) represents a strand of research on the meanings of prosody (variation in pitch, rhythm, timing and volume). It considers how a relevance-theoretic approach can explain relations between prosodic and other kinds of meanings, the kinds of meanings they encode, and how specific meanings are inferred in specific contexts. This work was carried out between 2005 and 2012.</p> <p>Clark's work on pragmatics (focusing on inferences involved in the production and interpretation of communicative acts) is also based on relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986), which builds on Paul Grice's groundbreaking work (Grice 1989) beginning in the 1960s. Work in pragmatics has developed from Grice's work in several directions. While relevance theory adopts the Gricean view that intentional communication is governed by ultimately rational principles, it departs from Grice in that its key theoretical assumptions are understood as law-like generalisations about human cognition and behaviour rather than norm-like principles to which individuals aim to conform.</p> <p>The vast majority of work in this tradition of pragmatics has focused on the inferential processes involved in understanding spoken and written utterances rather than on the inferential processes involved in production. Clark (2009) retains the focus on interpretation and develops a methodology for stylistic analysis (aiming to explain how texts have the effects they do on readers). He (2012b) extends this approach to consider inferences made by writers and editors in the production and redrafting of texts, and how this approach can help to account for literary criticism,</p>

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interpretation and evaluation. Clark and Owtram (2012) discuss how this approach can be developed in pedagogical and other contexts to help writers develop their writing and reflect on their own practice by focusing on the inferential processes of readers and writers. This research has been key to developing courses for undergraduates at Middlesex, and in the impact on school level curriculum development described below.

3. References to the research

1. Clark, B. 2012a. The Relevance of Tones: Prosodic meanings in utterance interpretation and in relevance theory. *The Linguistic Review* 29.4: 643-661.
2. Clark, B. 2012b. Beginning with 'One More Thing': pragmatics and editorial intervention in the work of Raymond Carver. *Journal of Literary Semantics* 41.2: 155-174.
3. Clark, B. and N. Owtram. 2012. Imagined inference: teaching writers to think like readers. In Burke, M., Czabo, S., Week, L. and J. Berkowitz (eds.) *Current Trends in Pedagogical Stylistics*. Continuum, London: 126-141.
4. Clark, B. 2009: Salient Inferences: Pragmatics and 'The Inheritors'. *Language and Literature* 18.2: 173-213.
5. Nicolle, S. and B. Clark. 1999. Experimental pragmatics and what is said: a response to Gibbs and Moise. *Cognition* 69: 337-354.
6. Zegarac, V. and B. Clark, 1999. Phatic interpretations and phatic communication. *Journal of Linguistics* 35.2: 321-346.

The outputs include book chapters and articles in highly ranked journals reviewed through peer/editor/publisher processes.

4. Details of the impact

This work has had impact on: Key Stage 5 (AS and A Level) curriculum development; practice of Key Stage 5 teachers; student understanding at Key Stage 5 and earlier stages (which also has impact on curriculum developments).

Curriculum Development

Our research is playing an important role in the development of new AS and A level English specifications. Clark's research on reader and writer inferences, and how this can help students to understand their own practice as well as texts and writers, has been particularly influential. A wide range of activities led to this impact. Clark was a consultant at an AQA event on developing new specifications at the University of Sheffield in 2012. With Dr. Andrea Macrae (Oxford Brookes University) and Dr. Marcello Giovanelli (University of Nottingham), he was commissioned to write HEA reports on 'Lang/Lit' work at school in 2012 and 2013. Corroborating evidence here comes from a statement from an A Level examiner involved in revising AS and A level specifications: '*Dr. Clark's work has influenced my thinking and practice as an educational linguist and teacher trainer. His work has also influenced and informed discussions regarding the design and writing of a new A level specification in English Language and Literature that I have been working on with . . . the largest awarding body for school examinations and assessment in the UK.*'

Teaching practice

Teaching practice has been affected through workshops and other events organised for teachers in schools and in higher education. Clark co-presented (with Giovanelli) a workshop for teachers at the 2013 National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) conference, presenting ideas for classroom practice based on his research in pragmatics and stylistics and classroom experience at Middlesex. These activities raise student awareness of the nature of inferences they make when

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reading and writing, and help them to adapt reading and writing practice in the light of this. The workshop, for 20 teachers, was oversubscribed and teachers provided positive oral and written feedback. Clark co-presented (with Dr. Gary Wood, University of Sheffield, and Louis Blois, teacher at Leggott Academy, Scunthorpe) a workshop on the UK Linguistics Olympiad at a conference for English teachers at the University of Huddersfield in 2012. He has taken part in a large number of Higher Education Academy subject centre workshops on transition from A level to BA level. Corroborating evidence here comes from feedback forms and statements from teachers. One teacher says: *'an excellent balance between practical application (always at the forefront of a teacher's mind) and theoretical challenge and learning . . . is the real power in the work undertaken by Dr Clark . . . all students can better appreciate literature when they have the skills to confidently deconstruct the language 'magic' at work. Dr Clark's work offers us practical tools through which this can be explored and reinvigorated my personal passion and professional conviction to keep language at the heart of everything we do because this ultimately enriches our study of literature.'*

Student understanding

A number of activities have helped students understand the nature of language and linguistic study, influencing choice of subjects and more general interest and understanding. With Dr. Graeme Trousdale (University of Edinburgh), Clark has taught a 5-day residential course on linguistics ('Linguistics: The Language Detective') for the Villiers Park Educational Trust every year since 2007 and a course in English Language ('Language Meaning, Language Change') for the first time in 2012. Each of these courses is attended by up to 25 students. Students provide very positive feedback (always over 95% rating the course excellent). Clark was 'Linguist-in-Residence' at the English and Media Centre Student Conference on English Language in 2011 (attended by over 800 students and teachers from across the country) and regularly attends workshops and higher education days in schools. His work with the UK Linguistics Olympiad (UKLO) committee encourages interest in language and problem-solving among students in secondary school at any age and level. Participation has risen steadily since the first Olympiad in 2010. UKLO has been supported by a wide range of sponsors, including universities, publishers, learned societies, the British Academy (£10,000) and the Leverhulme Trust (£50,000). Corroborating evidence here comes from Villiers Park student feedback forms, statistical evidence of yearly increasing numbers taking part in Olympiads (from 562 participants in 2010 to 2878 in 2013), statements from teachers and Villiers Park staff. The success of these activities has provided evidence of potential for a linguistics-based A level in English Language currently being developed by another awarding body, who invited Clark to contribute to the development of this award. The new specification will be submitted to Ofqual in spring 2014, materials will be available to teachers in September 2014, and first teaching will be in 2015.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Curriculum Development:

1. A Level Examiner, AQA.

Teaching practice:

2. Feedback forms from teachers attending NATE workshop.

3. Key Stage 5 teacher.

Student choice and interests:

4. Feedback forms from students attending Villiers Park Education Trust courses.

5. Director, Villiers Park Education Trust.

6. Figures for UK Linguistics Olympiad participation at the UK Linguistics Olympiad website:

<http://www.uklo.org/1131-2>

7. British Academy funded report on the UK Linguistics Olympiad:

<http://www.uklo.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/UKLO-Academy-final2.docx>