Institution: **Cardiff University**
Unit of Assessment: **29**
Title of case study: **Improving the effectiveness of police communication with the public in South Wales.** [**Bold**: REF guideline text; ***Bold italic**/italic*: emphasis; [Superscript:] refs to § 3 and 5]

1. Summary of the impact

Rock researches the comprehensibility and effect on readers and hearers of police language. She has deployed this research in a long-term collaboration with South Wales Police (SWP) and their associated agencies, such as trainers and interpreters. Rock has used her research findings to offer tailor-made solutions to a range of specific problems that SWP have identified in their communications with the public. So as to build capacity rather than creating long-term dependency, she places strong emphasis on acquainting the in-house staff sufficiently with her research to enable them to understand the potential options available, and to contribute to developing the best outcomes. Her interventions focus on written and spoken communications with the public relating to complaints, victim care, interviewing and interpreting. Outcomes have been major revisions to texts and permanent modifications to individual and organisational practices.

2. Underpinning research

Rock (joined as Lecturer 2005, SL '08) researches the comprehensibility and effectiveness of spoken and written texts in police-public interaction, including the processes by which these texts are constructed and their impact on the hearer or reader.[3-1,3-3] Her methodology for researching legal-lay communication[3-2] combines the direct analysis of texts themselves with a detailed examination of how they are used, in the context of the actions they are intended to achieve (e.g. warning, describing, informing). The approach unites several established linguistic methods, including discourse analysis (the macro-structures and underlying functions of texts) and linguistic ethnography (the close detail of how people interact through language in context). Also deployed, for written texts, are principles from information design (the effectiveness of information for its purpose) and the study of literacies (the many ways in which writing and reading are undertaken). Importantly, Rock's work demonstrates why language cannot be separated from its contexts of use. Rather, contexts, and particularly the individuals who operate within them, are made central, with user-collaboration fundamental to the research. Rock's methods identify three types of feature that can impact on effectiveness: 1. Potential obstacles to comprehension, e.g. an intimidating style that might distract from the intended message. 2. Features that impact on feelings or attitudes, e.g. by generating unintended negative inferences. 3. Features indicating that speakers or writers are at cross-purposes—potentially leading to misunderstandings, and failure to achieve the intentions of one or both parties or to meet the institutional needs.[3-2,3-3,3-5] She evaluates, for each text, how negative effects might be balanced by benefits, such as precision, communicating the seriousness of a legal message, and marking the transition from an informal into a legal activity.[3-2,3-4] Integral to such analyses are interviews, focus groups, online investigations and participant observations, to see how features operate in practice. Her work with interviewers and interpreters involves evaluating the impact of different types of oral feedback, and the potential sources of misunderstanding as well as evaluating training materials and principles of practice. Work with interpreters builds on Rock's research into the diversity of needs in policing settings.[3-2] For details of the specific research within the projects themselves see section 4.

3. References to the research: 3-1, 3-2 submitted to RAE2008. All items available from the HEI

1. **Rock, F**. 2005. 'I've picked some up from a colleague': language, sharing and communities of practice in an institutional setting. In: Barton, D. & Tusting, K. (eds.) *Beyond communities of practice.* Cambridge University Press, 77-104. ISBN: 978-0521544924
2. **Rock, F.** 2007. *Communicating rights: The language of arrest and detention.* Palgrave. ISBN: 9780230013315
3. **Rock, F.** 2012a. 'You say 'I'm sure' but you're not, are you?' Trust and doubt in police interviews with witnesses. In: Candlin, C. and Crichton, J. (eds.) *Discourses of Trust.* Palgrave, 203-219. ISBN: 9780230308497
4. **Rock, F.** 2012b. The caution in England and Wales. In: Solan, L. & Tiersma, P. (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Language and Law.* Oxford University Press, 312-325. ISBN: 9780199572120
5. **Rock. F. 2013.** 'Every link in the chain': The police interview as textual intersection. In: Conley, J., Heffer, C. and Rock, F. (eds.) *Legal-Lay Communication: Textual Travels in the Law.* Oxford University Press, 78-103. ISBN: 9780199746835

4. Details of the impact

Nature of the impact: The impact is an **effect on public policy and services** within South Wales Police (SWP) and associated agencies. It operates on the **activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, process and understanding** of police staff and legal interpreters, with onward impact on **attitudes and understanding** in the general public using police and interpreting services. The **reach** is targeted on SWP staff, a particular constituency with whom a sustained relationship has been built, but it affects a broad range of people, including *victims, witnesses, suspects and complainants*. Furthermore, local innovations are often adopted more widely: Changes to how detainees' rights are explained to them in police custody that were made on the basis of Rock's research[3-2] have been used across England and Wales since 2006, continuing to impact on the 4000 people per day who are arrested. The revised letters to complainants (project 1 below) adopted by SWP were, at 31/07/13, under consideration by the all-Wales IPCC Commissioner;[5-1] and the interpreter memo (project 6) created for practitioners in the SWP area was expected to be adopted by Gwent Police, Dyfed Powys Police, and, via the National Interview Advisor, across England and Wales.[5-8] The **significance** of the impact is its contribution to the *effective management of complex civic interactions, encompassing justice, protection, compliance and community relations*. Rock's input has materially improved the match between linguistic choices and communication practices. The significance is demonstrated by the testimonies and other evidence in section 5[5-1,5-2,5-3,5-7,5-8] and also in the award to Rock of £5857 from the British Association of Applied Linguistics' Applying Linguistics Activity Fund 2012.[5-9]

Context and process: Rock's research-to-impact portfolio results from collaborations with SWP since 2005. She has developed strong relationships with key individuals, which have resulted in onward recommendations to other units and agencies. As a result she has pervasive influence across the Force in shaping the many ways in which the police and their associated staff interact with the public. Typically, she is approached to address a specific problem relating to language (see example projects below). She collaborates with those who generate the texts and procedures, to help them learn new ways of reflecting on their practices, through (a) awareness of choices in words and structures; (b) consideration of the desired outcome and available linguistic means for achieving it; (c) awareness of the needs and assumptions of those reading or hearing a text, and of the author's own assumptions; (d) the role of legal requirements in wording. Her research-based interventions have enabled writers to broaden their linguistic choices and accommodate the needs of their readers/hearers more directly and effectively, e.g. by managing the level of formality and the use of difficult vocabulary. Her attention to capacity building in staff ensures that investments in one context are transferable and adaptable to others.

Examples of projects and evidence of impact:

(1) Revising responses to complaints against the police (from 2011): The Professional Standards Department of SWP deals with all complaints about the Force. The Senior Manager, Dale Ponting,[5-1] sought advice from Rock regarding the emotional impact on recipients of the letters sent by the Force in response to complaints. Rock interviewed letter recipients to develop an understanding of the letters' strengths and weaknesses in readers' eyes. She also conducted focus group research with impartial readers. Based on her findings, she offered an intervention *resulting in the replacement of 12 'standard' letters central to the complaints process.* Research-informed mentoring of Mr Ponting and feedback on his practices over many months created *a sustainable dynamic resource* for the Department which has been used in a subsequent large-scale review of letters and procedures triggered by the Police (Complaints and Conduct) Act 2012. Rock's work also triggered a *review of wider communicative practices in the SWP* around complaints, centring on greater awareness of spoken interaction. In an email (17/10/2011), Mr Ponting said of this work: "I think the new style is far more user friendly from complainants' point of view and would engender more trust in the complaints system. This is a really useful exercise for me. I have viewed our letters from a completely different perspective."

(2) Victim Care Bureau – letters and telephone greeting (2012): Rock was approached by the Central Communication Hub General Manager, Ms Megan Hughes, who was setting up the Victim Care Bureau to *help witnesses through policing processes*. By means of *collaboration* with three police staff, Rock evaluated letters sent to victims and the *revised versions are now used across South Wales* (1279 letters in the first month). Satisfaction survey results before and after the new letters showed increases of 9.3% (actions taken), 13.7% (follow-up), 6.5% (treatment) and 7.3%

(whole experience).[5-2] Ms Hughes reported a thank you letter from a victim of crime for the work of the SWP officers, referring to *"your most reassuring letter".* Rock's advice was also sought on spoken communication in the Bureau and her **guidance on telephone and email messages is also now in use** across the Force. As with (1), **a legacy of changes in workplace language skills and awareness** has inculcated a culture of attention to communication and a positive approach towards making improvements.

(3) Teach-to-Talk (from 2011) *Teach-to-Talk* is an interview method devised by police trainers at SWP to help witnesses provide the evidence required for an effective police enquiry. Rock reviewed instances of police officers using the *Teach-to-Talk* technique in training, comparing it with findings from her previous work on witness' attention to facts and figures, and on collaboration in police-witness interviews. On this basis she undertook **targeted investigations of rapport and the provision of feedback** during the openings of police interviews, in close consultation with interview trainers and a small research team. The resulting recommendations are being fed into police training through an **iterative process of intervention and further research**. The developments are informing the training of over 100 police officers each year. Interview trainer Kerry Marlow says: "The research at Cardiff University has enriched our understanding of the technique and its potential."[5-3] In an email 16/07/13[5-4] he described the new method as: "focus on action detail (evidential) material rather than people, location or time detail (investigative) and then giving them feedback [to] enhance[e] a chronological story". He added, "The collaboration with the University on practitioner development in providing evidential information for the court will if the hypothesis is significant be ground breaking in investigative interviewing."[5-4] By phone, 16/07/13 he said of *Teach-to-Talk*, "We've been amazed with the results." The work was "really significant" and "ground-breaking from a training perspective and from a practice perspective… The training has …been noticed by Monmouth Legal Services who are also interested in finding out more."[5-4]

(4) Interpreters and meaning: FuzzyLaw (from 2011): The multilingual population of South Wales requires the use of interpreters in many police interviews as well as in the courts. Interpreter trainers in South Wales initiated this intervention, when they expressed to Rock their concern about the challenges inherent in **putting non-native speakers on a 'level footing' with their native speaker counterparts.** The core issue was the capacity of interpreters to navigate the different elements entailed in 'correctly' translating a legal term, including: (a) its technical meaning and the legally equivalent term in another language, (b) its lay meaning for native speakers, including connotations and cultural associations read into the term by ordinary native speakers, and (c) other additional subtextual meanings. Rock recognised that the external stipulative definitions of terms used in legal procedures need to be juxtaposed with lay people's beliefs about their meanings, for an adequate path to understanding and, hence, appropriate interpreting, to be possible. To achieve this, Rock **created a two-way process of information gathering and dissemination,** FuzzyLaw,[5-5] able to inform both specialists and the general public about the hidden meanings and associations of terms used in legal contexts. The *survey site*, http://flaw.cardiff.ac.uk collects native speakers' explanations of legal terms. The explanations are **disseminated to interpreters and police officers** through http://fuzzylaw.cardiff.ac.uk. **Learning is facilitated** through reviewing and comparing the explanations. Discussion forums are also available for interpreters and police officers, who might not otherwise interact, to reflect on meaning. In this way, not only can interpreters learn more about the complex meanings of legal terms used by the police, but also the police become more alert to the many ways in which a term can be differently understood. Further impact has been **awareness raising** in lay people who provided explanations about legal terms and then could read the official definitions:[5-5] "Had no idea what violent disorder really meant - think this is quite a misleading phrase." "We think we know the answers, but it's evident we are not all of us entirely sure about the meanings of some of the jargon used." "We hear these phrases on TV all the time, but hard to put your finger on what they exactly mean." "I would not like to rely on my knowledge or description"; "[FuzzyLaw] has re-balanced my understanding of these words**."** One interpreter wrote two mini-articles on how FuzzyLaw changed her perception of the interpreter's role (http://fuzzylaw.cardiff.ac.uk/commentaries 27/7 and 26/7).[5-6]

(5) Dialogue between interpreters and police (from 2011): As a result of (3) and (4), Rock recognised connections between the interview training required by police officers, and the training needed by interpreters: both roles require a deep understanding about how comprehension works in legal settings, and, when working together, each needs to understand the tasks and constraints of the other. She proposed to the police interview trainers serving the South Wales Force, and to

the Public Service Interpreter Trainers, who train interpreters in a wide range of languages, that dialogue would be beneficial to both parties. She *organised a series of meetings* between the two groups, and led *research-informed discussions* of language issues and of shared communication-related interests. The outcome was *a new collaborative training initiative,*[5-3] with the first, week-long joint training session in October 2012. It was attended by 24 police officers and 20 interpreters. This is now a regular fixture of the SWP Advanced Suspect Interview training programme which equips senior investigators with skills for interviewing about serious crimes such as murder. A week of this three-week course is now dedicated to interpreting, whereas no time was spent on this issue previously. In 2013, 48 officers from SWP attended the training as well as 24 from Thames Valley Police. Interpreter Martha Edwards stated: "The training has changed the way I work… my interventions seem to be more effective and smoother, more confident … I've found myself spontaneously paraphrasing terms which I didn't have an equivalent for in my language at the time because I learned about them during the training."[5-7] The police training team presented the method at the 2013 Investigative Interviewing Research Group Conference, Maastricht, an international event for investigative interviewers (Rm 2, 9am http://bit.ly/1asFHzw).

(6) Revising preamble scripts for interpreted interviews (from 2013): In the light of her previous research on the comprehensibility of the rights text, Rock *instigated an intervention* focussed on the interview preamble (which explains suspects' rights, outlines how the interview will proceed, and sets the legal and practical ground-rules for interview) when it is mediated by an interpreter. For interpreted interviews, a crucial part of the preamble is explaining the interpreter's role and responsibility. Rock worked with a small team of police interview trainers, practising interpreters, and the S.Wales Police officer responsible for interview policy (David Roberts), to examine the wording of the preamble. The outcome was a *complete revision,* captured on a 'memo card', *which every individual arrested in South Wales who does not wish to be interviewed in English or Welsh will benefit from* (c.480 per year, rising annually). Roberts said of this change: "your input ... has a huge benefit. The memo card is used for both voluntary attendees and persons arrested and in custody."[5-8]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Project 1: Testimony of the Senior Manager, S.Wales Police Professional Standards Dept. He confirms that Rock was approached to research a problem with complaints letters, that her research resulted in "substantial alterations …to the structure and language of the letters" and that the IPCC is interested in the project outcomes. (Mar 2012)

2. Project 2: Email from the Central Communication Hub Manager, S. Wales Police. She reports improvements in all four targeted areas of victim satisfaction level as a result of the changes made to the letter sent to victims. Her figures relate to the Central Basic Command Unit but she confirms roll out to the other three BCUs of SWP. (Apr 2013)

3. Project 3: Testimony of a *Teach-to-Talk* interview trainer, at Investigative Interviewing Training and Consultancy. He confirms Rock's research-based contribution to enhancing the effectiveness of the *Teach-to-Talk* programme for training police interviewers and also her role in setting up the joint training of police officers and interpreters (Project 5) (1.07.13).

4. Project 3: Email and transcribed quotes from a phone call from the same trainer (16.07.13), confirming the impact of the changes claimed in section 4.

5. Project 4: The Fuzzylaw websites: http://fuzzylaw.cardiff.ac.uk and http://flaw.cardiff.ac.uk. On these sites the public assist in demonstrating the popular understanding of terms. The pages include comments by interpreters, police and lay people on their learning from the sites.

6. Project 4: Mini-article by an interpreter, on how FuzzyLaw changed her view of the interpreter's role. http://fuzzylaw.cardiff.ac.uk/commentary/1005 (Jul 2013).

7. Project 5: Testimony of a public service translator and interpreter (Spanish & Catalan-English). She explains the different ways in which the joint training with police interviewers has informed and enriched her professional practice. (16.07.13).

8. Project 6: Emails from the SWP Suspect Interview Advisor and a freelance interpreter. They confirm the value and take up of the memo card, and interest in it by other forces. (2013)

9. http://www.baal.org.uk/winners.html: Lists Rock as one of three 2012 winners of funding from the Applying Linguistics Activity Fund (out of 20 applications; hers was the largest award).

The testimonies (5-1,5-3,5-7), the emails (5-2,5-4,5-8) and pdfs of the webpages (5-5,5-9 saved 11/07/13 and 5-6 saved 04/10/13) are all available from the HEI.