

# Creativity and Innovation in Language Studies

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KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Hello. Welcome to the session on Creativity and Innovation in Language Studies. It's great to be here. Thanks for joining. I've got colleagues here from the two departments that make up Language Studies. That's the Department of Applied Linguistics and English Language, and also the Department of Languages.

So, we want to explore, a little bit, the nature of language and creativity. And we'll also talk a little bit about the things that we do to support, to help you learn, languages. Study the nature of languages.

And we're also very keen to hear from you. If there's anything that resonates with you, anything-- questions that you have relating to the topics that we have been talking about, please do share it with us. And we'll pick it up as it comes in.

And another thing I would like to ask you is, you must-- often people have one favourite word or an expression, in either their own language or another language, they've learned. So if there's one that comes to mind that's particularly meaningful to you, that's stayed with you, it has a personal meaning, do share that with us too. And I've asked my colleagues here to do the same.

And maybe we'll start introducing each other. My name is Klaus-Dieter Rossade, I'm Programme Director for Language Studies. But I'm also Module Team Chair for the Level Two course in German, and I'm very keen this year to actually have very direct contact with students.

Next to me, David. Would you like to introduce yourself?

DAVID HANN: Thanks, Klaus-Dieter. I'm David Hann. I work in the Department of Applied Linguistics and English Language. And amongst other things, I am Module Chair for the Second Level course called Worlds of English, UT14.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Thank you. Valerie.

VALERIE DEMOUY: I'm Valerie Demouy. I'm French, as you can probably hear. And I've been working in the French section for quite a long time now at the Open University. And more recently, and you'll hear about that in a few minutes, I've been involved in the production of a Welsh course.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Thank you. Mirjam.

MIRJAM HAUCK: I'm Mirjam Hauck. I am a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Languages. I'm born out of the German section, but have worked in almost every other section apart from Spanish, I think.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Well, thank you. So, creativity and language. Somehow it just seems to be like a non-question, and language is always creative. But if you then think of a

tax return, or passport application, suddenly that notion of creativity is lost. Can you tell us a little bit about what makes language creative?

DAVID HANN: I'm not sure if I can convince you that filling in a passport application is creative, but I'll give it a go. I think with regards to language and creativity, we often think of creativity as residing in things like literature, in poetry, in drama. But actually, one of the things that you find when studying language is actually the seeds of creativity can be found in the most mundane interactions that we have.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Like what?

DAVID HANN: Well, like for example, we think of storytelling as being the preserve of literature. But actually, we narrate our lives all the time. If somebody-- when you go home and a member of the family says how is your day, then you start to narrate. You tell a story. You edit it, of course. Because you can't say-- you can't talk through the day. And if through that story you voice protagonists, including yourself, and I'm sure you've put yourself in a very good light when you do that. So that's just one simple example of how we are creative on a daily basis.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: So we do that quite naturally. Everybody does it, just saying, in all the languages. So how, so why do we need to learn about it in a course? In one of your, like your course, the one where you're the chair.

DAVID HANN: Well, I mean, you could say that you speak English without thinking about it. But the point is, that actually making people consciously aware of aspects of communication, including creativity, make us appreciate it more. And I think that's very important.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: OK. And I also want to, in this session a little bit, to convey some of the research that your colleagues are doing. Where we actually look at exactly features of language which you might not normally pay a lot of attention to. Do you want to tell us some of the research project that people do?

DAVID HANN: OK. Yes. I can give you a flavour of the spectrum of projects which are specifically focused on creativity. So, for example, my colleague, Frank Monahan, is looking at football banners. OK. And the creativity of football banners. And just to give one example, he's an ardent Liverpool fan. And he was looking at the banners which Liverpool fans took to Galatasaray, the Turkish club.

And for people who follow football, Galatasaray have a big banner which says, welcome to hell, for their visitors. And Frank shows, for example, this one banner which the Liverpool fans held up which said, you think this is hell, you haven't been to this particular bar in Liverpool at two am on a Saturday morning. So there's a, there is a sort of visual dialogue going on between the fans there.

And then on the other side of the spectrum I've got, there's a colleague Sofia Damian and she's looking at the creativity in the language of people who are in extremis. Carers for people who are terminally ill. And actually how they use humour, and banter, and metaphor to convey their messages.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Thank you. Thanks. We must move on. I could talk for hours on this one alone.

Valerie, you've worked on-- you've said you've already worked on a Welsh course. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

VALERIE DEMOUY: Yes. Of course. I mean that's something very, very new. It's a new venture for Languages and the whole faculty. And that came about because we already offer a Welsh language course, Beginners' Course, which has become less viable through the years and for all sorts of reasons.

So, we just didn't want to let go of the Welsh. We wanted to keep a presence for the Welsh in the faculty, and also at university level. So, we put forward the idea of producing a Welsh course which would include beginners' language, obviously. Beginners' Welsh. But also a cultural aspect.

So this course is made of two parts. It's got a language part, which is-- both parts are actually taught through the medium of English. But it also has a non-language, or a cultural part, which takes you through cultural aspects of Wales. A better understanding of what makes Wales the country it is or the nation it is at the moment.

So, you're going through all sorts of things from the geography, or the land, through to the people. Including famous people. But also politics as well. So it is a very interesting course, and that's.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: And it's quite something unique to add a beginners course to have language and culture at equal levels. So you weren't a Welsh speaker at the time. You just had the expertise of putting quarters together. Now you are? You can speak Welsh?

VALERIE DEMOUY: Well, yes. I can speak a bit of Welsh. Obviously through reading the material. So you want me to say something in Welsh?

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: I would love to. Yes.

VALERIE DEMOUY: So, here we go. OK. [SPEAKING WELSH]

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Ok. Thank you.

VALERIE DEMOUY: Everyone guess what that meant?

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: All the Welsh speakers will know what you said. I don't. But I guess something was about, my name is Valerie and I live or work in Milton Keynes. I guess.

VALERIE DEMOUY: That's right. I said I was a teacher and then I lived and worked in Milton Keynes. So, there we are. And I apologise to anyone who's got a bit of Welsh for murdering the pronunciation.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: And that's really something that we always worry about when we speak another language. Because you don't really know what it sounds like to somebody

else. And that really makes it scary, and something we need to overcome. So thanks, really, for doing that for us here.

VALERIE DEMOUY: You're very welcome.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Mirjam. You've done, as you said, quite a lot of roles in the department. But at the moment, you also coordinating some of the research and scholarship activity. And I wanted you to talk a little bit about some of the projects.

MIRJAM HAUCK: You gave me a very good cue talking about the worries that some learners experience. So we've got one important scholarship project running around the concept of a student buddy. Which we introduced a few years ago in our beginners' courses. And these are students who've been through it. They've studied a beginners' course, and they are then there in the cohort wide forums that we run for the students of the next presentation of the course.

And they are basically there for people's well being. They're kind offering pastoral care, support, pep talk, they jolly you along. And we have started to systematically evaluate, not necessarily so much what they do, but more the how they do it and how that impacts on the students.

And more recently, not only on how it impacts on the students in that course, but also how it impacts on the student buddies themselves. Because they continue to be learners on another module. It has all sorts of positive effects in terms of.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: It's been a very positive.

MIRJAM HAUCK: Community. Feeling part of a community, for example.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: We have some questions. Can we have some of those from students? Or some comments?

KAREN FOLEY: We've been having lots of interesting chat on the social media desk. And Elodie is here, as well, answering lots of people's questions. Which is great. So if you do have specific questions, do let us know and Elodie can try and answer those. And also, if you do have anything specific you want to know about languages, then email us [studenthub@open.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@open.ac.uk) and we'll forward those to Elodie so she can get back to you on that.

When we talk about funny things and Laura says that she was speaking French and she went and asked for a small child. Which is really cracking us up. And Rachel says she asked for skirt fries. But we do have a question as well from Theta who was saying English isn't her first language, and are there any supporting materials that she can access to try and learn English as a language.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: David, is there?

DAVID HANN: Well, yes. This is not really my area. But, yeah. Certainly with certain modules there are. There is supporting material for those whose language-- whose first language is not English.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: And I think we should say we have a introductory module called Exploring Languages and Cultures. Which kind of picks up people from not really knowing an awful lot about languages. Maybe being quite scared. And in terms of language, this should be quite easily accessible.

MIRJAM HAUCK: We also have English for academic purposes.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: We do have.

DAVID HANN: We do.

MIRJAM HAUCK: Which is a module that I chair, and it was produced now six, seven years ago. And that is for native and nonnative speakers of English.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: So those might be two ideas to have a go. Can I actually, because I've been asking about favoured words. Have some come through?

KAREN FOLEY: They were, but we're way past that. We can collate some for you, but loads of people have. So if you haven't, give us your favourite words.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: And I'm going to ask now the panel. What is your favourite word?

MIRJAM HAUCK: Unfathomable I think is the one that I like most.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Why is it?

MIRJAM HAUCK: It's just because it's so difficult to pronounce for a German native.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: OK. Valerie.

VALERIE DEMOUY: Well, for me it's going back to when I first learned English and it was butterfly. And back then I just didn't know what it meant, but it sounded really nice. And I think that's going back to making sounds in languages, that we were talking about this morning.

And I think it's a challenge, but it is also a pleasure to be able to do it. And I think if you haven't tried it, just start with little words like that and they just evolve into something. I like the fact that English is very economical as well, which is very good.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Have you had a favourite?

DAVID HANN: Well, my first teaching job was in Italy. So I have to choose an Italian word, and it's a very simple one. It's 'cinque'. And again if you think how boring five is or 'fünf', it's just the two syllables and the way that they combine. It's interesting that we've all talked about the aesthetics of it as well.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: I think, and that's often is probably what it means. My one is a Japanese one, 'gochisousama' which you say when you finish your meal. It's a way of thanking. It's a word that we've used in our family quite a lot.

We're almost up. I just wanted to point out the discussion can go on. In FELS we've got a Facebook account. We also got a Twitter feed on OU DALEL and OU Languages. So please keep in touch with us, and the discussion goes on. And back to you, Karen.

KAREN FOLEY: Well we've had some great words and one of them is thanks. Which I think is a very important word, for a lot of reasons. Penguin, pengunu, and millennium. So all great, fun words to say.

We've now got a short video which is about What Languages Can Do For You. And then we're going to come back into the studio where Janet Sumner is going to tell us how to make a video. Because we'd love more of those later. So we'll be back in a couple of minutes.

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