Languages, Cultures & Literacies (LCL) Public Seminars
Simon Fraser University
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20
EDB7600, EDUCATION BUILDING, SFU BURNABY CAMPUS

9:30 – 12:00
HUMANS, ARTIFACTS, AND ENVIRONMENTS AS SYSTEMS IN INTERACTION
Dr. Steven L. Thorne
Portland State University and University of Groningen

1:00-3:30
FINDING ONE’S WAY IN THE UNITARY FIELD OF ACTION, PERCEPTION, AND LANGUAGING
Dr. Paul Thibault
University of Agder

Rm.7600, Education Building, 8888 University Drive, Burnaby
Chairs: Dr. Angel M. Y. Lin, Dr. Ena Lee, & Dr. Ron Darvin

ALL ARE WELCOME

RSVP by March 18
http://websurvey.sfu.ca/survey/339313337
Abstract: Human development arises as a function of participation in, and contribution to, historically formed and dynamically emergent social, symbolic, and material ecologies of association. When viewed this way, learning of whatever kind cannot be clearly separated from social fields and processes, material conditions, and living bodies (Bourdieu, 1984). In this sense, humans are open systems and development involves an ‘ensemble’ process orchestrated along a brain-body-world continuum (e.g., Spivey, 2007; Cowley & Steffensen, 2007; Steffensen, 2013). An open systems approach is particularly relevant to understanding technology-mediated communicative and cognitive activity since the meditational means at hand transform the morphology of human action in ways that potentially enable and constrain developmental trajectories.

In this talk, I describe instances of “learning in the wild” (borrowing from Hutchins, 1995), highlighting the relevance of situatedness and place in language learning interventions using mobile Augmented Reality (AR), the primary objective of which is to embed languaging events and resources in phenomenologically rich and embodied experience in the world (Hellermann, Thorne, & Fodor, 2017; Thorne et al., 2015; Thorne & Hellermann, 2017; Zheng et al., 2018). Our video analysis of language learners engaged in AR activity draws from multiple approaches (activity theory, the ‘distributed language view’ (Thibault, 2011), usage-based linguistics, multimodal ethnomethodology, posthumanism) and illustrates the achievement of ongoing co-action through visible embodied displays, the performance of new actions through coordinated (re)use of public semiotic resources (Goodwin, 2013), and perhaps controversially, the physical surround as actant in the sequential production of action in interaction.

Steve L. Thorne (Ph.D., UC Berkeley) is Professor of Second Language Acquisition in the Department of World Languages and Literatures at Portland State University (USA), with a secondary appointment in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Groningen (The Netherlands). His interests include formative interventions in world languages education contexts, intercultural communication, communication across new media and mobile technologies, indigenous language revitalization, and research that draws upon contextual traditions of language analysis and usage-based and distributed approaches to language development. In 2014, he was selected to receive the Faculty Research Excellence Award for assistant and associate professors at Portland State University. His research has appeared in numerous journals, edited collections, and books, the latter including Sociocultural Theory and the Genesis of Second Language Development (with James Lantolf, Oxford, 2006), Internet-mediated Intercultural Foreign Language Education (with Julie Belz, Thomson/Heinle, 2006), Language, Education, and Technology, Volume 9 of the Encyclopedia of Language and Education (3rd Edition) (with Stephen May, Springer, 2017), and Engaging the World: Social Pedagogies and Language Learning (with Sébastien Dubreil, Cengage, 2017).
Abstract: Human languaging is a multiscalar bio-cultural resource that enables persons to coordinate with other persons and with aspects of the situations in which they co-participate with each other. From the Distributed Language view, I argue that embodied, richly multimodal first-order languaging is a unified field of action, perception, and expressive resources and media that are constrained and scaffolded by second-order cultural constraints (Thibault, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2019). On this basis, I develop the thesis that languaging is a form of extended action-perception system. In their dialogically coordinated languaging, persons make available stimulus information that has the capacity to activate and guide flows of action-perception, both actual and virtual, in both one’s self and in other persons. Through the skilful deployment of repertoires of vocal tract and other bodily skills and techniques, persons develop capacities normatively to affect and direct the flows of experience of the selves who participate in dialogically coordinated languaging in the human ecology. Persons develop the skills of way-finding (Hodges, 2007) along with the skills of indicating or pointing to the affordances and the places of observation of their environment from which affordances can be apprehended and accessed. Against this backdrop, I will also focus on the concept of interactivity with reference to video-recorded episodes of learning and other situations. A growing body of evidence shows that interactivity, not abstract symbol manipulation, internal representations or information processing centered on the internal mental processes of the individual, is the key to human learning and intelligence (Vallée-Tourangeau et al., 2011). A focus on the learning of abstract social and semiotic codes has traditionally privileged pedagogies that abstract away from this basic fact. Humans learn best in situations that promote rich, culturally saturated multimodal interactivity when they engage with and manipulate external artefacts to solve learning tasks and cognitive problems in often complex cognitive-semiotic environments such as aircraft cockpits, interpreting fMRI brain scans by brain scientists, and medical simulations involving senior doctors and trainee doctors (Hutchins, 1995a, 1995b, 2010; Alač & Hutchins 2004; Clark 1997, 2008; Kirsch, 1995a, 1995b; Steffensen, Thibault, & Cowley 2010). I will show and discuss selected video recordings to illustrate the points outlined above.

Paul J. Thibault is professor in linguistics and communication studies at the University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway. From 2015-2018, he was Hans Christian Andersen Academy Visiting Professor at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense. He has held academic posts in Australia, China, Hong Kong, and Italy. His research interests and publications are in the areas of applied and general linguistics, development, distributed language and cognition, human-animal interaction, human interactivity, learning, multimodality, narrative, social theory, learning theory and teaching and learning in higher education, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and systemic-functional linguistics. With Mark King, he is working on learning in HE at UNSW Sydney using cognitive ethnography, distributed cognition, and multimodal event analysis. He is close to completing a new book, Distributed Language: Languaging, affective cognition and the extended human ecology for Routledge as well as preparing one entitled The Linguistic Imagination for Bloomsbury. He is on the editorial boards of six international peer reviewed journals: Language and Semiotic Studies, (語言與符號學研究); Language, Context and Text: The social semiotics forum; Language and Sociocultural Theory; Language Sciences; Linguistics and the Human Sciences; and Social Semiotics. He is currently investigating the gesture-graphic trace relation with colleagues in Birmingham, Glasgow, Odense, and Marseille, from the perspectives of the production and reception/perception using a methodology that brings together expertises in multimodal interaction analysis, neurophenomenology, cognitive neuroscience, and fractal scaling.