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## Text Trajectories – Developing dynamic approaches to textual analysis

A seminar organized by  
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**Rationale:** The term ‘text trajectories’ is derived from the propensity of texts to be transferred, transposed and transformed across different contexts, with different resulting meanings, significance and effects. It is a key notion being used alongside others- *text histories, genre chains, genre suites, text chains*- as a way of empirically tracking and theorising the ways in which texts (across modalities) instantiate and construct highly consequential social practices. For instance, asylum seekers’ testimonials can pass through various processes of translation, summary, reformulation, interpretation and evaluation at different stages in the asylum application process, ending up with meanings and consequences which are at odds with those originally intended by the refugee (Blommaert, 2005a). Academic articles have complex text histories contingent on the geo-political positioning of the authors and the targeted journals, with micro text brokering and evaluation practices shaping the knowledges being published in local, national and transnational publications (Lillis and Curry, 2010). Written records of medical procedures and decisions in a hospital operating theatre are transformed into figures in reports justifying expenditure and deployment of resources (Bezemer, 2012). These processes of entextualisation and recontextualisation are of academic interest in the challenges they present to theory and methodology in the study of literacy and its role in social life. They are also of professional, practical and moral significance, because of the ways in which they are knitted into institutional practices (for discussion of texts in organisations see Fraenkel 2001, Smith 2005) and because of their crucial effects on people’s lives: textual trajectories determine whether hospitals gain funds, academics advance their careers, or refugees are granted asylum and entry to a new life.

The focus on text trajectories in this seminar brings together a number of emerging streams of work in interrelated fields, such as sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, genre studies, literacy studies and linguistic ethnography. In all these areas there is currently a strong interest in how to research and more robustly theorise dynamic, processual aspects of texts, in order to better understand their significance in institutional practices and their effects on people’s lives. The main frames of reference in this seminar will be literacy studies and linguistic ethnography. The seminar will also be of particular interest to researchers exploring dynamic approaches to genre.

## Programme

9.30	Coffee
10.00	Welcome and Introduction
10.15	Speaker 1: Frances Rock, Cardiff University. Textual travel in legal settings has the potential to influence lives in permanent and incisive ways. This paper exemplifies text trajectories in policing and suggests how research can influence legal practices through collaborative research between linguists and legal practitioners.
11.00	Speaker 2: Theresa Lillis, Open University. This presentation explores text histories and trajectories in two distinct contexts: academia (writing for publication) and social work (case note recording). The focus will be on illustrating the value of adopting a text history approach for shifting analytic attention away from single texts towards clusters of texts across time and space and for identifying key moments of production and uptake.
11.45	Speaker 3: Jeff Bezemer, Institute of Education. This presentation explores text trajectories in hospital environments, drawing on audio, video, and written records of surgical operations produced by clinicians and social science researchers. The focus will be on the transformations involved in 'transcribing' conversations and events in writing for institutional and academic purposes.
12.30	Small group discussion, to share research interests in text trajectories and identify any points and questions to bring to the plenary group discussion after lunch
1.00	Lunch
1.45	Plenary: points and questions from small groups
2.15	Speaker 4: Tom van Hout, Leiden University. Texts travel to, within and from institutions. In the process, meanings, interpretations and outcomes change. In this talk, I make a case for analyzing the inherent mobility and mobilizing effects of texts and consider linguistic ethnographic approaches for doing so.
3.00	Tea
3.15	Speaker 5: Catherine Kell, University of the Western Cape. This paper outlines the importance and necessity of a shift within Literacy Studies from the theoretical framework of events, practices and domains towards the role of texts in meaning making across space and time. It presents a methodology for tracing text trajectories. This methodology enables fine-grained distinctions to be made firstly, about the concept of scale in relation to debates about the local/global, and secondly, the role of texts in constructing social processes which have greater durability and irreversibility, or not.
4.00	Plenary led by two respondents
4.30	Finish