

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to the Student Hub Live. In this session we take a look at applied linguistics. And joining me to discuss this is Maria Leedham and Laura Paterson Thank you for joining me today.

We've had a lot of discussion about bilingual teaching and English as a second language on the chat today. And so do keep your questions coming in if there's anything that you'd particularly like to know about this pathway. And Zach and Lee will put those to our panel in the studio.

Maria, you're a senior lecturer at the OU and you work on two modules in the applied linguistics pathway, the MA in education. And Laura, you're a lecturer in applied linguistics and English language at the OU. And you're also on the module-- well you're the team chair of EE817, which is the first module on the applied linguistics pathway. And we'll talk a little bit about pathways later. The broadly what does applied linguistics cover?

MARIA LEEDHAM: I think if you see it as any issue, any aspect of real world language issue. So it covers-- it might not be a problem. It could just be an issue that you want to investigate. It might be translation, interpreting, teaching, social media, looking at language and new technology. So really it's a very, very broad area. Do you want to add anything?

LAURA PATERSON: So language permeates all. So you can put an applied linguistic lens on absolutely anything. And we've had students do projects on language in a classroom with autistic children. We've had students look at the language of law and is it penetrable to the everyday person, business contexts where they've gone and kind of done a bit of research in their offices and that kind of thing, anything. We can put an applied linguistics stamp on anything.

KAREN FOLEY: If people missed our earlier session today we were talking a little bit about careers and we were saying what sorts of things could you do with an MA in applied linguistics. Could you recap on that briefly?

MARIA LEEDHAM: Sure I mean we sit within the umbrella MA education. So most of our students are either TESOL, teaching English to speakers of other languages teachers, or teachers, educators in some sense, whether it's in a secondary school, further education. But we do have people who are just interested in learning language, learning through language, learning about language. You might just be a math teacher, but you're interested in how your students learn math

through language. Everything is mediated through language. And having an applied linguistics degree at a high level is useful for a wide range of careers-- maybe journalism, interpreting, translation, maybe publicity advertising areas, anywhere where language is important.

KAREN FOLEY: So it doesn't have to just relate to teaching.

MARIA LEEDHAM: No it doesn't at all. And you could you could study on our pathway and not be a teacher, not work in an education setting, but maybe you teach your child. You help your children with their homework through language, or you teach your next door neighbour to get on the internet. It could be anything like that, anything through language.

KAREN FOLEY: So if we've got anything and it's very, very broad, then what is the focus in the applied linguistics pathway on the MA?

MARIA LEEDHAM: Do you want to start?

LAURA PATERSON: We start on EE817, which is applied linguistics in English language. And what we do on that module is we introduce students to lots of different ways of going about investigating language and lots of different types of interaction as well. So we might look at doctor-patient interaction or something like that and apply different frameworks to it. Or we might give the students a puzzle or a problem or an issue and say, OK, of the frameworks that you've come across so far, which do you think might be applicable here and why, and kind of walk them through how, whilst we have all of these fantastic tools, not everything applies to every situation. So by learning how to be critical of the tools that you use, you learn how better to analyse language.

KAREN FOLEY: We've put lots of widget questions up. And someone's just joined us from Asia. Hello. We'd like to know where you are. So if you could let us know on the map where you're based at the moment, all you do is press the area that applies to you on the map. We've also got some word clouds that you can fill in. And these say things like three words to describe my identity, what's your work setting, and three words to describe applied linguistics. No right or wrong here. We've seen it's a very, very broad area. But for these word clouds with three things, you do need to put three things in to submit your answers. So if you can only think of one or two, that's absolutely fine. Just put a full stop in the others and then your results will submit.

We'd also like to know which module you're studying. So there's a series of E numbers there, not the bad sort. But you can let us know which module you are studying. And of course if there are any questions, Lee and Zach can put those to our live panel in the chat. But if you're

watching on catch up-- and all of this is available on catch up-- then you can email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk, and we'll make sure that your question gets to the right person.

So we've talked a bit about the applied linguistics and it covering a lot of things and the focus as well. How are students then guided through this MA? I mean, can you tell them about the structure and what they can expect?

MARIA LEEDHAM: In stage one of the whole MA education there are three pathways. And you've heard from the other two pathway leads. Now we're onto applied linguistics. You can study any of the stage one modules, and then at the end of that stage one year, you can decide whether to continue with that pathway, which is in fact what most students do, or you might want to switch. You might decide you're doing leadership management and then you want to switch to applied linguistics, Or vice versa.

Once you're onto stage two, then you stay with that for stage two and for the final dissertation module. So we've got you to the end then of the three years.

KAREN FOLEY: Now we were talking before about the dissertation module and about research questions and about really how to focus those and how broad they can be, but also how important it is for things to be manageable. What does the dissertation look like then in implied linguistics?

MARIA LEEDHAM: You draw on the tools that you've covered in Laura's material, stage one, and in stage two and the methodological tools and the technology you've explored. And you can draw on any of those to examine an issue in your own teaching and learning context. Which could be, how can I improve a small, manageable aspect of my teaching-learning context and make things better? It might not be a problem that you want to resolve. I mean, it often is. It might be, my students don't talk enough in class, or how can I make my students' writing better? Or it might just be an issue, you know, what happens if I introduce a wiki into my classroom? And you can try that out, investigate it through maybe questionnaires, interviews, talking to students, trying it out to kind of before and after testing and examine the results using a form of linguistic analysis, and then try to improve things that way. Or just see what happens if I intervene, if I make this intervention.

Really the key is that it's small scale, manageable, because while you've got a year for the dissertation module, it's got to fit in with your teaching or your neighbour's availability if you're showing them how to get on the internet. So it's got to be manageable within your time frame. And it's a 12,000 word dissertation, which might seem a tall order, but it's guided. You have to

TMA's, tutor-marked assignments that guide you through it. And you have a lot of one-to-one support from your tutor as well.

KAREN FOLEY: These are important points. Michelle has just joined us from China. Lee, would you like to fill us in?

LEE: Yeah, Michelle joining us all the way from China. It's evening there at the moment. She says she only planned to learn the first module of her MA in education since English is her second language, and it's also her first OU course. So she's already looking forward to being part and joining us today.

KAREN FOLEY: We've got a lot of people from around the world watching now. And if you are new to the OU, Lee and Zach are the best people to ask any questions too because, in addition to being students and manning our hot desk, they also work on our student support team. Lee and Zach, fill those people in who have just joined us on the sorts of things that people might want to get in touch with you two about.

ZACH: Well, anything really, anything that your tutor may not be able to answer in the first instance, if you are having issues or want to find out some more information about how to plan your studies, maybe looking at time management. Perhaps some life events have happened that have affected your studies. Anything at all really that could happen or would happen or you want to ask in the future about then you can always just get in contact with your student support team and we'll kind of guide you through different bits of policy and give you advice and guidance on how to plan and stay on track.

KAREN FOLEY: And lots of people can talk to you because you're open very sociable hours. You also have different ways that maybe our international students may find easier.

LEE: Absolutely. I mean, we know a lot of people like to call us. And that's absolutely fine. And we do take international calls as well. But of course they can be quite expensive. So you can email us and you can contact us through a contact page and form in student home. And we're always available through student home that way. And we have a turnaround time of about one to two days, usually, we'll get back to a student from an email. So that's another way of keeping in touch with us.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. And are there any urgent questions that we need to cover, Lee and Zach? And know you talk about lots of other things and covering an awful lot out there as well. But

anything that you'd like to know about applied linguistics?

ZACH: Not yet. We have put the question out there just to get in contact with our guests about if they've got anything in particular about applied linguistics. Did have a lovely story from one of the guys on the chat, Sharon Sweetland, whose tutor actually identified that she had dyslexia back in 2013, which may be quite relevant if you're someone that studies applied linguistics. Is that a skill that you can have, identifying how people use language to kind of better their learning as well? So maybe that relevant, I don't know.

KAREN FOLEY: I think that's a really good point. Often dyslexia people commonly associate with misusing words. But sometimes it can relate to thought processes as well. And we know that a lot of OU students study with dyslexia and there can be ways of spotting it. Does studying language and when language is going wrong give you an indication that there might be something there?

MARIA LEEDHAM: We have quite a strong accessibility team at the OU. We try to make sure all our module material is accessible to people with any range of any kind of disability. So I'm going broader than dyslexia here. If you've got vision or hearing issue, then we try to make everything-- you can read the transcript if you can't follow the audiovisual materials for example. So I think there is a lot of help and guidance out there for students.

LAURA PATERSON: I was going to say I think as well in terms of our students, some of our students may be practitioners working with dyslexic children or dyslexic adults. You can use the tools that we teach you within your professional practise.

KAREN FOLEY: And if you're worried about any of that, you can speak to the student support team. And there are some basic tests that you can do to check if you might want to look at some sort of diagnostic process for something like that.

We've asked about identity and a lot of words are coming up like professional, being a teacher, student, studios, linguistics, et cetera. So lots of various things going on there about how people perceive their identities. But I wanted to ask you, sort of going back to that idea about making the most of your studies, you know, this is very much a practical qualification, as are the others that we've been looking at. How do students make the most of their time as a student?

LAURA PATERSON: I think bring your enthusiasm, for starters. I think one of the hardest things is making sure that you plan your time and setting off with a good start on the module by working out when in the

week you're going to be able to study, keeping in contact with your tutors, and if you have an issue, if you need some help, do ask them. And being active on the module forum and getting involved with your other students as well and kind of getting a rapport going, because it is sometimes isolating to work at a distance. But if you meet people online in these groups, you can build those rapports and you know that you're not alone.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, no, exactly. The community is really important. And we asked people what module they were studying. 29% are doing 817, EE817. No one's 818. 819 with 14%, 57% during another module at the moment.

So this whole idea then of forums and things, we've got some people who have just joined the OU who might not know what a forum is. What advice would you give students about sort of navigating some of these aspects? Where do they start and what should they be doing right now in week one?

LAURA PATERSON: If you are on EE817, we've produced a screencast which shows you how to navigate the module web site which shows you where the different tutorial rooms and different forums are. So you can go and have a look and go and see who interacts in different forums. So there is a guide there for you as a starting point. Anything else?

MARIA LEEDHAM: I think definitely getting involved in the student forum, meeting people. We've heard lots from introduction on 817, people telling us where they are. I think we cover every continent, don't we, the entire world? And students interacting with each other, that's the key point, not so much telling us but telling each other where they are, and people hooking up. Kind of oh yeah, I'm in China too. Let's not quite meet up for coffee, but we've got the same context there.

And I think introducing yourself to your tutor and being involved-- everything's online but there are synchronous and asynchronous communication going on. So you can be live with your tutor. You can engage in the moment with the tutor. And having that context and having-- you've almost promised to somebody else that you will study this and somebody else looking out for you. Your tutor will notice if you're getting behind, if you don't submit your TMA and will prod you along a bit. You need that contact with other people.

While I think a lot of our students really enjoy the flexibility with the OU, that they can study when they want, where they want, I think you also need somebody else looking out and kind of knowing that they're going to be watching out for you. Oh, you've not been active in the forum? That kind of thing is really important.

KAREN FOLEY: Now bearing in mind we've got a lot of students who aren't studying applied linguistics at the moment, what advice would you give them who are thinking, oh, I don't really know if this is for me. You've mentioned how broad it is. And you've also mentioned this various methodological tool kit which I was very interested in. So how might people know whether this is something that might be for them?

MARIA LEEDHAM: They could look at the YouTube videos that we produced on what is applied linguistics, which I think will be shown and it's in the resources on Student Hub Live. They could follow us on @OUDALEL, applied linguistics English language, and you could ask a question that way. They can look at our web site, MA education applied linguistics. And you've got a little introduction to each of our three modules there and see what is covered.

KAREN FOLEY: And Liala says that the introduction to EE817 is excellent. She says well done.

[LAUGHTER]

MARIA LEEDHAM: Good to hear.

LAURA Good to hear.

PATERSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Good. So there are lots of different ways that people can find out about whether or not this might be for them. Is there a certain type of student who might do well at this? And also what sorts of skills would you say that students need to be mindful of developing and shaping as they're sort of moving into postgraduate study?

LAURA That's a very good question. I think you have to be interested in language. That's probably
PATERSON: rule number one. If you do use language in a teaching capacity in your daily life, obviously we're on the MA in education pathway.

Another thing is, well, maybe just to go back to what Maria was saying is if you're not too sure if applied linguistics is for you, if you are an OU student already on whatever module, if you go to the OU library, there is an article "What is applied linguistic" by Burns et al. 2009. It's very short. It gives a nice overview of what we do. And it could be your way into doing linguistics.

MARIA LEEDHAM: Yeah, definitely. If you explore these resources, probably something along the way will grab your interest and make you think, you know, yeah, that resonates with me. I can see that. You

can also look at the LAL, School of LAL, Languages and Applied Linguistics website and see the kinds of research that we do and where language study fits in there.

KAREN FOLEY: We're going to show a video in a minute about applied linguistics. So people can watch that as well. But before we end, I wondered if you could both tell me-- you're both actively researching as well as doing your work on the modules, et cetera-- why is applied linguistics so exciting for you?

MARIA LEEDHAM: My previous research has been in EAP, English for academic purposes. And I looked at Chinese students writing in English in UK universities and compared that with British students and found that Chinese students use a lot more visuals in their writing. So if they're working in biology, undergraduate biology, they were more likely to put in drawings and diagrams and so on in order to convey. And given that biology is a very visual discipline, that worked really well. So it's a different thing, not a deficient thing. So I was looking at the language there, student writing.

Currently I'm on a project called with WiSP, Writing in Social Work Practise, where I'm looking at the writing of social workers, collecting the text with Theresa Lillis, who's PI on the project. And we're hoping that that will have an impact on the work that social workers do. So this is an example of a kind of a real world issue. We hope it will feed into social worker education, both preservice and in service, and make an impact in a small way in the real world.

KAREN FOLEY: Well a small way. I think you're underselling it there.

MARIA LEEDHAM: Well, we haven't got to end yet.

KAREN FOLEY: But it's vitally important. I mean what you're actually doing is you're looking at things like how people are actually going out and recording notes, which ultimately is recording someone's life situation, how they're feeding it back and looking at ways that recording things could be made easier. So I think you're doing yourself a disservice there.

MARIA LEEDHAM: Well we haven't got to the end of the project yet.

KAREN FOLEY: But it's got a real worth. And I often applied linguistics, we asked people what three words they use to describe applied linguistics, and unsurprisingly it was things like language and teaching. But actually your work really shows the huge importance that this can have in terms of policy and practise, a lot more broadly than just the language which we often associate with applied linguistics.

MARIA LEEDHAM: Yeah. And if you're interested in that project we also have a Twitter account @OUWiSP. So do have a look for us there and a website as well.

KAREN FOLEY: And they can see if it really is so fantastic at the end.

[LAUGHTER]

What about you Laura?

LAURA
PATERSON: I work on something completely different. So I don't actually have a language and teaching background. I work on discourse of poverty. So I look at the language used to describe poverty within the UK and elsewhere. And my results have shown that the way poverty is talked about has an impact on whether people are sympathetic or not to those who are poor.

KAREN FOLEY: Wow, again completely different and showing the diversity. And where were you at with that?

LAURA
PATERSON: There will be a book coming out next year, but it's a new method called geographical text analysis where we look at how language relates to place, and how, if particular places the reporter talked about, are they perceived differently by different media outlets? So fingers crossed book will come out next year.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. No, it's really exciting. And Michelle's been talking about some of the helpful bibliographic tools which she's enjoyed. Lee and Zach, how are you guys?

ZACH: Yeah, good. As I say, yeah, Michelle was really impressed with some of the recommendations and some extra reading that they can do. Been talking about what people can do outside of the tutor group forums as well, how they like to work using visual aids and interpret new information from the module website materials.

LEE: Absolutely. And with the help of Google we've managed to find some Mandarin to Michelle in the theme of linguistics. And of course other search engines are available.

KAREN FOLEY: I thought you would have been using the old emojis lee, universal language.

LEE: Absolutely.

MARIA LEEDHAM: Well emojis are again something that members of our department have studied. We're in there. Social media, tick, emojis, tick. It's everywhere.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, because of course it's about what is language, isn't it, and how we communicate.

MARIA LEEDHAM: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Last piece of advice then for our new students out there who are just beginning their modules?

MARIA LEEDHAM: I'd say stick at it. Do something every week, even if you have a week when you're really busy with work, family, the rest of your life. Try and do something, even if it's just reading one of the articles and catching up the next week. There is flexibility, but don't let more than a week go by without studying.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's about the momentum.

MARIA LEEDHAM: Yeah, definitely.

LAURA And I would say if you need help, ask for it. We are here. And if anybody is on 817 and they'd
PATERSON: like to kind of feedback on what they've heard today, do talk to me. Happy to answer questions on there as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. So if you do have anything you'd like to feedback then email us at studenthub@open.ac.uk and we'll pass it on to Laura and she will get back to you.

Well that ends our session on applied linguistics. It's been a fascinating discussion. Thank you very much for that both. We're now going to have a short video which is about applied linguistics. And then we'll be back to look at childhood and youth. So join us in a few minutes for that.

[MUSIC PLAYING]