

The First James Britton Memorial Lecture

Language and learning in the classroom: Reflections on James Britton's ongoing contribution

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15 March 2018
5.30 – 7.30

UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way, WC1H 0AL
Room 604

This lecture is a chance for teachers, researchers and policy makers to consider the continuing significance of Britton's ideas about language and learning and why his influence remains vital within all literacy and English classrooms. It will begin with some of James Britton's thoughts towards the end of his life about his ongoing contributions to language and learning, drawing in particular from a lecture entitled 'English Teaching: Retrospect and Prospect' (1980) and his two last publications, *Literature in Its Place* (1993) and *The Flight-Path of My Words* (1994). A focus will be the provocation for twenty-first century teachers of talk, writing and reading of his ideas about interactive learning, especially the crucial part played by language for learning in joint ventures between teachers and students in the classroom. The lecture will also reflect on Britton's influence in bringing Vygotsky's work to the attention of English teachers and hence the potential for changing pedagogical theory (1987). Finally, it will conclude with recollections of some of the ways in which Britton himself appeared to like working, not least through small-group collaboration and conversation. Although he was a key player in major national and international events such as the Dartmouth Conference (1966) and the proceedings of the Committee of Enquiry into Reading and the Use of English which resulted in the 'Bullock' Report (1975), he also remained committed to 'quiet processes and small circles' from which, nonetheless, important understandings could – and did – emerge.

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