

# BaAL News

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*British Association for Applied Linguistics*

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**Promoting understanding of language in use.**

<http://www.baal.org.uk>

## **THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS**

### ***Membership***

Individual Membership is open to anyone qualified or active in applied linguistics. Applied linguists who are not normally resident in Great Britain or Northern Ireland are welcome to join, although they will normally be expected to join their local AILA affiliate in addition to BAAL. Associate Membership is available to publishing houses and to other appropriate bodies at the discretion of the Executive Committee. Institution membership entitles up to three people to be full members of BAAL.

### ***Chair (2006-2009)***

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### ***Membership Secretary (2007-2010)***

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Dear all,

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2009 issue of *BAALNews*.

As always, the Autumn/Winter issue of the BAAL Newsletter is a feature-packed one; so much so, in fact that I will not even try to summarise everything contained within these pages. Instead, I would simply like to draw your attention to the fact that this issue contains the inaugural report of incoming BAAL chair Guy Cook. Guy begins by rightly praising his predecessor, Susan Hunston, for the energy and commitment that she brought to her role, and for her many and various achievements as chair for the period 2006 – 2009. He then goes on to outline some key issues and challenges that still face applied linguistics as a field of study, and BAAL as an organisation that aims to promote this field. The agenda that Guy's article sets out should be seen as an exhilarating rather than a forbidding one, however, and I hope you will agree with me that reading his report leaves one with the feeling that there has probably never been a more exciting time to be an applied linguist than the present.

**Nicholas Groom**  
**Newsletter Editor**

## **BAAL Executive Committee**

**2009-2010**

Guy Cook (Chair 2009-2012)

Lynn Erler (Membership Secretary  
2007-2010)

David Evans (Ordinary Member 2009-  
2011)

Tess Fitzpatrick (Ordinary Member  
2009-2011)

John Gray (Ordinary Member 2009-  
2011)

Nicholas Groom (Newsletter Editor  
2007-2010)

Tilly Harrison (SIG Officer 2009-2012)

Valerie Hobbs (Web Editor 2007-2010)

Jim Milton (Treasurer 2009-2012)

Hilary Nesi (Ordinary Member 2009-  
2011)

Richard Pemberton (Ordinary Member  
2008-2010)

Erik Schleef (Meetings Secretary 2007-  
2010)

Paul Thompson (Secretary 2007-2010)

Catherine Walter (Co-opted Member  
2009-2010 - CLIE Representative)

Steve Walsh (Publications Secretary  
2009-2012)

Steve Williams (Postgraduate  
Development and Liaison Officer  
(2009-2011)

I took over from Susan Hunston as Chair of BAAL at the annual general meeting in Newcastle this September. My term will run until 2012. Susan has been an outstanding chair. BAAL has immensely benefited from her dedicated and expert leadership, and we all owe her a great deal. She is also a hard act to follow!

There have been changes on the Executive Committee too. We have lost Richard Badger as treasurer, John Field as SIG officer, Dawn Knight as postgraduate officer, Veronika Koller as publications secretary, and ordinary members Lynne Cameron, Alice Deignan, and Sheena Gardner. All have exceeded the call of duty and deserve the thanks of the association for their energy, work and commitment.

Good leadership has not been able to solve all problems though. There are perennial issues for BAAL which will be increasingly important in the coming three years and beyond. These are the main concerns I have for the future.

1. As an applied discipline concerned “with real world issues in which language is central”, the worth of our field should be measured in large part by its impact on the world outside academia. Yet applied linguistics has a poor record in influencing public policy and perception. We should seek to increase the profile of BAAL in public, media, political and commercial discussions of language-related issues.

2. Applied linguistics is an expanding discipline. Recent years have seen the

growth of comparatively new areas (e.g. medical communication, forensic linguistics) new links with established areas (e.g. translation studies, clinical linguistics), and continuing development in more traditional core areas (SLA, language teaching). Such variety however carries with it a danger of factionalism and fragmentation. BAAL should be seen as the natural home for all branches of the discipline, and should seek to attract a wider representation of areas than it does at present.

3. Within British universities, applied linguistics is a popular, expanding and dynamic area. Yet its success and importance receives inadequate recognition. It is often treated as a lodger within faculties and departments of education, English, linguistics, modern languages or TESOL. BAAL should campaign for greater institutional recognition and status for applied linguistics.

4. In national academic bodies, applied linguistics has a similarly low profile. In addition to maintaining our presence where we are already represented, we will need to be active in the Academy of Social Sciences, and the new University Council for General and Applied Linguistics. Most importantly of all we need to campaign urgently and energetically for greater representation in the coming REF (see below).

From these general points, I move on to more specific one.



### **Response to the REF consultation.**

One of Susan Hunston's legacies to BAAL is the expert panels she established to respond quickly and effectively to consultations and requests. I have been working with one of these panels, and with the Executive Committee, and with the BAAL membership, on the BAAL response to the REF consultation. By the time this newsletter is published, this will have been submitted to HEFCE by their deadline of December 16th 2009.

A key issue for BAAL is the panel configuration proposed in the consultation document

[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09\\_38/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_38/). As in the RAE, applied linguistics submissions are likely to be spread across several units of assessment. HEFCE seems determined to have bigger units, so there is virtually no chance of applied linguistics having one of its own, nor is this necessarily desirable. We do however need to make a strong case for greater applied linguistics representation in all the relevant units. To do this we need hard evidence of the extent and high quality of applied linguistics submissions to the last RAE, and I am currently collecting this to make a case.

### **Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS).**

Founded ten years ago, this is now an active and powerful voice for 36 learned societies, speaking on our behalf to government, media, universities, and the public. Deadlines for response are typically very tight, and again the advice of expert panels is crucial.

Responses we have made since I became Chair include the following:

In September we responded through the AcSS to a request by the Commons Science and Technology Committee on the government's use of evidence. We were asked to give an example of how policy could be informed by applied linguistic research. Our submission is given in full below (Appendix A).

In October we responded to an AcSS call for an example of social science research which has had a beneficial effect on society to be included in their briefing documents. (Many thanks to members who sent in suggestions in response to my request on BAALmail.) We submitted both a general statement and one specific example (Appendix B).

There are currently seven members of BAAL who are academicians of the AcSS. We are making a number of nominations for new ones.

Guy Cook  
30 October 2009

## **Appendix A: BAAL submission to Commons Committee on Science and Technology. (via AcSS) 28 September 2009.**

### **Languages Spoken in the UK and the Teaching of English as an Additional Language**

In an era of globalisation and mass migration, informed language policy and planning becomes ever more important for democratic, prosperous, and tolerant societies. Yet academic research on language is consistently undervalued in policy.

There is for example no reliable data on the numbers of speakers of different languages within the UK, nor evidence-based policy on assessing or improving proficiency in English, although both are crucial to effective educational and social policies promoting inter-ethnic relations and economic efficiency. This is the case for both school pupils and the adult population.

In schools, the established practice for collecting ethnic and language data falls short of being ‘evidence-based policy’. The Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) collects data on first languages and ethnic backgrounds. Teachers ask pupils to self-identify both their ethnicity and their first language and, if there is a complication, use their own judgment to assign a category (e.g. Urdu/Pakistani). ‘First Language’ is defined as the language to which a child was initially exposed during early development.’ (Notes to Editors, DCSF, 2008). Both the

process and the categories have serious weaknesses. Research has shown self-identification to lead to inaccuracies. ‘First language’ is not necessarily the same as a child’s main language, home language, best language, or the language with which they identify. Applied linguistic research could provide evidence which would enable the government to refine its categories and to elicit information more effectively.

For the adult population there is no equivalent mechanism to the PLASC. Past censuses have missed the opportunity to include a question about languages. It seems likely that any question included in future censuses will suffer from the same limitations as the PLASC. Informed evidence-based advice on how to count speakers of different languages and to analyse the results of any study or census is urgently needed.

A similarly inefficient use of evidence is apparent in government policy for the teaching and learning of English as an additional language (EAL), both in schools and for adults. Current policy in schools does not separate assessment of EAL proficiency (QCA, 2000; DfES, 2005) from the National Curriculum assessment framework for English (as a curriculum subject for all pupils). Equal opportunities policy has led to mainstreaming of all EAL pupils. This means that irrespective of pupils’ English language knowledge and skills, they are expected to participate and learn both English language and subject content in mainstream classroom activities. This is at odds with research evidence on best

provision and denies EAL speakers both the support and the credit they deserve. Current EAL policy is a kind *laissez faire* approach loosely based on outdated and discredited ideas about language teaching from the 1980s in which exposure to a new language is seen as sufficient to develop proficiency. This is reflected in teacher education policy too. EAL is not offered as a main subject in the PGCE curriculum and no formal teaching qualification required for EAL in school teaching.

English Language provision for adults is similarly at odds with the best current research and evidence. Recommendations about the most effective pedagogy for new immigrants and longer term residents have been ignored, even when sponsored and monitored by government. For example, the largest study to date on the effective teaching of English to speakers of other languages who are migrants to the UK was instigated by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC), a research centre established by government specifically to inform the *Skills for Life* policy. The research was closely monitored by the (then) DfES (now BIS). Yet the findings and recommendations in the report (NRDC 2007) appear to have been ignored.

To sum up, government policy on languages and EAL teaching in the UK appears to be ‘flying blind’. There is a wealth of evidence and research which could be drawn upon if proper channels of communication between government and academia were established.

Guy Cook, Chair  
British Association for Applied  
Linguistics  
28 September 2009

Thanks to Mike Baynham, Constant Leung, Li Wei, Celia Roberts, and James Simpson for information and advice

## References

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## Appendix B: BAAL submission to AcSS. 12 October 2009. Benefits to Society of Applied Linguistics Research

Applied Linguistics is the branch of the social sciences concerned with the theoretical and empirical investigation and amelioration of real-world problems



in which language is a central issue. As such, its activity spans a wide field of enquiry, and its benefits to society are many and various, encompassing applications in education, language policy and planning, cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication, legal investigation, information technology and design. Active and ongoing areas of enquiry include:

- developing the teaching and learning of additional languages (both English by speakers of other languages and other languages by speakers of English), assessing language-teaching methods, materials and resources, and informing policy, assessment, teacher education and student placement
- the maintenance of minority and indigenous languages through for example the promotion of complementary schooling and effective policy
- supporting the understanding and development of literacy through for example research into the mental processing and social use of written language in a variety of contexts, media and subcultures
- enhancing and improving the quality of deaf people's lives and their contribution to society by furthering understanding and recognition of sign languages (deaf linguistics)
- advancing techniques in the assessment and remediation of speech-language pathologies (clinical linguistics)
- developing effective professional and workplace communication, through for example the analysis of doctor/patient interaction to inform training courses

and assessment of overseas-trained doctors

- developing the use of linguistic evidence in criminal investigations to establish for example the identity of a speaker or the authorship of a document (forensic linguistics). A spin-off of this has been software to identify plagiarism
- improving the compiling and updating of dictionaries and other language resources through the use of corpus linguistic software analysing multi-million word databases of actual language use
- developing effective translation and interpreting
- understanding the nature and effects of persuasive language in the media, politics and commerce with a view to improving the effectiveness and integrity of language use in these areas and/or public understanding of how language can be used to indoctrinate or manipulate.

An example of socially beneficial applied linguistics research is analysis of doctor/patient interaction to inform training courses and assessment. For example, a research project 'Patients with limited English and Doctors in General Practice (PLEDGE)' led by Professor Celia Roberts of King's College London looked at communication problems in doctor-patient consultations in an area with a linguistically diverse patient and doctor population (Lambeth). Initially funded by the Sir Siegmund Warburg Charitable Foundation, additional funding was then awarded by the NHS London Post-Graduate Deanery to make two DVDs

based on the PLEDGE research. The first DVD 'Doing the Lambeth Talk' was for GPs with a linguistically diverse patient population, and the second DVD 'Words in Action' was for doctors who are have trained overseas and are new to the NHS.

Guy Cook  
Chair, British Association for Applied  
Linguistics  
12.10.2009

Thanks to the many members of BAAL  
who contributed ideas for this document,  
to the Executive Committee, and to Celia  
Roberts.

# Treasurer's Report

The first part of this report relates to expenditures since 1 June 2009. In the second part of the report I raise some issues which come out of the annual reports.

## ***Income/ Expenditure between 1 June 2009 and 1 September 2009***

Income from subscriptions £2,702.92  
(£2,696 subscriptions +£6.92 interest)

Expenditure £8,090.532

I have not given the expenditure since the period covered by my last report as the financial year ended on 31 May and it was simpler to provide a report from the

beginning of the new financial year. The expenditure and income between 25 April and 31 May is covered by the annual report.

## ***SIG financial reports***

Some SIGs are not very good at getting financial reports to me in time for inclusion in the accounts, despite reminders from the SIG Officer and myself. Is there any action we can take to address this?

## **The annual accounts**

The news from the annual accounts is

DATE	NO	AMOUNT	Payee	Evidence	Category
01/06/2009	282	£117.14	Lynne Erler	Receipts	
11/06/2009	285	£910.00	Newcastle University	Letter	Conference Expenses
18/06/2009	286	£54.30	Tim Shortis	Receipts	
18/06/2009	288	£56.30	Tim Shortis	Receipts	
18/06/2009	289	£1,200.00	Somerton Hotels	Invoice	Conference Expenses
06/07/2009	290	£2,100.00	Dovetail	Invoice	Dovetail
14/07/2009	291	£300.00	Martin Bygate	Invoices	ALAF
17/07/2009	292	£450.00	University of Warwick		BAAL/CUP
17/07/2009	293	£67.45	Mahendra Verma	Receipts	
30/07/2009	294	£161.00	Gabrielle Hogan	Receipts	ALAF
14/08/2009	296	£20.93	University of Bristol	Invoice	
14/08/2009	297	£1,376.00	Dalton	Invoice	
25/08/2009		£77.41	Credit card/DDebit costs		Bank charges

generally good. We have increased our income by over £20,000 because of the income from the Swansea conference and donations to the Chris Brumfit fund. There are a couple of troubling issues

1. The amount of miscellaneous income is up largely because of unidentified amounts credited to BAAL to BACS.
2. The amount we have paid to Dovetail is down. This seems odd.

3. Our subscription income is down by almost 20% (from £25k to £20k). To what extent does this reflect a drop in subscriptions and what should we do about it.
4. Printing and publications are up by £8K. This seems strange. This is a break-down of the figures totalling just over £15,000.

15/08/2008	188	£1,531.00	Dalton Printers	Invoice
10/07/2008	183	£739.00	Dalton Publishers	Invoice
10/07/2008	184	£1,136.40	Dalton Publishers	Invoice
23/07/2008	187	£2,876.82	Pack-it	Invoice
11/09/2008	206	£66.52	Susan Hunston	Receipts
16/12/2008	226	£1,226.64	Pack-it	Invoice
05/01/2009	229	£1,653.97		Invoice
16/01/2009	236	£100.00	Lynda O'Brien	
16/01/2009	237	£110.00	Nicola Taylor	
29/01/2009	243	£1,759.00	Dalton Printers	Invoice
22/04/2009	256	£1,186.00	Dalton Printers	Invoice
22/04/2009	257	£705.86	MPJ Edwards	Invoice
17/05/2009	272	£2,002.90	Pack-it	Invoice

### Notes on the BAAL accounts for the year ended 31 May 2009

5. Membership subscriptions are down. It is likely that this is partly a reflection of the general economic situation. It is also possible that people are delaying taking out a subscription until it gets closer to the conference and they know if their papers have been accepted. However, it does suggest that we need to consider carefully any decision to increase subscriptions.
6. The amount of miscellaneous income has increased.

One issue here is that the accountant is still treating reclaimed tax from donations to BAAL as miscellaneous income. The heading of donations on our income is an innovation this year but I would hope that he will be persuaded that reclaimed tax will be treated under the head to which I feel they properly belong, donations.

There has also been some income from the print version of the proceedings for the Cork conference.

Finally, between March and June this year the bank credited with amounts

which we and they have been unable to identify.

7. Expenses for the executive committee meeting are up by two thousand pounds. This partly reflects the fact that more of the committee have been able to attend meetings and also the extra expenses of the last executive meeting at Swansea where some members of the executive spent two nights in accommodation at Swansea. There is also likely to be an element here which relates to inflation.
8. Publications and printing costs have almost doubled. A contributory factor here is that one invoice for 2007/8 went missing and, because we had no record of it, it could not be treated under the accounts for that year. This invoice was paid in 2008/9. In addition, there were some one-off costs related to the digitisation of our archive. Despite these factors, this is a considerable increase and we may need to look at alternative suppliers for printing and publication.
9. We have a new head this year of income from donations to the Chris Brumfit and the figure on the accounts underestimates the amount here because it excludes reclaimed taxes and because the bank has mislaid one cheque. I would like to thank Guy Cook for his work in encouraging people to donate to this fund, largely through standing orders. I should also acknowledge the support of Ros Mitchell. This scholarship is now secure for at least six years year and

almost definitely for longer.

10. The most striking figure in the accounts is the very high level of income from the conference at Swansea. This relates to the good level of attendance and the favourable costings agreed by Swansea University but in particular to the efficiency and hard work of the local organising committee headed by Tess Fitzpatrick. In acknowledgement of the work of the committee, the executive allocated £2500 to be used for attendance at the Newcastle Conference.

This is my last report as treasurer. My job has been made much easier than it otherwise would have been by the fact that people have been working so hard to produce income for BAAL and the support from people in all parts of BAAL. I would like to thank the executive committee for their support over the last three years. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dovetail and Jeanie Taylor for their support and advice. I wish the new treasurer the best of luck.

Richard Badger  
Outgoing Treasurer

## BAAL 2009 Newcastle (3rd – 5th September)

The conference theme of BAAL 2009 was “Language, Learning and Context”. Around 300 delegates attended the conference. Plenary speakers were David Crystal (Bangor University), Bethan Benwell (University of Stirling) & Liz Stokoe (Loughborough University), and Pauline Rae-Dickins (University of Bristol). The conference was organised by the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences (SECLS), and the Centre for Research in Linguistics and Language Sciences (CRiLLS).

Very many thanks and congratulations to Chris Jenks and other staff and students at Newcastle University for a highly successful conference. Delegate feedback forms and emails abound in comments such as “very friendly and informative conference – very good sessions – excellent plenaries – wonderful experience – student helpers and conference chair were wonderfully helpful and friendly – we enjoyed the variety of sessions – great conference!”.

The majority of delegates who filled in forms rated the venue as ‘good’ and ‘very good’. Almost all delegates who filled in forms also rated the programme and the quality of sessions as “good” or “very good”. The number of papers submitted has increased from last year (see table 1 and Figure 1). 343 abstracts were submitted to the conference organisers, and 186 were accepted this year. The number of accepted papers has decreased somewhat this year (54% this year compared to 69% last year). Poster submission and acceptance has increased again this year. There was a prize for best poster displayed at the conference which went to Tess Fitzpatrick and Jon Clenton from Swansea University for their poster “Exploring the usefulness of a test of productive vocabulary”.

There were three proposed colloquia: Learning Foreign Languages Across Contexts, Language and Neoliberalism, Multimodal Analysis – The State of the Field. There was one invited colloquium: Emerging Contexts: Staff-Student Presentations.

Five SIG Tracks were organized: ‘Corpus

	<b>2004 Sub.</b>	2004 Acc.	<b>2005 Sub.</b>	2005 Acc.	<b>2006 Sub.</b>	2006 Acc.	<b>2007 Sub.</b>	2007 Acc.	<b>2008 Sub.</b>	2008 Acc.	<b>2009 Sub.</b>	2009 Acc.
Individual	<b>106</b>	69	<b>146</b>	92	<b>232</b>	141	<b>277</b>	100	<b>197</b>	127	<b>246</b>	114
Colloquia												
abstracts	<b>50</b>	50	<b>41</b>	41	<b>13</b>	13	<b>18</b>	14	<b>8</b>	8	<b>12</b>	12
SIGs	<b>27</b>	22	<b>29</b>	17	<b>47</b>	24	<b>47</b>	17	<b>72</b>	52	<b>50</b>	30
Posters	<b>27</b>	19	<b>11</b>	21	<b>11</b>	22	<b>14</b>	10	<b>21</b>	21	<b>35</b>	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>210</b>	160	<b>227</b>	171	<b>303</b>	200	<b>352</b>	141	<b>298</b>	208	<b>343</b>	186

Table 1: Submitted (Sub.) and accepted (Acc.) papers from 2004 to 2009



Figure 1: Submitted and accepted papers from 2004 to 2009

Linguistics', 'Language Learning and Teaching', 'Gender and Language', 'Psycholinguistics', and 'UK Linguistic Ethnography Forum'.

BAAL gives two international scholarships (one of which is the Chris Brumfit award) and ten UK student scholarships. This year there were 46 international scholarship applications and 30 UK applications. A scholar from Serbia, Ksenija Bogetic, received the International Scholarship, and one from Egypt, Muhammad Abdel Latif, was selected for the Chris Brumfit award.

Routledge sponsored a drinks reception before dinner on Thursday night at which the new journal *Classroom Discourse*,

edited by Steve Walsh, was launched. Palgrave sponsored a reception on Friday night at which the BAAL book prize was announced. The 2009 BAAL book prize was awarded to: Wei, L. and M.G. Moyer (eds) (2008): *The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism*. Blackwell. The BAAL Gala dinner was held at Newcastle's Civic Centre on Friday night. It was accompanied – not by the usual ceilidh – but a disco band from Macclesfield. The conference closed the following day with a tribute to Peter Martin and Johannes Eckerth, the last of the three plenaries, and closing remarks by several representatives of BAAL and Newcastle University.

As in previous years, the 2009 meeting in Newcastle will result in a CD-ROM with extended abstracts (ca. 1,000 words) of accepted papers and other impressions from the conference. Please send contributions to Steve Walsh ([steve.walsh@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:steve.walsh@newcastle.ac.uk)) by 18/12/2009.

## **BAAL 2010 Aberdeen (9th–11th September)**

BAAL 2010 will be held at Aberdeen University. The conference theme is “Applied Linguistics: Global and Local”. Plenary speakers are Wilson McLeod (University of Edinburgh), Bonny Norton (The University of British Columbia), Alastair Pennycook (University of Technology, Sidney), and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (University of Roskilde).

The conference will be organised by the School of Language and Literature and the Centre for Linguistic Research. Robert McColl Millar is the local organiser. Further members of the LOC include Rob Dunbar, Mercedes Durham, Barbara Fennell, Mark Garner, and Michael Hornsby.

The University campus is located close to the city centre in the historic Village of Old Aberdeen and within easy reach of railway and bus stations. Aberdeen airport is served by regular flights from cities across Britain and Europe, including Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Southampton, and Dublin.

Aberdeen, Scotland’s third city, is known by many names: the granite city, the oil capital of Europe, and the silver city by the golden sands, all of these encapsulating various aspects of the city. Aberdeen has two universities, a 5 star Maritime Museum, a variety of restaurants, coffee shops, tea rooms, and a wide range of cultural, entertainment, and shopping attractions. The Aberdeen-

Grampian area boasts dozens of castles, coastal roads, golf courses and plenty of cultural attractions. We are confident that it will provide an inspiring conference experience too.

**Erik Schleeef**

BAAL Membership status on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009 was as follows:

740 individual members; 208 paid a reduced rate of which 166 indicated that they were full-time students; 532 paid full rate.

About 110 members are now paying by direct debit. (Many thanks to them!)

There are now 20 institutional members, the newest being at:

1. The Research Centre at Al-Imam Muhammed Ibn Saud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia;
2. Nottingham Language Centre at Nottingham Trent University, UK;
3. The Sprachenzentrum at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich, Germany.

A warm welcome to these and all new members who have joined BAAL over the course of 2009!

By the end of November we begin sending out membership renewal emails. It is greatly appreciated when you renew promptly without further need of us reminding you. Do consider setting up a direct debit, if you haven't already. It will save BAAL on administration expenses in the long run, thus helping to keep the membership fee quite low, as it currently is. In addition, a direct debit membership is still being offered at a reduced rate. You can email Jeanie Taylor at [admin@baal.org](mailto:admin@baal.org) to request a direct debit form. It will be sent in the post as there are

embedded images that make it overlarge for an email attachment. There is an application form at the back of this BAALNews for a colleague of yours who is not yet a member of BAAL!

**Lynn Erler**

## 2009 BAAL/CUP Seminar Programme Reports

### Academic Language Corpora and Education (ALCE)

University of Edinburgh,  
May 7-8, 2009

This seminar, organised by Joan Cutting and Bróna Murphy, and held in The Moray House School of Education, aimed

- to bring together researchers involved in both emergent and established academic corpora (written and spoken) as well as linguists, lecturers and teachers researching in education, be it language teaching, language teacher-training or continuing professional development in language awareness, who may be new to corpora and its applications.
- to explore the possibilities of working together with researchers in speech recognition and synthesis, and other specialists in technological innovation.
- to provide an opportunity to disseminate the latest developments in academic language corpora

The seminar strengthened links between institutions and created networks for researchers to explore ways that corpora can help to study general classroom practice and be used as part of language classroom teaching. It attracted 30 participants, from universities in Czech Republic, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Japan, Switzerland, and the UK; there were two plenary papers and 14 individual papers.

Mike McCarthy's (University of

Nottingham) plenary, entitled 'Turn, turn, turn again', considered turn construction as the locus of interactional competence and examined the shaping of speaker turns in spoken academic contexts and learner oral examination contexts (e.g. IELTS, FCE). He looked at the distribution of turn-openers in English native speaker of English and non-English native speaker data, comparing casual conversation with academic seminar and small-group talk and examination data. Turn-construction is crucial to the creation of flow and confluence in talk and is a key feature of collaborative learning.

Hilary Nesi's (Coventry University) plenary was 'Genre identification in a corpus of student writing'. The British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus contains 2,761 pieces of proficient assessed student writing. The BAWE designers created a finite list of 13 genre families, within which the genres shared an educational purpose and key components, across levels, domains and disciplines. The genre families have assignments requiring different literacy skills to achieve different educational purposes. The genre classification may inform the work of writing-centre staff and EAP teachers.

Kirsten Ackermann (Pearson plc) introduced the Pearson International Corpus of Academic English (PICA), which started 2007 and comprises 36 million words from a wide range of academic subjects and material relating to students' extracurricular life. PICA contains 77% written and 23% spoken

text, covering American, Australian, British, Canadian and New Zealand English. The word lists will help to distinguish EAP from general English, and ESAP from EAP. Courses based on PICAIE could give students a tool for directed- and self-learning, and enable comparisons between their own writing and features of registers and genres. PICAIE could be used to validate proficiency tests of academic English.

Joan Cutting and Bróna Murphy (University of Edinburgh) spoke about 'Edinburgh Academic Spoken English (EDASE) corpus and teaching applications'. EDASE aims to consist of workshops and supervision tutorials, lectures, conferences and symposia, meetings and casual conversations. It will be used to study pragmatic features and the interaction of international students. The coding system encompasses interactional features, pedagogical features and participation features. EDASE could guide continuing professional development of lecturers in good practices.

Jane Evison's (University of Nottingham) paper was "'Podcast, yeah, we don't quite know what to call it'": building identities through broadcast audio-recorded academic conversations'. The study explored the ways in which the podcasters in the TESOL Talk from Nottingham Corpus (TTFN) create, maintain and develop their own identities, and that of the podcasts. It analysed event labels (e.g. 'podcast', 'edition', 'show') and suggested that they evolve as the podcasters' construct the podcasts and their own understandings of themselves.

It raised issues such as concerns about new technology and education, the need to model critical academic behaviour and a desire to present oneself as a 'person' as well as 'a tutor'.

Liam Murray, Elaine Riordan and Fiona Farr's (University of Limerick) paper was 'Towards a definition of reflective learning among third level students: what can academic language corpora tell us?' They analysed spoken data from student teachers discussions, and written data from student essays, blogs and online discussions, and found evidence of reflection using lexical and grammatical stance markers (adjectives, adverbs, verbs, etc), level of contribution, task performance (orientation, illustration, development etc), and affective engagement (interpersonal, pragmatic, and motivational). This points to a more tangible framework for examining the practice of reflection for educational purposes.

Stergiani Kostopoulou (Trinity College Dublin) talked about 'Corpus-informed curriculum and material development for English language support in Irish post-primary education'. The paper reported on the elaboration of curriculum and materials informed by the analysis of a corpus of the most commonly used textbooks for English, Geography, History, Home Economics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Physics in Irish schools, using WordSmith Tools. The curriculum and materials introduce English as a Second Language (ESL) students to subject-specific language within the various subjects. The study

should raise subject teachers' awareness of their subjects' linguistic repertoires and is relevant to learning and teaching beyond the ESL classroom and across educational systems in Europe.

Pei-Chun Liu's (Lancaster University) paper was entitled 'Using a corpus as the basis for studying academic written genres'. This study focuses on ways that the rhetorical actions in dissertation literature reviews (LR) can be defined, based on a corpus of 30 Master's dissertations in three academic disciplines. The various uses of citations, evaluating words and transition words point to the occurrence of different LR rhetorical actions. The rhetorical actions do not appear in a fixed order and the choice of rhetorical actions and sub-actions vary from discipline to discipline. This study should help EAP teachers to prepare their students to write academic genres and also teachers in the subject areas to be aware of their students' difficulties.

Tony Lynch (University of Edinburgh) presented 'Small and imperfectly formed: The pedagogic value of a nanocorpus'. Current views of language teaching emphasise focusing on form and helping learners to notice lexical chunks in discourse. As an EAP teacher preparing international students for university study, Dr Lynch compiled a corpus of native and non-native interactions intended to bring useful chunks to learners' attention. The data set comprised recordings of performances of speaking tasks that parallel those done by the learners in their EAP classroom. The corpus was very

useful as a device for encouraging learners' noticing.

Markéta Malá (Charles University in Prague) told us about 'Participial adverbials in the spoken academic monologue'. Participial adverbial clauses occur frequently in academic prose and rarely in conversation. The distribution varies according to cognitive complexity. In lectures in the BASE and MICASE corpora, speakers use fixed, lexicalized participial constructions or lexico-grammatical associations. Bundles such as 'what do you end up getting?', 'you end up getting cells that frequent metastasize' (MICASE) perform expressions of stance, organise discourse and have a referential function. An understanding of these bundles and their function could facilitate the understanding of lectures for non-native speakers.

David Oakey's (University of Birmingham) paper was about 'Isotextual comparisons of lexical bundles in research articles across disciplines'. This paper discussed methodological issues relating to the construction of comparative written academic corpora and suggested a distinction between isolexical comparisons, in which subcorpora containing a similar number of tokens are compared, and isotextual comparisons, in which subcorpora containing a similar number of texts are compared. It compared lexical bundle frequencies between isolexical and isotextual subcorpora of research articles in different disciplines, and suggested that isotextual comparisons reveal more about the discourse functions of lexical bundles



in research articles. The paper concluded with a discussion of the implications for pedagogy of these findings.

Aisling O’Boyle (Queen’s University Belfast) delivered a paper called “‘Little steps or a foot in the door?’ Using a corpus of spoken academic discourse in teacher education programmes’. Her corpus consists of audio recordings of small group teaching contexts from a university setting taken from a range of subject areas. It was used in an initial teacher education programme to raise awareness about language variation and language use in context, in a continuing professional development programme in the subject area of TESOL, and in a student task investigating the effect of task and material on language learner interaction. Context and location have a bearing on the perceived appropriateness of the application of the corpus.

Anne O’Keeffe (Mary Immaculate College) and Steve Walsh (Newcastle University) spoke to ‘Appropriate methodologies for investigating classroom discourse’. This paper evaluated approaches to studying corpora of classroom interaction: conversation analysis, interaction analysis, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. Drawing on empirical classroom interaction data from the LIBEL corpus as case studies, it assessed the relative merits and shortcomings of the various approaches and looked at the ways in which understandings can differ according to which approach is adopted. It also scoped out the usefulness of combined approaches to analysis so as to

appraise which combinations optimise the understanding for educational goals.

Tomoko Watanabe (University of Edinburgh) spoke about the ‘Frequency of English vague language forms used by Japanese learners at different proficiency level: an analysis of a spoken EFL corpus’. The paper dealt with a quantitative analysis of English vague language (EVL) forms used by Japanese learners of English (JLEs) in a speaking test, in the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology Japanese Learner English Corpus. It studied the frequency of each EVL form at various speaking proficiency levels and discussed the features of the most frequently occurring forms, showing that some forms are not used in a way that a native speaker of English would. The findings could inform EVL teaching and help textbook writers and material designers.

**Joan Cutting and Bróna Murphy,  
The Moray House School of  
Education,  
University of Edinburgh**

**Key Themes in Intercultural  
Communication Pedagogy  
University of Sheffield, July 9-10, 2009**

The seminar, organised by Jane Woodin, Gibson Ferguson, Valerie Hobbs and Lesley Walker, (School of Modern Languages & Linguistics and School of English, University of Sheffield) aimed to bring together those working in intercultural communication pedagogy largely – though not exclusively - in the

higher education sector. It drew inspiration from the growing number of courses with an intercultural element, from stand-alone modules and training courses to Masters' degrees.

The seminar proposed some questions, which had arisen from the BAAL 2008 conference colloquium on 'Discourses Communication and Interculturality' as a starting point, namely:

- What contribution can a discourse approach make to the learning/teaching of intercultural communication?
- How far is intercultural communication necessarily interdisciplinary in nature? And what are the implications for teaching/learning?
- How can the mismatch between textbook accounts of intercultural encounters and the reality of such encounters be best developed from an educational perspective?
- Within SLA, how easily does an intercultural approach sit with syllabi whose main focus is on language learning?

There were 27 seminar participants, with teachers and researchers from a variety of pedagogical contexts, both from the UK and elsewhere. It was well-attended by postgraduate students, two of whom gave papers. Participants came from the Universities of Aveiro (Portugal), Balamand (Lebanon), Birmingham, Durham, Huddersfield, Melbourne (Australia), Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham Trent, the Open University, Sheffield, Warwick and Westminster, and Cambridge University Press.

There were two keynote speeches, seven 40 minute presentations and 3 – 4 hours of discussion over the two days either in plenary or small groups to allow for plenty of engagement with the seminar content. Cambridge University Press also arranged a 'vox pop' for their new Applied Linguistics website.

Helen Spencer-Oatey's (University of Warwick) keynote speech 'Developing 'Global People': insights from International Partnerships' on the first day described experiences from setting up the eChina-UK programme, and the main issues which this long-term collaborative project needed to face. This included communicating about the project itself, such as goal priorities, communication mechanisms, identifying common ground and building relationships. Identified as fundamental to any intercultural project with international partners was the need to plan for the establishment of shared knowledge within the project planning itself.

Tony Young (University of Newcastle) reported on the results of research into intercultural communicative competence and English language teachers' beliefs and practice in three countries, raising the issue that while teachers – both native and non-native English speakers – enthusiastically welcomed an intercultural approach, they found obstacles to its practical integration into their teaching. Richard Fay (University of Manchester) offered a reflexive account of the difficulties of setting up intercultural courses with either a lack of institutional support or over-interference in the content

of courses in an institutional attempt to 'internationalise' the curriculum.

Jane Woodin (University of Sheffield) provided evidence from research into tandem learners' identification of their language learning partner as native or non-native speakers, using this to raise some issues relating to the implications of a shift from a native-speaker role model to that of the intercultural speaker. Sonia Galluci (University of Birmingham) focused on the Year Abroad experience and in particular the role that emotions play in sojourners' intercultural sensitivity development and attitude to difference, arguing for the importance of considering emotional development.

Mike Byram's (University of Durham) keynote speech 'Intercultural Communication Pedagogy as Training and Education', on the second day, focused on teaching courses in 'intercultural communication' (IC) in institutions such as universities and suggested we consider how the teaching of IC relates to the general purposes and aims of formal institutions of education such as universities who, because of their funding and relationship to the state, have a responsibility to society as well as having their own autonomy and freedom to educate as they consider appropriate. He considered the concepts of '*Bildung* and Liberal education', 'criticality', 'education for citizenship' and 'training and education' and the dichotomy between them with reference to the teaching of IC.

Celia Thompson (University of Melbourne) considered the value of a

dialogic approach to intercultural communication. She offered some examples of intercultural teaching/learning activities in the light of Bakhtin's concept of dialogism and post-structuralist theory. Adam Brandt (University of Newcastle) presented a microanalysis of skypecasts in an international discussion group to show how the relevance of interculturality in these interactions changed on an ongoing basis. His findings explored the ways in which cultural identities were drawn upon as interactional resources by interactants who contested, negotiated and co-constructed culture and cultural practices. Carmen Lucas (University of Aveiro) reported on research into early years communication development and the implications for intercultural communication pedagogy. She argued that this vital point in children's lives is ripe for the development of intercultural competence and proposed that intercultural sense is created progressively and implicitly within children's identities, preserving their own identities at the same time.

Issues which were discussed in relation to the seminar questions led to the identification of two major foci within intercultural communication pedagogy: that of pedagogy itself and that of analysis of intercultural interactions and in particular a consideration of what is it that makes an interaction intercultural in itself. There was also some discussion around theoretical positions in intercultural communication pedagogy, such as the replacement of the native speaker role model with that of the intercultural

speaker, and the implications for pedagogic practice.

Questions were raised as to the need to define more clearly central concepts such as intercultural awareness, and the concept of criticality. It was acknowledged that intercultural communication pedagogy is a pedagogy for change within the person; with this was wide recognition of the need for framed and conceptualised experiential learning, and the need for a supported process-oriented approach to intercultural development. Ethnographic approaches were highlighted as relevant for this, as well as calls for working together more closely across the traditional training-education divide.

Discussions were also held around the need for clarification of key terminology within intercultural communication field, and how it links to other research areas within applied linguistics such as L2 acquisition. Further areas for research within the field were identified, among which were:

further work on identification of establishing common ground in intercultural pedagogy, and further work on the implications of intercultural interaction research for the pedagogy of intercultural communication. comparative studies of intercultural pedagogy continuing exploration of the relationship of the IC pedagogy to other more established areas within applied linguistics.

One immediate outcome of the seminar

was vociferous support for the suggestion by Tony Young (Newcastle) to set up of an Intercultural Communication SIG within BAAL; this is now underway.

**Jane Woodin**  
**School of Modern Languages and**  
**Linguistics**  
**University of Sheffield**

## **Connecting discourses: Academic and Professional Worlds**

**University of Warwick, May 15-16,  
2009.**

This seminar was co-ordinated by Steve Mann and Sue Wharton. C.K. Jung was web co-ordinator, and the supporting committee was made up of Tilly Harrison, Duncan Hunter, and Stefanie Stadler. Fei Chuang and Tim Kelly helped with uploading films and powerpoints to the conference website. Approximately 27 people attended, from institutions in Austria, Hong Kong, New Zealand and the UK.

### **Introduction**

The objectives of the seminar were to engage in cross-disciplinary discussion on the following issues:

- Written and spoken communication in professional contexts
- Professional identity in communication events
- Studies of professional genres via work based learning
- The integration of professional genres into academic contexts

- The role of universities in professional communication training
- The teaching of transferable discourse skills in universities
- What discourse analytic tools are useful for studying communication events in different disciplines and professional settings
- Accounts of successful collaboration between academic and professional institutions in the area of professional communication.

In the field of Applied Linguistics there has been renewed international interest in professional communication and in the analysis of texts produced in institutional contexts. Many professionally orientated programmes at both under-graduate and post-graduate levels are designed to prepare students for professional practice (e.g. business, engineering, medicine, and teaching). This seminar asked questions about the relationship between the discourse used and produced in professional settings and those produced in university settings.

The recently established Professional and Academic Discourse Research Group (PAD) at University of Warwick is particularly interested in understanding the situated nature of written and spoken text production and use, and the implications for those involved in associated language events. In hosting a seminar at this time we aimed to promote the role of discourse analysis in raising awareness of the nature of professional talk and writing.

We also sought to explore the nature of communication between academic and

professional contexts. We discussed the ways in which professional bodies and institutions can communicate discourse needs to universities, and the extent to which universities can teach transferable discourse skills. Various presentations focused explicitly on the conditions for successful collaboration between contexts.

### Plenary speeches

Srikant Sarangi opened the seminar with a talk entitled *Bringing together communities of interest: applied linguistics and professional discourse studies*. He argued for a view of professional discourses as knowledge based expert systems, rather than as examples of language for specific purpose. Such an understanding of professional discourse brings a number of challenges for the applied linguist, who needs to work in long-term collaboration with users of a professional discourse in order to characterise it appropriately. Such collaborative relationships enable a richer view of situated practices. To illustrate such a relationship, Sarangi discussed an established partnership in the field of genetic counselling research. The stages of the project have raised a number of issues about the respective roles of discourse analysts and professional insiders in the interpretation of recorded events, and the dissemination of such interpretations in different professional communities.

Meredith Marra began the second day of the seminar with a talk entitled *Teaching them to fish: harnessing discourse analysis in workplace communication skills training*. As the title suggests, a

major focus of the discussion was pedagogic: Marra reported on the ongoing evaluation of a course designed to advance the workplace communication skills of migrants to New Zealand. The course is underpinned by a large corpus of workplace interaction data collected and analysed by the project team at Victoria University of Wellington. Its aim is to foster discourse analysis skills among participants, so that they can critically reflect on their interactions at work and engage in an action research style process to identify and address their development needs.

## Papers

Almut Koester presented a paper on behalf of herself and Jeanette Littlemore. Her focus was figurative language in the context of workplace and academic interactions: the functions it can serve in communication and the barriers it can present to second language speakers. She presented data from studies in two different contexts, offering insights into the prevalence of figurative language and the strategies used by second language speakers to engage with it.

Adrian Stokes focused on the professional identity of medical doctors. He reported on recent consultations by the GMC which aim to revise understandings of what it means to be a medical professional. Part of this process involves research into the wide range of professional and academic genres with which doctors need to engage, and the research has highlighted aspects of the role of discourse in constructing professional identity. Stokes looked

particularly at the notion of the doctor as teacher, and the influence of this notion on discussions of professional communication in medicine.

María Stella Martinez Contreras reported on an interdisciplinary problem-based learning course used in the department of Systems Engineering of the University of Applied Sciences, Austria. The course is intended to embed English language learning with the learning of Engineering content matter, requiring students to work with language specialists, Engineering faculty members and representatives of local companies. The collaboration raises interesting issues for the teaching of professional communication, and an interim evaluation of the project has suggested new directions which will now be explored by the team.

Tim Rapley presented a study of multidisciplinary in action within the context of paediatric rheumatology. He reported on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in physical examinations in children's outpatient clinics and explained the analytic tools he used to represent the simultaneous and multimodal behaviours of members of the medical team, patients and parents. Using these tools, he reported on the roles taken by different professionals, and the nature of the collaboration and interaction observed between them during these consultations.

Barry Stierer discussed ongoing research into the everyday workplace writing of university lecturers. The goal of the research is to gain an understanding of writing as an instantiation of professional



practice; methods used included an examination of documents and interviews with those who had worked with them. Stierer argued that such research offers a new way to understand some of the relationships between professional and discursal practices, and specific professional identities.

Duncan Hunter focused on the development over time of the language and content of a particular professional publication, *English Language Teaching Journal*. He argued that the journal over time could be seen as representing and instantiating an identifiable professional discourse, and went on to discuss key changes that it had undergone. He looked in detail at the transformation of the journal in the early 1980s, exploring both the evidence of transformation and the possible reasons for it.

Fiona Copland examined the notion of professionalization in the context of initial teacher training in TESOL. Using data collected for a study of the post-observation feedback conferences between trainers and trainee teachers, she discussed the values and behaviours which were made most salient. Combining this data with a discussion of interviews with trainers and trainees, she showed how features of the post observation feedback talk help to foster an identity as a TESOL professional.

Steve Walsh reported on a comparative study of reflective practice in two teacher education courses. The study indicated a gap, in both contexts, between student-teachers' and teacher-educators'

perceptions of reflective practice. It suggested that student teachers needed to be persuaded of the value of RP and to be given tools for conducting it. Walsh argued that the inclusion of reflective writing in assessment can be counter-productive, leading student teachers to undertake reflection primarily for display.

Marga Menendez Lopez and Doris Dippold examined the pressure on language degree programmes in the UK to demonstrate their relevance for the world of work. They examined possible conflicts between an academic or a professional communication approach to language degrees in the UK, and reported on a programme at the University of Surrey which aims to overcome this potentially problematic divide. They argued in favour of an approach to professional communication which is based on sociolinguistic principles and on fostering reflection on the part of students.

CK Jung looked at the Engineering laboratory report in both the professional and academic context. Under the theme of 'what is the worst that could happen', he explored the very different consequences of failure in academic and professional contexts. By emphasising the quasi-legal nature of the professional laboratory report, he opened up a discussion of those genre features which can, or can not, retain meaning across contexts.

Jo Angouri and Stephanie Schnurr looked at models of interactive decision-making presented in materials for learners of Business English. They contrasted the

relatively unproblematic representations found in such materials with data from decision making interactions collected in workplace contexts. They concluded with proposals about how such research can feed back into training models, therefore offering a richer experience to those participating in such training.

Both days of the seminar concluded with a wrap-up session in which themes emerging from the day were discussed. In addition, there were two poster presentations. Olga Zayts and Stephanie Schnurr's poster presentation was titled "Organisations here are just not interested in this" Or are they? Negotiating ways of giving feedback to professionals in Hong Kong. Veronika Koller's poster was titled "Connecting academic and professional discourses in an undergraduate course on corporate communication".

### **Post-conference dissemination**

Many details of the papers given at the seminar, including extracts from plenary speeches and powerpoint slides from presenters, can be found on the seminar webpage. The plenaries can be found at: [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/groups/pad/events/baal\\_cup\\_2009/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/groups/pad/events/baal_cup_2009/)

The other papers and poster presentations can be found at: [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/groups/pad/events/past\\_events/20090515/prog/papers](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/groups/pad/events/past_events/20090515/prog/papers)

## Language Learning and Teaching SIG Annual Meeting

The Language Learning and Teaching SIG held its 5th annual meeting on 6 and 7 July 2009 at the Manchester Metropolitan University.

The theme of the conference was 'Exploring the Interfaces: Interrelating learning theories, policy and practitioner perspectives on foreign and second language learning in the UK'. This was intended to address the relationship between different perspectives on language learning and teaching with a particular focus on how these have an impact upon practice in the UK at a time when languages have arguably a higher profile than ever before. The call for papers highlighted some key issues, including the introduction of languages in primary schools, cross-curricular approaches in primary and secondary schools, the use of ICT, the development of the plurilingual agenda, the opportunities for international links and innovation in assessment at all levels. It also stressed the importance of critical engagement with research for the future directions of language learning and teaching in the UK. It was envisaged that we might explore how a range of cognitive and/or socio-cultural perspectives on language learning could inform these debates.

Invited plenary talks were given by three speakers, Nina Spada (OISE, University of Toronto), Susanne Niemeier (University of Koblenz) and Do Coyle

(University of Aberdeen). Nina Spada's talk, entitled 'The Case for Integrated or Isolated Form-Focused Instruction: Views from L2 Teachers and Learners' opened the two-day conference, addressing the question of whether it is better to draw learners' attention to language form in lessons that are *isolated* from communicative or content-based interaction or in activities where form focus is *integrated* within communicative practice, a theme germane to all the issues outlined above that we had intended the conference to address. Our second invited talk by Susanne Niemeier, entitled 'Applied Cognitive Grammar as an EFL teaching paradigm – Focus on aspect teaching' drew our attention to cognitive and a usage-based approaches to the teaching of grammar, drawing on a German EFL context. On the second day, Do Coyle gave our third invited talk, Strategic Classrooms and Meanings Matter: the effects of conceptualising language as a learning tool', looking at learner and teacher perceptions of learning through another language and the way language is used in CLIL (content and language integrated learning) classrooms. This was illustrated by the teaching of science through a foreign language in a UK classroom.

The three plenary speakers provided an excellent framework for the 18 individual papers that were presented in two strands. These covered a range of topics relevant to the conference theme, and focussed upon classrooms both within and outside the UK in a range of languages. There were also two poster presentations. Additionally, on the second day we were

delighted to have the UK Project on Language Learner Strategies (UKPOLLS) present a symposium 'Researching the Interface between the Social, the Cognitive and the Pedagogic: The Case of Language Learner Strategies'. The researchers presented salient characteristics of current classroom practice and compared national curricula, policy documents in a UK context before giving individual paper inputs of empirical research carried out in British secondary schools in relation to language learner strategies. Two discussion sessions proved to be a successful way of allowing delegates to share views and raise further questions.

The conference attracted 55 participants within and beyond the SIG as well as from outside BAAL itself. A particular feature of this 5<sup>th</sup> conference was the presence of delegates from the UK MFL sector from the spheres of both language teaching and language teacher education.

Finally, the closing of the conference allowed us to thank Martin Bygate as the outgoing convenor for all his hard work and dedication, and to welcome Suzanne Graham as his replacement.

The conference was organised by Gee Macrory and Lesley Lancaster, both Manchester Metropolitan University Institute of Education.

**Gee Macrory (g.macrory@mmu.ac.uk)**

## AILA Board Meeting Report

This is a summary report of the main issues that were discussed at the AILA International Board Meeting held in Limerick, on 16-17 June 2009.

The AILA website <<http://www.aila.info/>> has been freshly re-designed and is worth an inspection. This now also hosts a Forum for discussion of relevant topics.

### 1) AILA congresses

The next AILA congress will take place in 2011 in Beijing, China. The theme is: 'Harmony in diversity: language, culture, society'. Further information is available at <http://www.aila2011.org/en/>.

The venue for the subsequent AILA congresses in 2014 will be Brisbane, Australia.

### 2) Research Networks

There are currently 12 Research Networks (ReNs). Those interested in joining a ReN are invited to contact the relevant Convenors who are listed on the AILA website.

### 3) Regionalisation

This initiative aims at establishing closer international cooperation among Applied Linguists from more or less neighbouring countries who are affiliated to AILA to foster joint events, projects, publications and conferences in the respective region. An AILA Network of European Applied Linguists (AILA-Europe) has now been set up. It will hold a conference in summer 2010 at

Jyväskylä University in Finland. A Junior Research day will also be held, on 18/19 March, in Münster, Germany. More information on these events will become available on the AILA website shortly. It is also planned to start a European Journal of Applied Linguistics as part of this initiative.

### 4) Multilingual policy

English remains the working language, but receptive multilingualism is being promoted.

**Gabrielle Hogan-Brun**  
**University of Bristol**

## **Conference Report: *Language in the (New) Media: Technologies and Ideologies***

**University of Washington, Seattle, USA, September 2009.**

The message of this conference is that we are always online. We use Facebook to keep friends up-to-date on the progress of a long birth and to announce the birth a few minutes after the event (Carmen Lee). We use the relationship status option on Facebook to announce the break-up of our relationships, as well as repurposing the limited options offered by the site to project what we want to say about our complex personal relationships (Ilana Gershon). These are new uses of language, as are the ways we describe our photos, and comment on other people's to improve our photography and to explore the global world out there, deploying multilingual resources to communicate

with friends and strangers (David Barton). All sorts of vernacular practices have moved online and been enriched by this; the boundary between online and offline has become fuzzy and blurred with each shaping the other.

As tourists we write about our experiences, even parodying them and distancing ourselves from being identified as tourists when snapping away at the Tower of Pisa (Adam Jaworski & Crispin Thurlow). Stance is also apparent when we come across internet sites like StuffWhitePeopleLike. We are uncomfortable with the issues of race and class we are confronted with and engage in serious reflection and discussion (Shana Walton & Alexandra Jaffe). On PostSecrets we anonymously make the private public and learn things about people which we didn't know (Alexandra Jaffe). We can trace the history of some of these practices back to the use of postcards in Victorian times (Anthony Guneratne).

As skateboarders we mix modes to project ourselves on YouTube videos as we would like to be, linking with boarders around the world to promote the sport (Rodney Jones). Videos we make on our mobile phones are taken up by mainstream media in systematic, but fast changing ways, and challenging the notion of media professional (Nuria Lorenzo-Dus & Annie Bryan). We invoke audiences in complex ways when YouTube comedy videos fuse and confuse Korean, Arabic and English (Elaine Chun & Keith Walters). Creativity is valued here and in other online spaces.

The research is going in many different directions. We use the internet to find support when a child appears to be developing abnormally and we draw upon the expertise of others around the world with similar experiences (Laurel Kamada). Several studies show how across the world smaller languages are finding niches to thrive on the internet and languages which were hardly written, like Luxembourgish, are now used extensively, changing their statuses and the ideologies around them (Melanie Wagner).

Internet research is covering all sorts of sites and uses of language. There are new methodologies needed (Jannis Androutsopoulos) to research this multimodal world (Theo van Leeuwen). In a stranded conference it is impossible to cover everything, but this was an exciting, important and friendly conference for understanding research on the rapidly changing forms and uses of language which we are all experiencing.

Abstracts can be perused at <http://www.com.washington.edu/LIM/>. This was the third Language in New Media conference; the first two were held in Leeds and the next one will be held in Limerick, Ireland in 2011.

David Barton

#### Language and Gender in African Contexts

The final Seminar in the 'Language and Gender in African Contexts' series is planned for April 13-15 2010, at Obafemi



Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Nigeria. Details of the programme, registration and accommodation have not yet been finalised, but if you are interested, feel free to contact Yisa Yusuf (yyusuf@oauife.edu.ng) or Jane Sunderland (j.sunderland@lancs.ac.uk). Further details will soon be posted on the BAAL List. We hope that this Seminar will be as international as possible. Some small within-Africa travel bursaries will be available for presenters.

**Jane Sunderland**

#### **New UKLEF coordinating committee**

At the UK Linguistic Ethnography Forum Annual General Meeting in Birmingham earlier this month, various new officers were elected to the Coordinating Committee of the SIG. The incoming Convenor is Jeff Bezemer, of Imperial College London. Tom van Hout, of Ghent University College, Belgium, is incoming Communications Secretary, and Sara Shaw, of University College London and The Nuffield Trust, is incoming Ordinary Member. The Coordinating Committee has co-opted a third Ordinary Member, Janet Maybin, of the Open University.

The Coordinating Committee members are now as follows: □ □

Jeff Bezemer, Convenor (2009-2011) □  
 Tom Van Hout, Communications  
 Secretary (2009-2011) □  
 Frances Giampapa, Meetings  
 Secretary (2008-2010) □

Fiona Copland, Treasurer (2008-2010) □

Max Spotti, Ordinary Member (2008-2010) □

Sara Shaw, Ordinary Member (2009-2011) □

Janet Maybin, Co-opted Member (2009-2010) □ □

On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank the outgoing Convenor, Ben Rampton, for his tremendous contribution to the Forum since its formation in 2001. Under his outstanding leadership the Forum has become a vibrant research community of 250 members across Europe, the US and elsewhere. Ben has been the driving force behind numerous initiatives, and I'm sure he will continue to be an active member of the Forum. I would also like to thank Vally Lytra, outgoing ordinary member, for all the work she's done for the SIG. She has been involved in LEF from the start, and joined the Coordinating Committee in 2004. □ □

**Jeff Bezemer**  
**UKLEF Convenor**

## Johannes Eckerth 1965 -2009

Johannes Eckerth joined the Department of Educational & Professional Studies at King's College in April 2008. A charming man, blessed with great vitality, he made an immediate impact on his new colleagues and went on to play a key role in stimulating discussions about classroom language teaching and learning issues amongst members of the department's Languages and Literacy Research Group. Johannes was a very able scholar, enthusiastic about his subject, and rapidly gaining an international reputation as a researcher in the field of second language acquisition in general, and task-based learning and teaching in particular. He was a fertile source of innovative ideas for new ventures, and set up several collaborative research projects with co-researchers both within King's and in the international applied linguistics community. Sadly, some of these may not now come to fruition.

As a colleague and as a teacher, Johannes was inspirational. No matter how busy he was with his research commitments, he always had time for others. To his staff peers, he was supportive beyond the call of duty, ever willing to discuss and exchange ideas. To his students, he was a charismatic teacher who always willing to devote time to giving advice and guidance.

Johannes was a humane, rounded, sociable guy. He had many other interests outside applied linguistics. He greatly enjoyed walking and hiking in the countryside, and especially loved, for his time at Portland State University, the big landscapes of America. Because of this we suspect he sometimes found living in densely populated London a bit trying. However, as a multilingual inter-nationalist, he relished the multicultural nature of the capital.

Johannes was the main driving force behind the decision that King's should host the annual conference of the BAAL Language Learning and Teaching SIG in July 2010. The event will now be dedicated to his memory. His sudden death, after a very short illness, came as a terrible shock to us all, and his loss will be an enormous one, both professionally and personally. His warmth and good humour will be greatly missed.

**Nick Andon   Alan Fortune   Constant Leung   Ursula Wingate**

## Tim Johns: 1936 – 2009

Tim Johns, who died earlier this year, was an inspiring teacher, an original researcher and scarcely capable of an uninteresting observation. He will be deeply missed by colleagues, friends and students from around the world.

A Cambridge history graduate, he worked for a spell in the Home office (which left him unable later to enjoy *Yes, Minister* as being too close to the truth), taught English at a language school, gained a Diploma in Applied Linguistics from the thriving department at Edinburgh, and taught in Czechoslovakia before coming to Birmingham where he worked

for thirty years, and maintained connections after his retirement. This bare outline however conveys nothing of the man himself.

In his professional life, he was a constant pioneer, an early promoter of EAP; an originator in team teaching, the inventor of micro-concordancing, which set out to do in a miniature way (originally on a Sinclair Spectrum) what John Sinclair was doing in a massive way on the University mainframe in developing the Cobuild project. Their thinking was similar, but they started from opposite ends of the scale. From Tim's work emerged data-driven learning, with the development of pedagogical principals and materials based on concordance output – “every student his own detective”. Thus was highlighted the idea of language learning as problem-solving, an approach which could be appreciated by engineering students, for example, as one shared by their own discipline. Tim also developed the notion of reciprocal learning, where student A, a native speaker of language X, would be twinned with student B, a native speaker of language Y, each learning the other's language. A set of exercises focusing on particular language difficulties (subjunctives, prepositions, and the like) was developed in each language, on which the students worked together, acting as both learners and informants. The pilot sessions were not inconsiderably assisted by the availability of wine.

Alongside all this pioneering development was Tim himself. Ceaselessly enthusiastic, shrewd, humorous - his laughter often emanating from his office when working with a student (probably the aha-moment of a discovery) - intellectually extremely sharp, dedicated to his students, excellent social company with a great store of anecdotes, his interests ranging from wild mushrooms and food to jazz and the writings of Arthur Ransome. He was a valued colleague whose advice was often sought and freely given. He was good at making connections. On a small personal note, we once had a coffee-time discussion about the verbs *don* and *doff*, and how the verb endings appeared to have migrated from the *do*-element to the end of the cluster; I mentioned *dout* as another example from my childhood, in the sense of extinguish. Tim immediately came in with “I always wondered about the meaning of Mrs Doubtfire – clearly the ‘b’ is wrong!”.

After retirement he developed an appetite for cruises, going around Cape Horn on one in waves that would not have been out of place on a duckpond, and making friends with the penguins. He was often off to Colindale newspaper library (“you can get a £5 ticket if you leave Selly Oak station by 6!”) to carry out research into Arthur Ransome's writings and early reviews of his books. At his death he had plans to work on redeveloping the literary pages of the allthingsransome site which he had originally developed (whose tribute to his work for them is headed *Si monumentum requiris circumspice*), and had just started an Honorary Fellowship at Aston University where he would have further developed his computer-based approach.

Tim's senior lectureship was pretty much thrust upon him. He never had any desire for personal academic advancement. His ambition was to do useful things well, and to develop for others' benefit the insights that he had so often been the first to have.

**Philip King**

## Grammar: widening the scope

(As World Englishes take centre stage, it is no longer appropriate to insist that learners simply master the limited range of grammatical features found in the so-called 'standard' languages. In a welcome initiative, the Chilton Research Association for Psycho-Pedagogical Orientation is producing a range of materials designed to widen the scope of grammar teaching. The following sample lesson from 'Grammar ain't as hard as what you think' (Didcot Academic Press, forthcoming) introduces students to a useful structure that is common not only in southern US speech, but in many other English varieties world-wide.)

### Double modals: you might better revise your ideas

**Double modals** are used in many varieties of spoken English. The most common are: *might could*, *might should*, *might oughta*, *should oughta*.

#### Examples:

We **might could** get tickets for tomorrow night.

We **might should** mosey down and see old Polly.

You **might oughta** check the oil.

Somebody **should oughta** do something about that kid.

### Exercise 1 Put the beginnings and ends together.

BEGINNINGS	ENDS
1. Maybe we might oughta	A. fry up some of that pork after the Bible meeting.
2. We might could	B. rescue granpaw from the burning whiskey still.
3. You might should	C. smoke that stuff while you're playing poker.
4. You shouldn't oughta	D. put your panties back on before the Minister gets here.

Note also the structures *had oughta* and *might better* (like *had better*, but more polite).

#### Examples:

People **had oughta** learn to talk right.

You **might better** get out of town while you can.

### Exercise 2 Put in words from the box with *had oughta* or *might better*.

be do put untie

1. You kids ..... Aunt Mildred.
2. The government ..... something about them pointy-headed perverted red commie homosexual university professors.
3. Do you think we ..... the alligator back?
4. You ..... more careful who you shoot.

Like other modals, all of these structures can be followed by **perfect infinitives**.

**Examples:**

*We **might should've opened** the gate before we druv out.*

*I **hadn't oughta've done** that.*

**Exercise 3 Make sentences with *might should've*.**

1. Lucille totalled the pickup. (*stop at the red light*)
2. BJ got et by a bear. (*read the notice*)
3. Donny had a real bad trip. (*buy better stuff*)
4. Mary-Lou's pregnant again. (*get him to write down his name*)

More complex combinations exist, but students should avoid using these until they reach a more advanced level.

**Example:**

*He **might woulda hadn't oughta brung** his horse into the church.*

Sentences with a **perfect progressive passive infinitive** are uncommon.

**Example:**

*I thought the hogs **might oughta've been being fed**, but I didn't rightly reckonemember.*

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**Jackson, J. (2008) *Language, identity and study abroad*. London: Equinox. ISBN 978-1-84553-142-3. 270 pp. £16.99.**

Study abroad – the phenomenon of undertaking part of a university degree course in another country – is as old as universities themselves, but its serious study dates back only a couple of decades. Enhanced language proficiency remains the prime motivation for student mobility, and the most frequent research topic for applied linguists, although recent educational research has expanded beyond second language acquisition topics to embrace the full gamut of learning outcomes. The literature is still plagued by a lack of definition and of agreed terminology. While most published statistics refer to the millions who undertake whole-programme study abroad, most studies focus on within-programme mobility, where the sojourn of anything from four weeks to two years is an integrated part of a higher education degree course. Even within-programme study abroad encompasses widely different experiences, from the carefully controlled North American programs, where students travel with their friends, their teachers and their academic structures, to the independent European models, themselves ranging from the *Auberge espagnole* ERASMUS romp to career-enhancing work placements and assistantships offering total immersion.

Study abroad perhaps embodies the social turn in SLA more fully than other research domains. Since Murphy-Lejeune's *New Strangers* of 2002, several in-depth, book-

length studies have sought to capture the real lived experience of study abroad, among them de Federico 2005, Dervin 2008, Ehrenreich 2004, Kinginger 2008, Papatsiba 2003, and Pellegrino Aveni 2005. Gains in fluency or vocabulary, which themselves are by no means automatic, can seem almost trivial compared to the profound challenges to identities and cultural understandings which living and studying in a new context can provoke.

Jane Jackson's study of Hong Kong Chinese students in the UK addresses both linguistic and interdisciplinary issues. She uses 'sociocultural perspectives to address the nature of language learning, identity (re)construction, and the development of intercultural communicative competence and intercultural personhood in L2 sojourners'. The book opens with a rapid history of how introspective techniques opened up the field for linguists, while specialists from other disciplines used surveys to explore the psychology, the social networks and the re-entry problems of sojourners. After a brief literature review, Jackson takes two chapters to present the theoretical contexts. Those familiar with ZPD, CoP, INT, SCT, liminality, double objectification, Bakhtin, Bourdieu and Vygotsky may skip this concise yet exceptionally clear and helpful presentation of relevant and related concepts, which does nonetheless trigger two reflections: firstly, that theories are useful only insofar as they help understand or explain observed phenomena; and secondly that theorists' taste for jargon, coinages and the

humptydumtification of terms (reflected in Jackson's lavish but justified use of inverted commas) itself echoes the power and access issues so prevalent in study abroad encounters.

In subsequent chapters, Jackson is careful to interweave theoretical reflections with students' narratives (and Ting-Toomey's Identity Negotiation Theory emerges as most perhaps the most valuable for study abroad research), but the contrasting stories are themselves fascinating enough to retain most readers' attention.

Short stays are becoming both more popular and more researched, and Jackson's book tells of four female Hong Kong students undertaking a five-week visit to England. The brevity of the actual stay is countered by meticulous pre- and post-sojourn support. Jane Jackson's role as both programme coordinator and researcher - a role in which she carefully balances emic and etic approaches - gives her unique access for this very rich ethnographic study.

Jackson's study, following her insightful pilot studies of earlier cohorts, is meticulously conducted. Exceptionally, she follows her subjects from well before the period abroad until well after their return, including close observation during their stay in the English Midlands. By regular data collection, and the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative measures, she is able to build convincing and detailed narratives against which to test the theoretical positions on language, culture and identity (re-)construction explicated previously.

Ada, Cori, Elsa and Niki (all pseudonyms) record their very individual journeys. Each

evidences the unrealistic expectations, initial euphoria, intercultural incidents, homesickness, culture shock, linguistic exploration, cultural insights and misunderstandings, gradual adaptation, sadness at leaving, re-entry problems and post-sojourn reflection on personal and linguistic gains which exemplify study abroad narratives. Yet each also illustrates the individual nature of the experience of otherness which makes qualitative study abroad research so much more fascinating than merely cognitive accounts, and adds detail to the high individual variability which characterises so many studies.

Ada, whose host family failed to acknowledge her Hong Kong Chinese identity, found the cultural differences too great to enable her to feel secure, to build any relationships, or to use her English much - although she did record some linguistic and cultural gains. Cori's admiration for Westerners became more critical and nuanced, while her self-sufficiency, allied to an instrumental orientation to English and low willingness to communicate, limited her language gains and made her more aware of her Chinese heritage. Elsa experienced the same miscommunications and perceived hostility as her peers, but showed greater ability to reflect objectively, and greater determination to use English in social situations. Consequently, her language improved and she grew affectively closer to her host community, to the extent that return to Hong Kong brought awareness of a more hybrid identity. Niki too



overcame the initial psychological challenges of functioning in the new context, and determined participation in social interactions with her hosts led to a virtuous circle of improved proficiency, enhanced self-esteem and self-efficacy, less utilitarian notions of English, and deeper appreciation of both British and Chinese cultures.

The reader will want to know, as with all ‘first-person’ narratives, exactly whose voices are being heard. To an extent, Jackson’s effectiveness as programme coordinator undermines her role as researcher: few pre-sojourn students in the literature show Elsa’s spontaneous ‘awareness of the relational nature of identity’, and the sojourners’ accounts and especially analytical reflections sometimes seem to be filtered through her theoretical framework. Nonetheless, this book stands as a highly original and substantial addition to the body of study abroad research, essential reading for linguists interested in identity and intercultural issues, and fascinating for all those who enjoy accounts of meetings with otherness.

**Jim Coleman, The Open University.**

**Brock-Utne, Birgit and Stattum, Ingse (eds), 2009. *Languages and Education in Africa: a comparative and transdisciplinary analysis*. Oxford: Symposium Books. 356pp. US\$ 64.00 paperback. ISBN 978-1-873927-17-5**

This book is a selection of papers presented at the Language and Education in Africa (LEA) conference that took

place in Oslo in June 2006. The book is edited by an internationally renowned social scientist, Professor Birgit Brock-Utne, and a linguist, Professor Ingse Skattum, both from Norway, but with vast experience of working and researching in Africa. Most of the chapters in the book are written by African scholars from different countries. Research from seventeen African countries is reported in the book: Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The main theme that runs through the book is that quality education can only be possible if learners are taught in a language they understand. In my view, the book has convincingly argued this point with a combination of solid scholarship and a voice of African scholars talking about challenges of language in education in their own countries.

The book consists of 17 chapters; an introductory chapter by the editors and 16 chapters divided into 4 parts. Part 1 deals with General Considerations on Language and Education and has 4 chapters. Part 2 is on Language as a Means of Instruction and as a Subject in Formal Education. This is the biggest Part with seven chapters reporting on research in Mali, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Botswana, Zambia and Tanzania. Part 3 is on Language Standardization and Harmonization. It has 4 chapters, three of which are on standardization and harmonization of Shona language/dialects, especially in Zimbabwe. The other chapter is on harmonization of Nguni languages in

Southern Africa. Part 4 reports on research Beyond Formal Education and has 4 chapters.

In the introduction, the editors have succeeded in paving a roadmap that coherently guides the reader into the book. They have also made a very good analysis of the transdisciplinary nature of the book. So, although the book is very extensive in terms of geographical coverage and the range of topics, there is a common thread that runs through it. What I wish to do below is to highlight the main issues that come out clearly in the book.

First, there is a consensus throughout the book that the mother-tongue (or another language that the learner understands) is the best medium of instruction. Empirical evidence from Tanzania (Chapters 2 and 12), and Ethiopia (Chapter 9) among others, shows clearly that using Kiswahili in Tanzania and different mother tongues in Ethiopia enables learners to understand different lessons, while using English is an impediment to learning. Furthermore, there is evidence that using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction does not prevent learners from learning a foreign language.

Secondly, while there are similarities across countries, there are also differences in terms of the challenges that these countries face. These differences are due to historical reasons and the political dispensation in different African countries. For example, whereas in countries like Mali and Ethiopia they have several mother-tongues as media of

instruction, in Tanzania only Kiswahili, the national language, is the only “mother-tongue” allowed in the school system. Although it is claimed that 99% of Tanzanians speak Kiswahili (Chapter 1, p.34), a claim which is not supported by any empirical evidence, it is also true that in remote rural areas in Tanzania there are children who go to school without any knowledge of Kiswahili. These children are disadvantaged at least during the first few months of schooling. Admittedly, their disadvantage is not comparable to that of learning through English.

Thirdly, there are practical problems of developing technical vocabulary, harmonizing orthography and producing didactic materials. These are discussed in several chapters (e.g. chapters 3, 5&6).

Fourthly, it should be understood that language is a necessary but not sufficient condition for quality education. Hassana Alidou (chapter 4) refers to the need for teacher training to be strengthened. In my opinion, this is important, but there other aspects that need attention as well. Things that are taken for granted in developed countries like desks, school lunches make a lot of difference between quality education and mediocre education. So does class size, availability of didactic materials, etc.

Last but not least, language issues need to be seen within the wider context of socio-economic and political power play. Martha Qorro (chapter 2) and Hassana Alidou (chapter 4) allude to this, but I think this should have been more salient than it has been in the book. As Martin-

Jones and Heller (2001: 2-3) point out:

Linguistic practices are central to struggles over controlling the production and distribution of resources and over the legitimation of relations of power...Debates over linguistic norms and practices are, in the end, debates over controlling resources.

I believe it is this phenomenon that has so far prevented the use of African languages in education, despite research evidence showing it is the right thing to do.

One would have liked to see at least some token commitment to using an African language in a book like this. The editors explain this glaring absence in terms of high costs of interpretation and translation (chapter 1, p.17). This is hardly convincing! If it was possible to include 3 chapters in French in this volume, why was it difficult to have, for instance, chapters 2 and 12 in Kiswahili? The authors of these two chapters could have easily written their papers in Kiswahili. At the very least, why was it not possible to have abstracts at least in one African language? I think we need to put our money where our mouth is.

Some very minor editorial errors: the President of Uganda is called Museveni, not Muzeveni (p.19). On page 27 there is a repetition of some words.

Overall, this is a very good book and I enjoyed reading it.

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*Language Complexity as an Evolving Variable. Studies in the Evolution of Language 13*. Edited by Geoffrey Sampson, David Gil and Peter Trudgill. 2009. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-954522-3. Hardback £65, Paperback £22.99. Pp. 309.

The editors to this book need no introduction, they are all prominent linguists. They have collated nineteen papers which challenge a long-held assumption in linguistics; namely, that no language is more complicated than another. The preface explains how the papers were the outcome of a particularly successful workshop convened at the prestigious Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology at Leipzig in 2007. Each paper argues that complexity in language is not invariant, but an evolving variable. If true, this strikes at the very heart of Chomsky's claims for a universal grammar. In this review, I shall not be able to cover each chapter for reasons of space. However, I stress, all are of a consistently high standard.

In the first, Geoffrey Sampson provides the historical background to the assumption that languages are equally

complex. He believes that linguists were more careful in how they stated the differences between languages before the post-Bloomfieldian era. He quotes Sapir, Bloomfield and Boas to prove his point. He then detects less and less care until, with the rise of generative grammar, this notion of equal complexity became enshrined as a linguistic universal and thereafter went unquestioned. He cites three arguments that generativists use to support it and rebuts them with recent findings. First, he cites Deutscher who found no finite complement clauses in his study of classical Akkadian; next, he cites differences among individuals' levels of competence; and, lastly, complexity growth during individuals' lifetimes. Some of the support he draws for his argument comes from researchers who have contributed to this volume (e.g., Everett and Deutscher). It is a good opening chapter.

In chapter 2, David Gil asks 'How much grammar does it take to sail a boat?' The answer is much less than you think. He argues that the level of grammatical complexity needed for contemporary culture, technology and civilization is no greater than that of an idealized language prototype he calls Isolating-Monocategorial-Associational Language (IMA). Basically, he is questioning the correlation between language complexity and that of society. He discusses Riau Indonesian, a language he describes as relatively close to an IMA language. Despite its grammatical simplicity, he sees few drawbacks to its communicative power and wonders why most languages are grammatically complex when they do not need to be. Gil's is a thought-

provoking argument that like most of the papers in this book draws evidence from language or research findings rather than seeking theoretical support.

In chapter 3, Walter Bisang introduces the notion that there is a trade-off – complexity in one part of a language compensated for by simplicity in another. On this question, his opinion is at loggerheads with Gil (p. 24) who does not believe overt grammatical simplicity is compensated by hidden complexity. Bisang describes how certain languages may be simple in terms of case agreements, but argues that there is complexity in pragmatic matters (p. 38 & p.49). He draws support from two Asian languages – Khmer and Late Archaic Chinese – to show that sometimes less is more.

Chapter 4 is by Östen Dahl. He compares Elfdalian and Swedish to find out if it is possible to identify the points at which they differ in complexity. Elfdalian is an endangered vernacular spoken by about 3,000 persons in Älvdalen in the Swedish province of Dalarna. He begins by offering a timely explanation of what is meant by 'complexity' before comparing the main grammatical categories of these dialects. He shows that Elfdalian has a more complex morphology while Swedish has a more complex syntax. The important conclusion he reaches is that 'overall complexity of the syntactic component of a language is not easily measured' (p.62). This is not a negative conclusion, but rather an honest admission. Measurement of complexity is problematic.

Chapter 5 is entitled ‘Between simplification and complexification: non-standard varieties of English around the world’ and it is by Benedikt Szmrecsanyi and Bernd Kortmann. The research task here is to find out the extent to which variety type correlates with complexity variance. From the point of method, this is a clever move. In the last chapter, two dialects were compared, now it is the turn of four dozen varieties of English. Obviously, it is going to be easier to make comparisons between varieties than different languages. Glossing over the details, the findings show complexity variance among varieties of English (p.76). Low-contact, traditional L1 vernaculars were more complex on all counts than high-contact L1 and L2 varieties of English.

Chapter 6 is by Matti Miestamo and on ‘Implicational hierarchies and grammatical complexity’. He uses the notion of hierarchy revealed by Greenberg’s implicational universals as a measure of complexity. For example, here’s the hierarchy for number: (singular) < plural < dual < trial. If a language has one of these categories, it will also have those to the left of it. Again, the method is very good: a specific, common-sense notion of complexity is investigated. Those languages that are higher on the hierarchy are more complicated in respect of this particular grammatical category. Miestamo chooses two pairs of hierarchies for investigation – agreement and case, and verbalization and copula. He concludes by weighing up the pros and cons of the method.

Chapter 7 is on ‘Sociolinguistic typology and complexification’ and it is by Peter Trudgill. He argues that factors such as language isolation, tightness or density of social networks and small speech community sizes contribute to complexity. Although it is very difficult to quantify any of these factors, they made good sense to me. The years I spent compiling an English-Japanese dictionary made me think even Japanese could even fit into his description. During the Tokugawa Period a 150-year period of isolation was imposed on the country and the number of foreigners living here was relatively small until the Asian bubble burst. The speech community is huge, but social networks are very tight. Although the complexity rating for Japanese is not high in Joanna Nichols’ survey of linguistic complexity in chapter 8, the focus of the chapters is on syntax and not factors such as different speech registers or complicated writing systems.

The following chapters I shall mention only in passing. Chapter 9 by Kaius Sinnemäki is about ‘Complexity in core argument marking and population size’. Chapter 10 written by John McWhorter is about how a single, small Saramaccan word shows us how a creole develops complexity. Chapter 11 ‘Orality versus literacy as a dimension of complexity’ is by Utz Maas, and in chapter 12 Ngoni Chipere writes about ‘Individual differences in processing complex grammatical structures’. In chapter 13, Fred Karlsson tackles the ‘Origin and maintenance of clausal embedding complexity’. He places the emergence of complex forms of clausal embedding in a

historical perspective and argues that they coincide with the advent of writing. In the next chapter, Ljiljana Progovac writes about ‘Layering of grammar: vestiges of protosyntax in present-day languages’. She provides three sets of data and argues that they support an evolutionary account of the development of syntax. Chapter 15 is an interview with Dan Everett whose work on Pirahã, a language spoken by about 200 people living in the Amazon rainforest, has attracted much attention because he claims it does not have subordinate clauses. The next is by Eugénie Stapert and entitled ‘Universals in language or cognition? Evidence from English language acquisition and Pirahã’.

Chapter 17 is written by Guy Deutscher who is best known for his book *Syntactic change in Akkadian* (2000). In that book, he said there were no finite complement clauses in the earliest stages of Akkadian. He discovered them developing out of non-recursive structures much later. The chapter is entitled “‘Overall complexity’: a wild goose chase?” He, as well as other contributors, is sceptical of finding a definition of complexity that will allow measurement. He suggests a bottom-up approach that compares only those subsystems of languages in which the parts can be counted. But he cites several reasons why even this method will not be ‘amenable to summation’ (p.249). He comes to the conclusion that it is impossible to compare any two languages for overall complexity. He doesn’t think the term ‘overall complexity’ is meaningless, it just eludes quantification.

In this chapter as well as others, we feel

the craving for a formula and frustration at how the differences between languages prevent easy comparison. My own feeling is that this frustration is not necessary. All that is needed is to draw philosophical conclusions regarding diversity. I am not suggesting that this book is the right place for that, but, if that were done, formularization will be put into proper perspective.

Chapter 18 is written by John A. Hawkins and entitled ‘An efficiency theory of complexity and related phenomena’. Hawkins is best known for his thesis on ‘Early Immediate Constituents’ (1994). He recognizes the intractable nature of complexity and believes some of its problems can be solved ‘if metrics of complexity are embedded in a larger theory of efficiency’ (253). And this is just what he does. He begins with ‘trade-offs’ because he believes there’s evidence for them and presents an impressive case. But a health warning – this last chapter is not for the weak-hearted. There are lots of technical terms – theta-role assignments, argument structures, etc. – and it is not easy reading. Try this: ‘I have argued that MaOP competes with EIC and Minimize Domains in head ordering asymmetries’ (p.264). But, before you reach for the drinks cabinet, remember that’s the cost of being at the cutting edge of linguistics.

In the conclusion, the editors sum up by saying that an axiom that has gone unquestioned for almost sixty years is now challenged. A crucial tenet of Chomsky’s claim for a universal grammar was that all languages exhibit a recursive function. The evidence from both Everett

on Pirahã and Deutscher on Akkadian disprove this. Once more in the brief history of linguistics, the pendulum swings. I'm sure Boas, Sapir, Bloomfield, Harris, and Jakobson would have applauded, and I can't help feeling how much better this kind of linguistics is than speculating upon alleged cognitive processes. This is what linguistics is really about – languages. Highly recommended.

### **Peter Sharpe**

Ex-professor of linguistics, now freelance writer.

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The following books have been received for review. If you would like to review one of these books, or any other books of your interest, please contact Dr Guoxing Yu, the Reviews Editor, Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, 35 Berkeley Square, Bristol, BS8 1JA. Your review should be submitted as an email attachment in MS Word to [Guoxing.Yu@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Guoxing.Yu@bristol.ac.uk) within two months of receiving the book.

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## **Copy deadlines for the rest of this year**

Please submit your contributions to *BAALNews* by the following dates:

Spring 2010:      January 29<sup>th</sup>

Summer 2010:    May 14<sup>th</sup>

## **Guidelines for contributors**

Please submit all material by email to:  
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Unless there is a very special reason, please submit material in Times New Roman, 12pt, left aligned (not justified).

Please don't use text boxes, as they complicate the reformatting.

Thank you.

# BAAL Funding Summary

Below is a summary of available BAAL funding to help promote Applied Linguistics. For more details and application forms, see <http://www.baal.org.uk/funding.htm>.

Award	Maximum amount	Number available	Closing Date	Contact
Annual Conference UK-based PG Scholarship	Covers registration fee	10	31 March	BAAL Meetings Secretary
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Applied Linguistics Activity Fund	£250	4	25 Feb 25 June 25 Sept	BAAL Secretary
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