



BAAL News

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Promoting understanding of language in use.

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Editorial

Dear BAAL members,

Welcome to number 114 of the BAAL newsletter. This edition of the BAAL News includes a Call for Papers for BAAL 2019, to be held at Manchester Metropolitan University. This year's theme, 'Broadening the Horizons of Applied Linguistics', invites us to consider the role that applied linguistics plays in many walks of life and across subject boundaries.

Many members will have been saddened by the news of Ronald Carter's death on 12th September 2018. Ronald was a key personality in applied linguistics and also Chair of BAAL from 2003 to 2006. I would like to thank Guy Cook for contributing the very thoughtful and personal obituary in this edition, starting on page 6.

I would also like to draw your attention to a very timely and interesting discussion piece by Dominic Griffiths on neurodiversity which addresses why this is important for research and practice in applied linguistics. Susan Hunston kindly contributed a piece on a new free on-line grammar pattern resource, which is a good example of how applied linguistic research is made available to a wide audience.

As usual, this issue of BAAL News features reports from our PhD student members. This time the report is by the winner of the best poster prize at the last BAAL conference at York St. John University.

With best wishes,

Bettina Beinhoff

Newsletter Editor



52nd Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics

29-31 August 2019

Theme: "Broadening the Horizons of Applied Linguistics"

Manchester Metropolitan University, England, UK

www.mmu.ac.uk/baal2019

twitter: @BAAL2019

Our theme- Broadening the Horizons of Applied Linguistics – takes as its premise that applied linguistics underpins a vast range of disciplines, and we intend the 2019 meeting to encourage exploration of the role that applied linguistics plays in many walks of life. We hope the conference theme will encourage proposals from a wide range of disciplines and that this in turn will encourage cross-disciplinary dissemination of ideas and research. Our Local Organising Committee is drawn from different faculties and departments across the university – the School of Teacher Education and Professional Development and the School of Childhood, Youth and Educational Studies, both within the Faculty of Education, the Department of Languages, Information and Communications within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and the Faculty of Health, Psychology & Social Care.

The BAAL 2019 conference is hosted by the Faculty of Education, located in the Brooks Building in the centre of Manchester. Manchester is a vibrant, lively city which not only has a rich industrial heritage but is also home to an exciting and varied cultural life. Manchester is only two hours from London by train, and within easy reach of Liverpool, Chester, North Wales, the Lake District, the Peak District and Yorkshire. The campus is easily accessible by car and rail. The University is a 20-minute walk or a short taxi ride from the train station. There is a direct train from Manchester Airport.



Plenary Speakers

Julia Carroll (University of Coventry)

Professor Julia Carroll leads the literacy research team in the Centre for Advances in Behavioural Science, Coventry University. Her work concerns the links between spoken and written language, particularly in children with developmental language disorder or dyslexia. In 2018 she won the lifetime achievement award from the British Dyslexia Association for her work.

Tim Grant (Aston University)

Tim Grant is Professor of Forensic Linguistics and Director of CFL at Aston University. His recent work focuses on using linguistics to assist investigations into the abuse of children and adults that occurs on and through the dark web. He provides investigative assistance to UK and international police and is an experienced expert witness.

Kate Pahl (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Kate Pahl is Professor of Arts and Literacy at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her work explores co-production, arts methods and literacy education. Her most recent book, Grenfell, M. & Pahl, K. (2019) *Bourdieu, Language-Based Ethnographies and reflexivity: Putting Theory into Practice* (New York: Routledge) is concerned with reflexivity in literacy education.

Pit Corder lecture:

Adrian Holliday (Canterbury Christ Church University)

Adrian Holliday is Professor of Applied Linguistics & Intercultural Education at Canterbury Christ Church University where he directs doctoral research. He has written about native-speakerism, his grammar of culture and qualitative research. In the 1970s and 80s he taught English and was a university curriculum developer in Iran, Syria and Egypt.



BAAL 2019 Contacts

BAAL conference queries: Baal2019@mmu.ac.uk

Local Organising Committee Chair: Dr Gee Macrory (g.macrory@mmu.ac.uk)

BAAL Meeting Secretary: Dr Alex Ho-Cheong Leung (alex.ho-cheong.leung@northumbria.ac.uk)

Call for Papers and Submission Guidelines

Abstracts are welcome in any area of Applied Linguistics, should be interesting and innovative in some way, and should be of scholarly and academically good quality and indicate clearly objectives, method(s), and results where appropriate. Abstracts which address the conference theme will be particularly welcome.

Deadline for receipt of abstracts: **31 March 2019**

Please visit www.mmu.ac.uk/baal2019 for information on the formats for presentation (individual paper for parallel sessions or SIG track, poster or colloquium) and the abstract submission process.

All presenters have to be BAAL members by the time they register for the conference.

BAAL 2019 Scholarships and Prizes

BAAL offers 4-5 full conference scholarships for students or early career researchers, with the latter defined as being within 2 years of PhD completion. In addition, BAAL offers the 'Chris Brumfit scholarship' which is usually targeted at delegates from outside Britain who would not otherwise have funds to attend the BAAL Annual Meeting. Please see the Call for Papers on the conference website for more information.

Poster prize: A prize of £50, for the best poster presented at the conference, judged by plenary speakers and leaders of invited colloquia.

Richard Pemberton prize: A prize of £50, for the best postgraduate paper, coordinated by the Postgraduate Development and Liaison Coordinator.



Ronald Carter, May 1947—September 2018, BAAL Chair, 2003—2006

by Guy Cook

When we remember someone—living or dead—we tend to have a snapshot of them in our mind in some very particular place and time. Why we preserve that one image over all possible others I do not know. When I remember Ron I see him among the publishers' stands at a BAAL conference where I have tracked him down. He has been speaking to a younger colleague, bending slightly forward, listening intently, telling them how much he admires their latest paper or article, suggesting next moves. He turns to me with his open friendly face.


Contemporary university life can be cruel, especially for those who do not remember kinder times. Academics labour over their dearest findings only to be overlooked in research assessments, bluntly rejected by editors, rudely dismissed by referees. All this while working conditions become less and less attractive.

Against this relentless current of discouragement, Ron Carter was a stalwart defence, always pushing in the opposite direction. He spent his academic life encouraging, supporting and facilitating the work of others. Ron made people feel good about being academics, even in the most judgmental of times.

Too few senior successful academics are like that. Many become fixated on their own reputations. Ron himself had so many successes and such a smooth rise in his career that he could easily have become an egotist. His awards and appointments might have gone to anyone's head. After working at the Hertfordshire College of Higher Education and finishing his PhD in 1979, he became first a lecturer and then Professor of Modern English Language at the University of Nottingham, where he stayed for the rest of his career. The years which followed saw many prestigious achievements and positions. Ron was co-founder and first chair of the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA) (1979), Director of the Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project (1989-1992), a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (1995), a winner (with John McRae) of the Duke of Edinburgh's English-Speaking Union Award (2001), a Fellow of the Academy for Social Sciences (2002), Chair of BAAL (2003-2006), recipient (with Mike McCarthy) of a British Council Language Innovation Award (2006), awarded an MBE for services to local and national higher education (2009), an Open University honorary doctorate (2013), and a British Council Lifetime Achievement Award (an ELTon) (2017). I doubt that someone reading this list without knowing him would have expected to meet the kind, modest, courteous, mild-mannered, humorous, self-deprecating man who was Ron Carter.

These many accolades and distinctions were the public recognition of a prolific and deeply influential body of work on language in many areas of applied linguistics—stylistics, corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, English language teaching, linguistic creativity, grammar, lexicology—work which not only furthered each of these fields but steered them in new directions creating foundations for further work by others.

The list of Ron's achievements and publications is too long to do more than pick out a few. There were the LINC materials which, though embargoed from publication by the Conservative government which had commissioned them, nevertheless exerted a lasting influence on the teaching of English in UK schools. There was the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE)—a pioneering database of transcribed spoken English—



compiled with Mike McCarthy, and the *Cambridge Grammar of English* derived from it. There were single-authored books *Keywords in Language and Literacy* (1995), *Investigating English Discourse* (1997), *Vocabulary* (1998), *Language and Creativity* (2004), numerous joint authored books, edited collections, articles, and co-edited series. Ron was a great collaborator. Even by the standards of contemporary academia, he worked with incredible intensity. “Don’t let him out of your sight,” I remember one of his colleagues saying, “he might start writing an article”. But his was a joyful productivity, very different from the gloomy unwilling treadmill of writing primarily for research assessments.

The range and quantity of these works might seem disparate and fragmented, as though Ron just had fingers in very different pies. But there is a noble unifying theme which runs through them all. Ron was a natural democrat and egalitarian, an enemy of unfair elitism and privilege. As language was his academic speciality, he unfailingly viewed it through the prism of these beliefs, shedding their light on every aspect of its study. In education, he was the champion of young dialect speakers, seeking to give them voices in the classroom as well as in the street. In literary stylistics, he wanted to show that there is *literariness* outside the literary canon, and that creativity is not only the property of a privileged few. In corpus linguistics, he wanted everyday spoken colloquial language to take its place alongside written texts, thus changing the description and understanding of what English use is like. Just as in committees of the establishment - with government, assessment panels, universities, learned societies, publishers - he always used his power as much as possible to help others and to further the influence of applied linguistics. Language for Ron was a moving, living force, never static or frozen, and it belonged to all its speakers, not only to a few.

Ron was loyal and active in BAAL throughout his career, not only as chair between 2003 and 2006. Unlike many other leading applied linguists, he stayed with the organisation through all its ups and downs, even when he felt it was going in the wrong direction. BAAL conferences and the whole association will be poorer without him.

I spoke to Ron regularly during the last months of his life. Throughout these very difficult times, he remained cheerful, stoical, philosophical, brave, and—characteristically—always more concerned about others than about himself. A snapshot memory can be of sound as well as sight, and as many others will too, I shall always remember the life-affirming energy, kindness and humour of his voice, and how it left me, every time we spoke, with renewed enthusiasm for everything.

Guy Cook

King’s College London

January 2019



Research and Discussion:

‘Neurodiversity’: an idea whose time has come?

by Dominic Griffiths


The word ‘neurodiversity’ is one that is being heard increasingly often in the fields of psychology, education and disability studies in a number of countries. In the UK context, in 2016, a consortium of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) charities, led by the British Dyslexia Association, won a large government funding grant for a project to develop mainstream school and college teachers’ capacities to work with and teach the diversity of learners in their classes through a series of one-day ‘train the trainer’ events held across England under the title ‘Teaching for Neurodiversity’(TfN). So what does this term mean and why might it offer an important development in thinking for teachers and speech and language therapists working in and with schools and colleges, as well for teachers, young people and families that they work with?

What is the genesis of this idea? The term ‘neurodiversity’ was originally coined by the sociologist Judy Singer, who identifies with the label Asperger syndrome, to reframe the term ‘Autistic Spectrum Disorder’ that she considered deficit-laden. In her book chapter, *“Why can’t you be normal for once in your life?”: From a ‘problem with no name’ to the emergence of a new category of difference*’ she states that “‘Neurologically Different’ represents a new addition to the familiar political categories of class/gender/race and will augment the insights of the social model of disability” (Singer, 1999, p. 64).

At this stage the term ‘neurodiverse’ was just used within the autistic community to define themselves in relation to non-autistic people, whom they labelled ‘neurotypical’. However, many people would consider a wider use of the term appropriate. As Baker (2011) has suggested “Limiting neurodiversity only to those with autism and related differences ... resembles limiting ethnic diversity to discourse about individuals of African-American descent” (p.22). Moreover, the Developmental Adult Neuro-Diversity Association (DANDA) insist that the term neurodiversity can cover a number of ‘recognised conditions’ and the research suggests that many people who have these conditions “also have problems associated with other ... conditions”.

This approach might be termed the ‘special educational needs (SEN) conception of neurodiversity’. It is worth noting, however, that the DANDA discussion of the term seems to highlight the issue of ‘problems’ and might be regarded as a rather deficit-based approach. This conceptualisation, like the autistic conception of neurodiversity is still fundamentally binary, with ‘neurodiverse’ standing as a proxy term for ‘neurodivergent’ (diverging from the norm), as opposed to ‘neurotypical’: a point noted in Walker’s (2014) ‘Neurocosmopolitan’ blog. There are critics of this rather binary approach. Runswick-Cole (2014), for example, notes that “implicit in the construction of neurodiverse and neurotypical populations is the homogenisation of both populations”(p.1126).

An alternative to this is an approach, which rejects these constructed SEN categories (e.g. Dyslexia, ADHD, Dyspraxia etc), whose boundaries are somewhat arbitrary, and replaces them with an acknowledgement of the universality of neurodiversity. In this conception each of these so-called SENs can be considered to be merely one end of a naturally occurring range of human variability. Significantly, Jones and Kindersley (2013) suggest that entirely ‘pure’ cases of



any specific learning difficulty (SpLD) are unlikely and suggest that using the concept of neurodiversity is possibly a more useful way of capturing individuals' unique patterns of strengths and weaknesses. They conclude that "Essentially, as human beings are diverse in their physical make-up, so they are diverse in their cognitive make-up and there is an infinite variety of combinations" (p.23). This viewpoint might be termed the 'universal conception of neurodiversity'.

So what are the implications of adopting neurodiversity as a concept to inform teaching and learning in the classroom? The 'Teaching for Neurodiversity' training attempted to move teachers' thinking about learners beyond traditional labels for SEN, not least through seeing the messiness of these categorisations, the overlaps of 'symptoms' and arbitrary cut-off points for diagnoses and to move them to a position of considering each child as a unique individual (the 'universal conception'). This conception focuses, instead upon 'dimensions' of learners' cognitive and affective profiles. So, for example, instead of labelling someone under the homogenised SEN categories of 'dyslexia' and 'autism' it is more useful to assess which individual dimensions of language, literacy and communications are stronger and weaker in that person. This can then inform teaching to their individual strengths, whilst seeking to minimise their difficulties, rather than looking to fit them into an SEN category.

This approach informed the TfN training project and findings from the evaluation of the TfN programme's impact (Griffiths et al., 2017) suggest some promising results:

- Teachers reported more holistic views of individual learners in their classes and being better able, therefore, to personalise their learning
- Teachers working with learners already given SEN labels, such as dyslexia, autism etc., reported beginning to teach beyond the label and, in doing so, responding to otherwise under-acknowledged elements of their learning profiles
- Teachers were better able to notice patterns of strengths and difficulties of children who were struggling but did not have a diagnosis and to act upon this knowledge
- Teachers reported beginning to use SpLD-friendly methods, such as multisensory teaching with learners without diagnoses of SpLDs and, sometimes, with the whole class
- Teachers reported that teaching to learners' strengths was leading to better engagement with learning

It is perhaps significant that leading scholars of language 'disorders' (Charles Hulme and Margaret Snowling, 2009, in the field of dyslexia and Dorothy Bishop, 2010 in the field of Specific Language Impairment) after a lifetime's research work, had previously come to the same conclusion: that considering dimensions of individuals' cognitive profiles was probably more useful than assigning them to traditional 'syndrome' categories

Neurodiversity may actually be an idea whose time has come, and the adoption of the 'universal conception of neurodiversity' to inform teaching and learning and in supporting people with speech, language and communication needs holds much promise. At a more profound level, the concept of 'universal neurodiversity' offers the possibility of a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1962) in the way we conceptualise human difference.



The author

Dominic Griffiths is a Senior Lecturer in Inclusive Education at Manchester Metropolitan University and is a BAAL member

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New resource:

Free on-line grammar pattern resource

by Susan Hunston

Teachers and researchers may be interested in a free, on-line resource that lists complementation patterns for adjectives, nouns and verbs in English. The resource can be found at www.collinsdictionary.com/grammar.patterns.

The web-site gives access to all the grammar patterns identified in the Cobuild dictionaries for adjectives, nouns and verbs. For each word class there is a list of patterns. Examples of patterns are:

ADJ that (adjective followed by a that-clause, e.g. 'She was happy that...')

N from n (noun followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with *from*, e.g. 'His departure from...')

V n in n (verb followed by a noun phrase, then a prepositional phrase beginning with *in*, e.g. 'They assisted him in his efforts')

Within each pattern there is a list of 'meaning groups', indicating the main meanings associated with the pattern. Clicking on a meaning group gives examples and a list of words found with that pattern.

For example, from the website you might click on 'Nouns' in the Table of contents. From the list of patterns, you might then click on 'N to-inf'. You then see an explanation of the pattern and a list of meaning groups: 'desire', 'arrangement', 'promise', 'proposal', 'attempt', 'ability', 'permission', 'request', 'responsibility', 'reason', 'tendency' and 'claim'. If you click on, say, the 'desire' group, you are taken to six examples and a list of 35 nouns used with this pattern and with the same general meaning. These include *aim, ambition, desire, eagerness, impatience, longing, need, wish* and *yearning*.

The site includes a lot of information and is the most comprehensive listing of complementation patterns available. It lists about 50 adjective patterns, over 60 noun patterns and about 100 verb patterns. Although no listing of words can ever be exhaustive, because of geographical variation and change of time, the lists are remarkably extensive. For example, the pattern **V n in n** lists over 150 verbs divided into 16 meaning groups. As a result, the lists go beyond the very frequent and obvious. For example, as well as 'break something in pieces' or 'fold something in half', the relevant list includes *carve, chop, crack, cut, divide, rip, slice, snap, sort, split* and *tear*.

Unfortunately, the site is currently not searchable by word, so you have to start with the pattern and arrive at the word, rather than vice-versa. We hope to improve the searchability in the future.

Grammar patterns can be used in teaching and in lexicography. They are a resource for describing how words are used. Awareness of pattern is not just a question of accuracy; knowing about patterns can give learners more flexibility in their language use. Various kinds of pattern description have been used in learner's dictionaries since Hornby's work on the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, and they are particularly prominent in on-line dictionaries such as the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (www.ldoceonline.com). A project page giving some ideas about the use of patterns can be found at <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/edacs/departments/englishlanguage/research/projects/patterngrammar/index.aspx>



and there are some videos available from www.collinsdictionary.com/grammar.patterns.

The Grammar Patterns website is a development of research undertaken as part of the Cobuild project. Grammar patterns originally appeared in the 1995 Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (London: HarperCollins) and the prototypes for the current website were the two publications Collins Cobuild Grammar Patterns 1: Verbs and 2: Nouns and Adjectives (1996 and 1998 HarperCollins) written by Gill Francis, Susan Hunston and Elizabeth Manning. Those publications are now out of print, though much in demand, and we are delighted that HarperCollins has been able to make the material freely available. The website materials are essentially the same as in the books, though considerable updating has been undertaken by Gill Francis.

The concept of pattern grammar was developed in a monograph (*Pattern Grammar: a corpus-driven approach to the lexical grammar of English*) by Susan Hunston and Gill Francis published by Benjamins in 2000. The idea of pattern proved useful to research, for example by delimiting search terms in academic discourse studies. More recently, exciting possibilities have arisen for combining the notion of grammar pattern and that of construction grammar (see, for example, a 2018 *Applied Linguistics* article 'Pattern, construction and local grammar: the case of evaluation' by Susan Hunston and Hang Su). We hope that having the resource available free of charge and accessible electronically will enable both research and practitioner communities to make use of it and develop it in new areas.



PhD research report:

A qualitative study on first language speakers of English in Sri Lanka

by Mihiri Jansz

It is with great pleasure that I share more details about my study, for which the best poster prize was awarded to me at the BAAL 2018 conference.

My poster was titled “The problem of being a first language speaker of English in Sri Lanka” which was a depiction of one major area of my postgraduate study, that of “ownership of language”. I was inspired to do this study through my own quandary regarding my ‘ownership’ of English as a Sri Lankan national. The literature (Canagarajah, 1999) seemed to justify my own vigorously stated claims, that since English was my first language (L1), I was a native speaker of English. I was then curious about how other L1 speakers of English saw themselves and whether they wished to stake a ‘claim’ for English. I was particularly interested in this, in light of the high status of English both locally and globally (Vandrick, 2014; Rambukwella, 2018)

My study is qualitative with a critical realist orientation. I applied the research design proposed by Maxwell (2012) in this study. I used in-depth interviews with eight participants (all names used in this report are pseudonyms) using a semi structured interview guide to generate data for this study. I secured a maximum variation sample, recruiting participants who varied in terms of age, socio-economic background, other first language spoken, ethnicity and gender. I used the framework of “imposed identities”, “assumed identities” and “negotiable identities” as proposed by Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) to analyze the data.


I approached ‘ownership’ of language through the labels associated with it. I asked my participants questions such as the two given below:

Has anyone ever questioned your status/label of first language speaker of English? Can you tell me about any specific incident?

What is your mother tongue? Explore

Contrary to my own strong ownership positioning which at times was a defiant challenge to the whiteness marker of English (Park, 2015), my participants’ perspectives on how they would label themselves and consequently their ownership of an L1 English speaker identity fall into four broad categories: Firstly, a complete assurance of the identity; secondly, a frustrated desire to own the identity; thirdly, an acceptance of some of the labels and finally a rejection of the labels.

The participant who most identified with English was Iris (60). She staked her claim mainly through an essentialist ethnolinguistic discourse regarding language and identity, that the language of Burghers (descendants of Portuguese and Dutch Colonists) is English. I concluded that her identity negotiation as a strong “assumed identity” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) and that Iris is untroubled by other discourses that label English as not native to Sri Lanka or by its “whiteness marker” (Park, 2015).



However, essentialist discourses are not always adequate to claim such a secure identity as shown by Rekha (19). Rekha identifies as Burgher, as does Iris. Yet, Rekha feels she cannot claim English, even though she wants to, see below an excerpt from Rekha's interview:

Rekha: but ...er... personally I feel well since it's a most used language I was, at home I mean it's like my first language, technically it shouldn't be. But, yes...

Interviewer: It shouldn't be? Why shouldn't it?

Rekha: (very softly)...I don't know? (louder, hesitant) - coz I'm more Sinhala? That's what people say or that coz I'm living in Sri Lanka, everyone expects the first language to be Sinhalese

Rekha's response illuminates the other powerful discourse regarding language and identity in Sri Lanka; that to be Sri Lankan one must be an L1 speaker of Sinhala. Thus, Rekha's identity is an "imposed identity", since she feels that others impose the notion on her that as a Sri Lankan she cannot claim an L1 English speaker identity.

Among participants (Kanthi, 80 and Desmond, 72) of a certain generation (those born before independence from the British Empire was won in 1948) were comfortable to be called L1 speakers of English but were vehement in rejecting the mother tongue (MT) label. Their assertion is that English is not 'Sri Lankan' and therefore was not their MT. Yet, because they grew up speaking English, they were L1 speakers of English. Their assertion of Sinhala as their MT, even though their primary language competence was in English, is in line with how MT is associated with emotional attachment and the "embodiment of that culture, ethnicity or sense of nationalism" (Mills, 2004, p. 166).

Finally, it seemed that a majority of my participants (Gerald, 60; Azhani, 40; Laksham, 40; Kelum, 27) though they had been speaking English from an early age, it was not an L1 they identified with. The reasons for this rejection of English had a range of reasons, for example, the need to distance themselves from the 'elite' and 'privilege' markers of English, and the perception that English was not Sri Lankan. Depending on their proficiency in the language associated with their ethnicity or other language spoken, and their own agency in resisting positionings these participants could be said to have assumed identities (Gerald; Lakshman; Kelum), or negotiable identity (Azhani).

However, while these participants reject an intimate ownership of English in the forms of L1 and/or MT labels, they do not reject being 'English speakers'.

One of the main conclusions I draw, is that there is no L1 speaker of English imagined community (Anderson, 2006) that L1 speakers of English identify with. Rather, they identify with a more elusive "English Speaker in Sri Lanka" community that may not have a strong biological age of acquisition association. Given this conclusion, I believe there are possible implications for English language teaching in Sri Lanka, particularly in relation to which type of imagined community learners identify with and consequently the types of language teaching material that should be used. It would be of significance if, as these L1 speakers reject English being Sri Lankan, L2 speakers have the same notion. Therefore, there is scope for further study regarding the identity of English speakers in Sri Lanka.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the guidance of my supervisors Prof. Wijeratne and Dr. Rassool on this project.

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BAAL/Cambridge University Press Seminar:

(In)Formal Second Language Learning: Integrating Informal Practices into Formal Contexts

(University of Oxford, Department of Education, 23-24 August 2018)

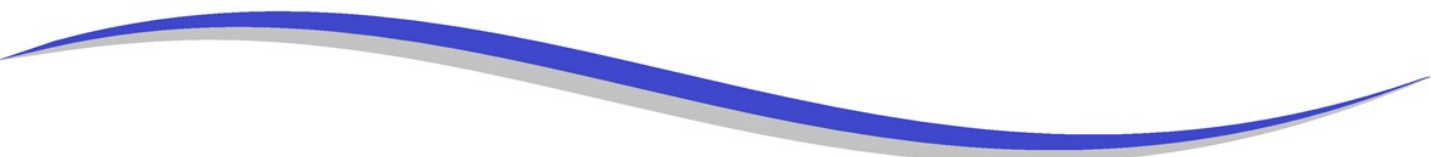
The seminar, organised by Henriette L. Arndt from the University of Oxford and Christina Lyrigkou from the Open University, brought together researchers and education practitioners from across Europe (and beyond) to engage in collaborative dialogue about the emergent, innovative field of informal second language learning (ISLL). The central topic for discussion was whether, and how, insights from ISLL research could be applied to formal language learning and teaching.

Altogether, there were 45 seminar participants including graduate students, researchers, e-learning professionals, teachers, and teacher educators from institutions around the UK and 10 other countries. The seminar featured four presentations, given by invited keynote speakers who are experts in the field of ISLL. Video excerpts from all four keynote presentations will be made available for some time on the conference website: <https://informall2learning.wordpress.com/2018-conference/>

In the first keynote, Geoffrey Sockett (Paris Descartes University, France) gave a broad introduction to informal second language learning (or, as he calls it, the “Online Informal Learning of English” [OILE]) and what is known about it so far, drawing on his own research and that of others. In the afternoon, Meryl Kusyk (Karlsruhe University of Education, Germany) reported on the outcome of her recent doctoral research project on informal learning of English among university students in Germany and France. On the second day, Liss Kerstin Sylvén (University of Gothenburg, Sweden) gave an introduction to her work on “Extramural English” practices in Sweden and their effects on learners’ written production, receptive vocabulary and school grades. In the final keynote, Huw Jarvis (founder and editor of www.TESOLacademic.org) gave a historical overview of research on the role of technology in second language learning and talked about implications of research findings for teaching practice.

In addition to the keynote presentations, the programme also featured many interactive elements, including a teaching workshop, poster presentations, a panel discussion, and breakout discussion groups. The objective of this two-day conference was to promote as much collaborative dialogue as possible about informal second language learning practices outside the classroom, whether and how such practices can be integrated into formal learning settings, as well as the challenges associated with such an endeavour. The objective was achieved, as researchers and practitioners from various backgrounds were brought together for the first time to clearly define the emerging field of informal second language learning, discuss appropriate theoretical frameworks, situate their individual work in the wider field and help create an agenda for future research.

One of the main conclusions of the seminar was that engaging with an L2 outside the classroom is the reality for many language users, nowadays more than ever before. Questions were raised, however, as to the role of intentionality in informal second language learning and to define more explicitly what does and does not constitute



‘informal’ practices. It was acknowledged that there is high intercultural and individual variation in these practices, and that, for this reason, definitions need to be highly specific and contextualised. Discussions were also held around the need for a unifying theoretical framework for ISLL and how it links to other research areas within applied linguistics, such as L2 acquisition, learner autonomy, and computer-assisted language learning. Further areas for research in the field were identified, among which were:

- further work on mapping informal second language practices, particularly in non-European contexts and target languages other than English
- further studies on the relationship of informal practices with variables beyond lexicogrammatical proficiency, such as language learning motivation, self-efficacy, language learning enjoyment, and anxiety
- explorations of ways to encourage students’ engagement in informal language practices beyond formal learning contexts

Finally, the central practical aim of the seminar was the creation of a network for researchers and practitioners interested in ISLL, to facilitate continued interaction and collaboration beyond the event. Several initiatives are now under way: First, a JISC mailing list is being set up and the conference website will be re-designed to serve as a central place for sharing relevant information about the network. Second, several delegates are working together to organise regular ‘digital roundtable meetings’ as a way for researchers to present, discuss, and receive feedback on their research projects, particularly work in progress. Finally, there is also an initiative to explore the possibility of holding another conference such as this BAAL/CUP seminar, at one of the keynote speakers’ institutions, in one or two years’ time.



BAAL Health and Science Communication SIG workshop

Mixing it up: multi-media, methods and modalities

**(School of Education, Communication & Society, King's College London, 21st
November 2018)**


The Health and Science Communication SIG held its fourth annual event “Mixing it up: multi-methods, media and modalities” on 21 November 2018 at King’s College London. As research into health and science communication continues to expand, we felt it was timely to examine the variety of methods and modalities that researchers in the field are working with. The goal of this workshop was thus to showcase research that analyses multimodal data, that adopts mixed methods approaches or that is in some way innovative with the methods it employs. The event aimed to bring together researchers from multiple disciplines to discuss the challenges and opportunities that variety in methods can pose.

The workshop attracted 40 participants from the UK and abroad (including Spain, Poland, Italy and Austria) with backgrounds in linguistics, discourse analysis, psychology, public health, medical education and sociology. The day was organised around two plenary talks, six parallel sessions, a poster presentation session over lunch and the HSC AGM.

In the first plenary talk, Jeff Bezemer (Professor of Communication at UCL Institute of Education) presented on how the successful accomplishment of healthcare is contingent on semiotic work. Using examples from ethnographic research and video-recordings of the work of surgeons, Jeff showed us how meaning making in clinical work emerges from semiotic relationships in a truly multimodal domain. In the second plenary talk, Gabriella Rundblad (Reader in Applied Linguistics at King’s College London) focussed on a 10-year programme of research investigating the communication of risk in relation to potential contaminants in the water supply. Using mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, Gabriella demonstrated how lexical items in risk communication (e.g. *low*, *insignificant*, *standard*) hold different meanings for the public and for health professionals, thus affecting public reactions and compliance to health advice.

The six parallel sessions were grouped around the themes of: 1) social media, 2) media & corpus analysis, 3) mental health & online forums, 4) health literacy, 5) health professional communication, and 6) multimodal resources. The variety of sessions reflected the theme of the workshop, with each session focussing on a different approach, method or type of data.

Many of the presentations used online data. For example, in the social media session, we heard how expertise and credibility is constructed through interdiscursive, multimodal means on YouTube, and we saw how corpus analysis of social media data can be combined with considerations from Artificial Intelligence. In the mental health & online forums session, presenters discussed the challenges and ethics of doing online ethnography, as well as the use of metaphors, metonymy and advice giving in forums for parents and carers of those with mental health problems. Sticking with written data, in the media and corpus session, a common thread was how women are represented in



the UK press. We heard about gendered discourses of obesity, framings of ‘normal birth’ and representations of populations affected by the recent Zika outbreak.

Several of the presentations examined communication involving health professionals. For example, in the health literacy session, we heard about tailoring linguistic and semiotic choices in risk information to culturally diverse audiences, about developing protocols for multilingual patient education videos, and about the interactional practices of clinicians when using ‘Easy Read’ texts with patients with intellectual disabilities. In the health professional communication session, presenters discussed issues such as training for open disclosure conversations, multilingual practices in therapy sessions and how multimodal channels in teamwork can help to improve patient safety. Finally, the session on multimodal resources explored how people use different technologies and artefacts to negotiate their identities and express their experiences.

Much of the discussion on the day revolved around the great diversity of approaches represented at the workshop, and many fruitful conversations were had about effective research design and the pros and cons of different (combinations of) methods.

Using the hashtag #healthsci18, the workshop also had a healthy representation on Twitter. To keep up-to-date about future events and to share relevant information with the ever-growing HSC SIG community, join our mailing list: <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=BAAL-HEALTHSCI>



BAAL Language Learning and Teaching SIG

Language teaching and learning in unstable times, and in changing political landscapes

(University of Southampton, July 12-13 2018)

The 14th Annual Conference of the BAAL Language Learning and Teaching SIG was held at the University of Southampton on July 12 & 13 2018. The theme of the conference was *Language teaching and learning in unstable times, and in changing political landscapes*. The plenary speakers were:

Tony Liddicoat, University of Warwick

National security as a motivation in language-in-education policy

John Gray, IOE University College London

The neoliberal recalibration of language teacher identity — possibilities for a ‘great refusal’?

Prue Holmes, Durham University

Intercultural pedagogies for language learning in “unstable” and “stable” contexts: Some affordances, challenges, and complementarities

We accepted 64 papers and 10 posters, and the final programme included 54 papers and 8 posters. We had 91 participants at the conference.

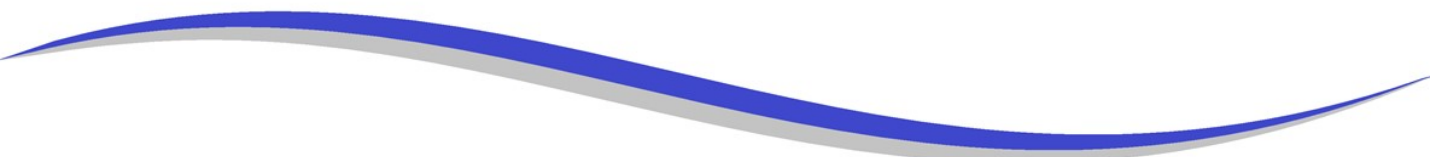
We emphasised the role of the conference as a valuable experience for PhD students and early career researchers in the LLT area of Applied Linguistics. We were able to offer 6 students scholarships, and managed to secure University of Southampton funding for a further 8 PhD students from Southampton. We arranged two lunchtime sessions specifically for PhD student networking:

PhD Forum, an open discussion and Q&A session led by Ros Mitchell and Adriana Patino;

Meet the editors, a session on writing for publication with Norbert Pachler, Julia Hüttner and Niall Rundle.

The conference evaluation highlighted the provision for PhD students as a positive feature, along with the plenary speakers, the variety of interpretations on the conference theme, food and refreshments, and the organisation on the ground. The key negative feature was the temperature in the conference venue and the accommodation: the conference took place in the July heatwave, and there was no air-conditioning.

We encountered a number of challenges in running this conference. First, the abstract deadline was in the March period of industrial action in the USS universities and this seemed to affect the number of submissions: we extended the deadline from 16 March to 22 March, and received 22 submissions in this period. Second, despite an active



publicity and social media team, take up (in terms of abstract submissions) varied across the UK universities with strong Applied Linguistics Language Teaching and Learning research centres. It is important to communicate with specific academic and research centre contexts in HEIs, in addition to communication through established lists and networks. Third, BAAL SIGs are increasing in number and offering a range of conferences, seminars, and workshops relevant to researchers in language teaching and learning, while funding opportunities for conference participation within universities are static or declining.

We would like to thank the generous sponsorship extended to the conference by the following organisations:

Confucius Institute at Southampton University

BAAL LLT SIG

Multilingual Matters

University of Southampton Modern Language and Linguistics

University of Southampton Humanities Graduate School

University of Southampton Academic Centre for International Students.

Richard Kiely, Conference Chair, on behalf of the organising committee



Book Reviews

Pinner, R. S. (2016). *Reconceptualising authenticity for English as a global language*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. ISBN 978-1-78309-566-7. 199 pages.

In a world where non-native users of English substantially outnumber native ones, Pinner argues, in this sophisticated yet accessible book, for the need to revisit and reconceptualize the notion of 'authenticity'.

The *raison d'être* of the book is that 'authenticity', a long-standing and foundational concept in the field of language learning and teaching, has been seen largely as a linguistic trait and as a product of a target culture. As Pinner explains, traditional definitions have tended to oversimplify authenticity as a thing based on the origin of the teaching materials and the extent to which this has been produced by native speakers of so-called 'natural languages'. Instead, and as convincingly argued by Pinner, authenticity needs to be reconceptualized as a fluid and contextually contingent concept suited to the multiple ways in which English is used in today's globalized world.


In Chapter 1, Pinner makes a case for the central role the concept of 'authenticity' has played in language learning and teaching, arguing for the timeliness of reconceptualizing it in relation to shifting societal conditions and reconfigurations of language learners and users. He states his aim of the book as being to 'replace the "classic" definition with a reconceptualised version, which is more inclusive to other varieties of English' (p. 2).

Chapter 2 offers numerous sophisticated reflections on the existential, philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of authenticity. Pinner expounds what some of history's great thinkers, including Rousseau, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Sartre, have had to say about authenticity and related concepts. Pinner suggests that one reason why existentialist philosophers might have struggled with the concept of authenticity is that, with some exceptions, they approached the Self from a stable and essentialized vantage point.

The role and status of English as a Global Language is the subject of Chapter 3. While Pinner recognizes and is appreciative of the many moves the field has seen away from simplistic native/non-native speaker dichotomies, he believes such moves have not gone far enough. He argues for the need to further challenge simplistic dichotomies, given the abundance of people and contexts that do not fit neatly into these. He offers the example of children brought up with different languages, raising the question of what it means for such speakers to communicate authentically.

The notion of authenticity itself and how it relates to language teaching and learning is not substantively engaged with until Chapter 4. This chapter offers a highly insightful and comprehensive account of the history and development of the concept of authenticity in the field, highlighting the many contradictions of extant definitions. This chapter will be particularly useful for readers seeking an overview of the development of the concept.

In Chapter 5, Pinner sets out to carve out his alternative conceptualization of authenticity, which is to convey it as a continuum. The authenticity continuum, which views authenticity as a dynamic process in multifaceted layers, signifies that 'multiple cultures, multilingualism and diversity are given a more central place in the language classroom' (p. 130). Authenticity is approached as a complex dynamic construct that can only be understood by examining it from social, individual and contextual dimensions, in relation to actual people.



Recognizing that English is rarely a question of either or, Chapter 6 moves on to consider the notion of authenticity in bilingual education. As Pinner rightly points out, bilingual education, in whatever form, is becoming the norm in many contexts across the world. Discussing the examples of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction), Pinner suggests that authenticity is relevant not in the sense of peppering the teaching with texts from the target culture, but in terms of relating it to a sense of communicative purpose that goes beyond the immediate context of the classroom.

The role of new media, and its increasingly entrenched presence in contemporary life, is the topic of Chapter 7. Pinner explores how the increased exposure to and opportunities for communicative exchange that transcends national and linguistic borders has significant implications for authenticity.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 8, summarises the main points made in the book and reiterates the need for reconceptualizing authenticity. It finishes by outlining some useful steps towards a new research agenda.

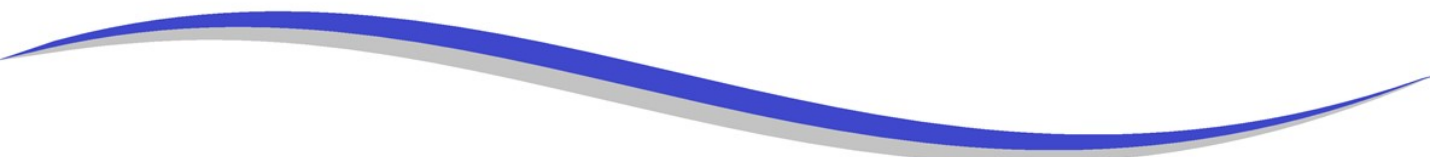
This is a clever and horizon-expanding book with a lot to offer readers. It gives an insightful and comprehensive review of debates around authenticity in language teaching and learning while suggesting a new way forward that is less Anglocentric and less static. The book is written in a lively, engaging and in many places entertaining, way with ample examples to concretise at times complex lines of argument. While on the whole accessible to a broad audience, some of the more complex ideas in the book might be more easily followed by readers well-versed in the literature, whether postgraduate students or scholars working in the field.

Perhaps the only thing that nagged this particular reviewer was one assumption that appeared to remain unquestioned. This relates to the extent to which identity (and by implication authenticity) is relevant to speakers themselves. Is it always potentially relevant in all contexts, both inside and outside of the classroom? Certainly in EMI contexts, which Pinner briefly discusses in Chapter 6, English appears to be used mainly as a pragmatic tool and not as something that's necessarily relevant to either identity or authenticity. Notwithstanding that this question remaining unanswered, this is an eminently well-written book, with an abundance of insightful reflections, to which it is impossible to do justice in this short review.

Anna Kristina Hultgren, The Open University

Gray, J. and Morton, T. (2018). *Social interaction and English language teacher identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. ISBN (eBook) 978-0-7486-5612-7. 200 pages.

Part of the *Studies in social interaction* series,¹ this book fittingly positions itself within the data-grounded exploration of identity through discourse, in this case of English language teachers without their students. Pre-service lesson planning interactions among CELTA trainers and trainees, research interviews with ESOL teachers on individual learning plans, group discussions on English varieties used by Spanish primary and secondary school teachers, a group discussion among teachers engaged in 'Action for ESOL', and a conversation between a gay teacher and an interviewer on LGBT representation in EFL materials present the varied and insightful selection of interactional contexts from which transcribed audio data are analysed, both to critically shed light on existing and



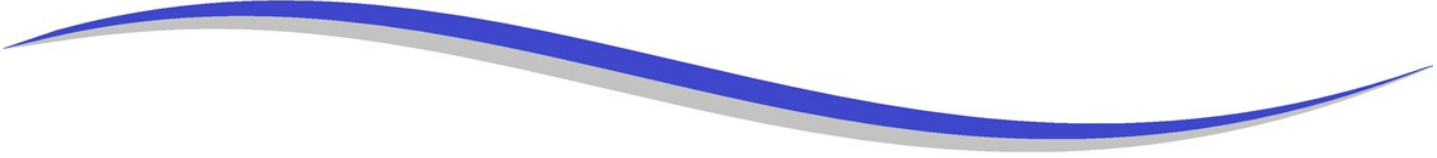
emerging themes within Applied Linguistics/TESOL and to illustrate methodological approaches to social interaction, in keeping with the aims of the series.

The data chapters are preceded by three introductory, theoretically oriented, and professionally informed chapters which make a case for the timely relevance of teacher identity, and of English language teacher identity in particular, the troubled and yet persistent conceptualization of identity in general, and its closely bound relationship with social interaction as a methodological concern. The timeliness of teacher identity is substantiated by a burgeoning interest among scholars and teacher educators, as evidenced by a growing body of literature, set by the authors against the political backdrop of a seemingly pervasive and rampant process of marketization of the education sector internationally. This is argued to complicate the process of negotiation of professional identities by teachers, whose pedagogical values, ideals, and practices can conflict with the increasingly bureaucratized demands of a performance measurement culture in which these are 'neoliberally recalibrated' (to paraphrase the authors). Crucially, this starts out from a place of training itself, as teacher education courses are observed to prioritize content and practice espousing and producing 'the effective practitioner' to the neglect of theoretical concerns which might inform the development and ongoing negotiation of identity as a useful 'organising principle' for teachers in their working and everyday lives.

Any such lack of attention in the field of TESOL is certainly redressed by the book itself, which includes a tightly packed theoretical overview of the concept of identity, drawing heavily on the work of Stuart Hall in the first instance to briefly chart its course from Enlightenment reasoning through to structuralist and poststructuralist theory (from essentialism to the constraints of social structures to an ultimate privileging of agency). While the authors insert examples from the context of English language teaching, as in the case of the well-worn argument of native-speakerism, for which they provide illustration of counter-narrative as a form of deconstruction, the theory on identity and discourse to which it then turns remains somewhat dense due to its very comprehensiveness (which could alternatively be viewed as a positive).

While acknowledging a commonly accepted view of identity as dynamic and multifaceted among discourse analysts of various ilk, the subject is initially broached in typical reference to CDA and CA, the latter of which is broadened to accommodate 'impure' approaches, i.e., less constrained by its bottom-upwardness yet mindful of the details of talk. Such an approach to identity as shown to be constructed in the workings of interaction while analytically informed by beyond is adopted by the authors themselves in their data chapters. First, however, they provide a more in-depth discussion of discourse methodology to further include perspectives and approaches informed by sociolinguistic, narrative, positioning, and epistemic theory, foreshadowing their relevance to the interactional contexts to be analysed.

Each of the five data chapters, again, begins with an in-depth overview of theory relevant (to a greater or lesser extent) to the anticipated findings, before attending to the details of talk from the professional contexts of interaction mentioned at the outset of this review. Although the authors make it clear that they are not pursuing a CA agenda, thereby freeing themselves up from its methodological constraints and allowing for an eclectic mix of approaches to analysis, much of the discussion of the discourse excerpts appears somewhat descriptive. Depending on one's own methodological predilections, it could therefore appear rather lacking in analytic focus and



systematicity, despite being highly theorised. On the other hand, the description arguably lends itself well to the narrative approach adopted in several of the chapters.

Given that the authors aim to illustrate the way in which English language teacher identity can be analysed by closely attending to what the participants are actually doing in interaction (rather than privileging the content of what they are saying thematically), they perhaps invite the critique that some of their findings, which are critically discussed within the wider context of Applied Linguistics/TESOL, appear to conflict somewhat with the methodological underpinnings of their analysis. One such example might be the case of applying membership categorisation analysis in a chapter on non-native teacher identity to data that are schematically presented according to pre-existing classifications from the literature (although the authors do not claim these to have been oriented to, as such, by the participants). Another would be the link that is established in the conclusions between future selves and teacher accounts of past learning experiences, which rather presupposes a thematically derived interpretation of the data as real rather than an analytic observation of what is being accomplished by the participants in their talk when they narrate. Perhaps this serves to underscore the potential conflict between agenda (in this case, one of advocating the case for identity in professional training and development) and methodology, to which one might draw parallels with the problematization of identity itself, a concept which, as the authors note, is essentialized in pursuit of advocacy in a way that is often at odds with its deconstruction.

¹ Published by Edinburgh University Press and edited by Steve Walsh, Paul Seedhouse, and Christopher Jenks.

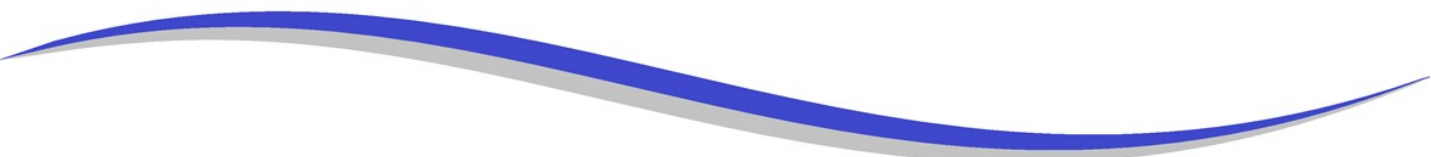
Marion Nao

Tieken-Boon van Ostade, I. and Percy, C. (Eds). (2017). *Prescription and tradition in language. Establishing standards across time and space*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. ISBN-13:978-1-78309-650-3. 385 pages.

In the course of their histories, languages around the world have undergone different forms of standardisation processes. While for some languages the process of standardisation can be traced back to the Renaissance, for other languages issues related to standardisation emerged relatively recently. No matter what the origin of a language is, there appears to exist a perceived need for *prescription*, or the attempt to establish some rules, laying down preferred or "correct" use of language, shaped by linguistic, cultural, ideological, political, educational and other factors (see e.g., Edwards, 2012).

Having emerged as the outcome of the conference held in 2013 at Leiden University Centre for Linguistics, the title of this book is identical with the conference title, "Prescription and Tradition in Language". All the chapters were written by scholars specialising in different aspects of standardisation processes across a variety of languages and coming from diverse backgrounds: teachers, language learners and language planners.

Quoting one of the authors, Pam Peters, it seems right to say that this book "[...] opens the door to a remarkable range of issues in establishing a standard language and/or language standards" (p. 355). Several authors question the meaning of "a standard language" and whether prescription emerges as the result of the top-down or bottom-up processes. Across the chapters in the anthology, varied aspects of language standardisation ranging from the distant past to the modern day are addressed.



This collection of articles consists of individual case studies, crystallising key interrelationships between linguistic standardisation and prescription as well as related ideas, concepts and practices. Among the key themes raised in these case studies are: *historical theme* (e.g., France and England), questioning whether different historical motives and contexts produce different manifestations of present day prescriptivism; *modern theme*, related to the present day contrastive studies of minority and majority languages as well as the differences in attitudes and the role of the media in shaping the attitudes and beliefs via the use of language; *general/theoretical issues* include the chapters that reflect on the role of linguists and academics in language planning, as well as provide insight into the popular attitudes with regard to language variation.

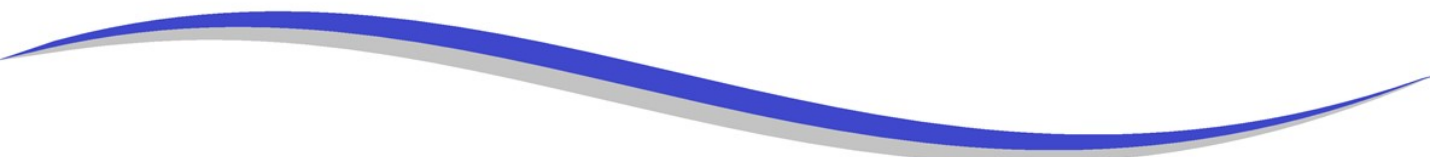
The chapters in the collection are split into four parts that reflect these common overarching themes. The chapters in Part 1 maintain that all language communities to a greater or lesser extent are characterised by multilingualism. This assumption challenges the idealised perspective that the majority of the Western policymakers have. Some of the chapters in Part 1 demonstrate the discrepancies between standard language and a nation, particularly the discrepancies between “grammatical correctness” and “social appropriateness”, which may at times be a cause of confusion both among the native speakers and the learners of a language.

The chapters in Part 2 claim that while in some countries the attempts to prescribe linguistic norms emerged from “above”, through the specially appointed national language academies, in other countries, this was mainly the result of the processes happening from “below”, based on the efforts of the writers of usage guides, sanctioning prescriptive publications with individuals becoming involved in the decision-making process and devising linguistic norms.

The chapters in Part 3 draw on data from large electronic corpora for studying prescriptivism in English usage guides. By drawing on data from the corpora, the authors and publishers have made claims about the usefulness and precision of the usage guides and the way prescriptive texts were received. Part 3 also demonstrates the way scholars and authors of usage guides add rigour to the English prescriptive tradition. Yet, some chapters illustrate the important role that private initiatives and private enterprise, such as Oxford University Press and their publication of Fowler’s *Modern English Language Usage*, continue to play in the prescriptive tradition in English.

Chapters in Part 4 shift the focus to the existing challenges in establishing and maintaining the norms in a politically unstable world. Among the challenges are the changing national borders and their impact on languages and dialects that become included or excluded as a result. Public anxiety with regard to linguistic variation is further intensified through media. For instance, in Russia, there appears to be a sense of threat to the classical linguistic traditions coming from the popular media due to the prominence of English loanwords and “poor quality words” coming from the Russians themselves. In other countries like Macedonia and Lithuania, earlier traditions and oppression have not been forgotten and continue to have an impact on language development and prescription in both countries. In other European countries, such as Spain and the Netherlands, standardisation of minority languages has also caused a number of challenges.

All in all, this anthology provides useful reading for scholars, practitioners and policy makers interested or working in language policy, language planning, variation and change. The book offers the reader a valuable overview of the issues related to standardisation of major and minor languages across the globe. The international group of authors



approaches the overarching issue of standardisation and prescriptivism from different historical, cultural and political perspectives, drawing links between the broader context and specific language(s). What is particularly interesting about this edition is that the authors raise a number of complex questions about standardisation, such as: who decides on language correctness and whose opinion should count; the role of subjective decision making as opposed to objective statistical data drawn from corpora; what the differences between language as a linguistic system and language as a social institution are; whether or not writing and speech should be closely related. In the chapters, the implications of standardisation for the relevant stakeholders are contextualised, but more conclusive answers to the above and other questions are not always provided. This may be explained by the authors of the anthology repeatedly asserting that more studies of various aspects of prescription and its implications are needed.

Even though the book includes many articles on the topic of prescription and tradition in language, there still remain many more aspects and concerns left beyond the scope of this edition. Nonetheless, what this edition suggests is that there is no single straightforward standardisation process or a theory of prescriptivism that could be universally applicable. Standardisation is not a straightforward process, resulting in specific outcomes that language planners may have hoped for. Moving through the chapters of the anthology, it becomes clear that each case is deeply embedded in its own historical, political, economic, social, national and cultural contexts and therefore has to be understood and studied against these specific contexts.

Reference

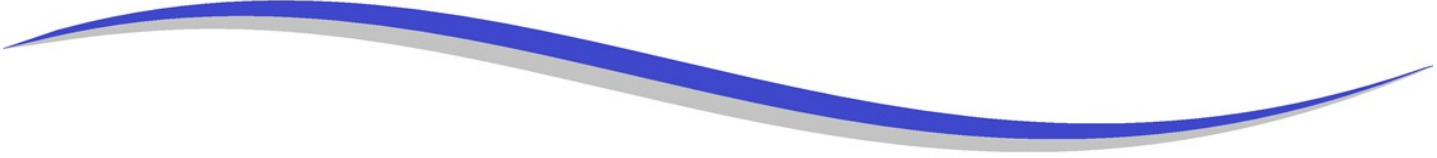
Edwards, J. (2012). Foreword: language, prescriptivism, nationalism – and identity. In Percy, C. and Davidson, M. C. (eds), *The languages of nation: attitudes and norms* (pp. 11-36). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Dina Strong, Birkbeck University of London

Pace-Sigge, M. (2018). *Spreading activation, lexical priming and the Semantic Web. Early psycholinguistic theories, Corpus Linguistics and AI applications*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 3319907182. 135 pages.

In this timely new book, Michael Pace-Sigge explores the legacy of M. Ross Quillian's pioneering 1960's research into machine learning, which provided the basis for several critical concepts in the fields of psycholinguistics, corpus linguistics, and natural language processing (NLP). Pace-Sigge argues that although each of these fields has made use of Quillian's work largely in isolation from the other, all have developed models and concepts which could be of mutual benefit. The book should therefore be read as an act of interdisciplinary knowledge-sharing and bridge-building; and though it is not without shortcomings, it is a valuable and helpful guide to an area of study which will be of interest to many.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first gives a brief overview of the book, describing Quillian's *Teachable Language Comprehender* (TLC) – a theoretical device which can be programmed to understand human language – and some of the key concepts which emerged from this work. It then gives some examples of how more recent researchers have made use of Quillian's ideas. These include Michael Hoey's theory of lexical priming, and Peter Norvig's NLP research, which has been highly influential in the development of the sophisticated speech recognition



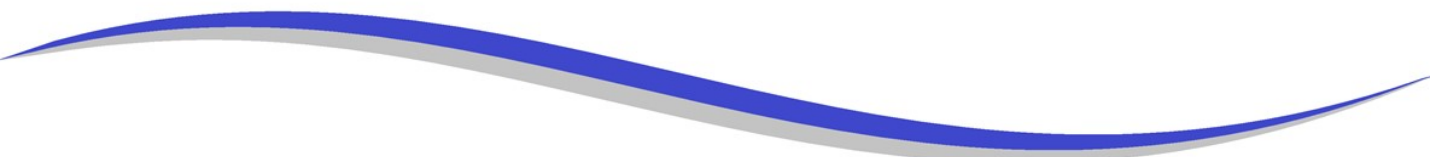
and text prediction software available in today's computers and smartphones.

Chapter 2 describes Quillian's work in detail. His approach involved training software to recognise recurrent patterns in texts, and organise this "knowledge" into a *semantic web* – a network of associated words which together comprise the main aspects of a word's meaning, and manifest its relationships to other concepts. The TLC could then draw on this information in order to process new texts. As the machine encounters words in these texts, their nodes are activated, and related nodes primed. Activation then spreads through the network, facilitating search and retrieval of semantic information. Throughout the book, Pace-Sigge reminds us that Quillian and his colleagues viewed their work not only as models of machine learning, but also as the development of "a theory of language" (p. 7) and human language processing. These ideas are particularly well addressed in this chapter, where the emergence, in Quillian's work, of the concepts of priming and spreading activation are set within the context of their importance to the psycholinguistic work of the 1970's.

One challenge for such an approach is to resolve semantic ambiguity: how can the machine (or the human mind) arrive at the intended sense of a word, when that word has multiple senses? Pace-Sigge presents this issue as driving force in the evolution of the models first developed by Quillian. Chapter 3 focuses on developments in this area. The discussion takes in the integration of knowledge bases, which allow the computer to draw on various types of language information, such as syntax or contextual information, in order to better resolve ambiguities, into computer language comprehenders. Pace-Sigge shows how the resolution of this and other important problems in Quillian's work, such as the question of how to maximise network search efficiency, led to the eventual development of the modern, recurrent neural network-based applications of the present day.

Another recurring issue in Pace-Sigge's book is *lexical priming*. This theory states that encounters with words – productive or receptive – either reinforce or weaken the association between words, syntactic structures, and contexts. Furthermore, these associations are a feature of speech production in that we are primed to produce words in the collocational, syntactic, and contextual sequences with which they are most strongly associated. The author shows how these ideas are a more or less direct development of Quillian's theory of priming, and draws attention to the implication that the similarity between the TLC and the workings of the human mind suggests that NLP applications may reflect human language processing.

One important implication of lexical priming theory, as well as of the success of the essentially lexical, semantic methods devised for teaching computers to understand language, is, according to the author, that formal models of syntax, such as Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar, may not be necessary to an understanding of how humans process language. Indeed, Pace-Sigge draws attention to the fact that Quillian "actively spurns" (p. 14) a role for syntax in his models; and that although later approaches did find a role for syntax as a constraint on word activation, there nevertheless remains a deep scepticism toward Chomskyan views of language in NLP research. In one entertaining section of Chapter 4, which discusses ways in which NLP researchers can learn from linguists and vice-versa, Pace-Sigge discusses Peter Norvig's rebuttal of Chomsky's famous "colourless green ideas sleep furiously" argument. Norvig demonstrated that several of the sentence's unlikely collocations ("colourless green", "green ideas", "ideas sleep"; p. 90) are in fact attested in texts published prior to Chomsky's use of them. Moreover, Norvig demonstrates that the probabilistic lexical models refuted by Chomsky are, in fact, able to demonstrate that



“colourless green ideas sleep furiously” is in fact “several thousand times more probable” than any ungrammatical reconfiguration of the same words (p. 90). This discussion raises a key question: to what extent do language processing applications validate the views of language upon which they are based? Pace-Sigge’s answer is emphatic:

“it appears that the AI researchers have cracked it: grammar, indeed, is not some abstract, fixed, in-built construct. Rather, it is a bag of words, very lexically led and [...] highly probabilistic” (p. 107).

In spite of the strength of this statement, however, Pace-Sigge’s book is not best viewed as a critical examination of the relative merits of different views of language. Such a discussion is beyond its limited scope: it does not explain the gaps between NLP applications and human language abilities in sufficient detail. In particular, it does not sufficiently address the question of whether these shortcomings can be better explained by the absence of those aspects of human experience not yet available to computers – intonation, discourse knowledge, sights, smells, tastes; or by concluding that NLP applications and human language processes are simply different.

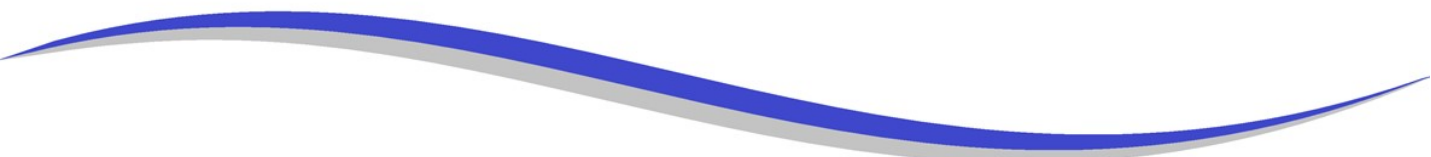
Instead, the book serves best as a primer on the legacy of Quillian’s work, particularly for linguists curious about how lexical network and corpus linguistic approaches have inspired research in the parallel universe of NLP, or for NLP researchers interested in how a better grasp of applied linguistics might inform their own work. One criticism, from this point of view, is that the book is not always entirely successful in explaining the complex concepts which underlie NLP research. To an extent, this is not surprising in a book of this length; these are complex ideas, after all. However, there are occasions when the book’s lack of clarity appears entirely avoidable, such as when psycholinguistic experiments are described in insufficient detail (e.g. p. 68), or when sentences themselves lack clarity (e.g. “the reader will be introduced to either the background or strong interest in linguistic studies and phenomena amongst prominent figures in the current Artificial intelligence (AI) development community”; p. 83). These issues give a sense that the book has not been edited with sufficient rigour.

In general, however, this is a readable and admirably concise book, and a helpful one for applied linguists. It is ironic that one of the most “applied” of all linguistic projects of the past 50 years – that of teaching machines to understand our languages – is generally not well understood by applied linguists. This book will help to bridge that important gap.

Peter Thwaites, Keimyung University, Korea

Harrington, M. (2018). Lexical facility: size, recognition speed and consistency as dimensions of second language vocabulary knowledge. London: Palgrave MacMillan. ISBN 978-1-349-67693-4. 305 pages.

This insightful book presents an innovative L2 vocabulary measure called lexical facility and is divided into two parts. Part one gives background to the lexical facility measure, and part two provides empirical evidence for the construct. The book will be of interest to L2 vocabulary researchers looking to apply new measures to their own research, particularly as lexical facility attempts to combine measuring vocabulary size with measuring mean recognition speed and recognition speed consistency in one construct, which adds a new dimension to previous L2 vocabulary measurement models.



Lexical facility uses scores from an adapted Yes/No test in which prompts are shown consecutively on a screen and responses are timed. Pseudowords that are orthographically or phonologically like real words are presented along with real words. Participants are required to recognize whether a word is real or not as efficiently as possible by hitting a yes or no button under timed conditions, which might elicit whether a word item is known. This has a useful function as incorrectly identified pseudowords enable the researcher to monitor and assess the effects of guessing.

Harrington provides an in-depth and insightful discussion about an often-neglected aspect of Yes/No tests: false guessing, when a participant hits no, although they recognised a test item. The author recognises that measuring false guessing is not particularly sensitive to individual response styles, does not consider the rejection of pseudowords and does not account for the issue of positive guessing results. Nevertheless, one significant limitation noted by the author is that the lexical facility construct might not be suitable for researchers interested in measuring what is known about a word because recognising a word does not necessarily say much about other aspects of word knowledge beyond recognition.

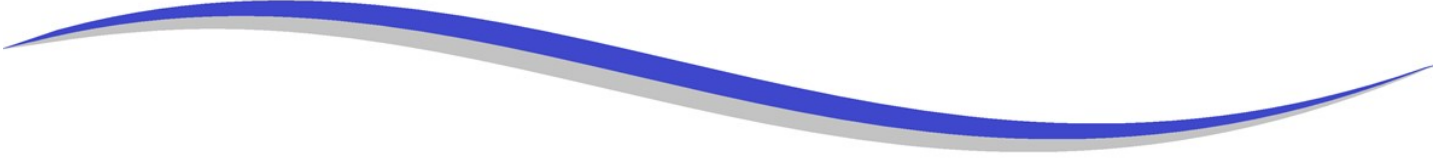
Before addressing the broad content of the book, it will be helpful to outline how the lexical facility construct works. The construct measures vocabulary size knowledge (VKsize), calculated by the proportion of hits to false alarms, and assumes that the more lower frequency words a learner knows the higher their L2 language proficiency is. Focusing on measuring VKsize assumes that frequency-of-occurrence predicts L2 proficiency.

In addition, a mean recognition time (mnRT) from Timed Yes/No test scores is collected. To account for proficiency, the mnRT and its standardisation are used to estimate recognition speed consistency conveyed through the coefficient of variation (CV). CV is the ratio of the standard deviation (SD) of the mnRT to the mean recognition time (RT) in a single value. Lexical facility is unique in using CV as a measure to index L2 vocabulary development, and this differentiates the paradigm from previous models.

Harrington skilfully sets up the research agenda for part two of the book in the penultimate chapter of part one, chapter 4, enabling the reader to see how the model has been applied in practice. The studies in the book test lexical facility in different population samples including L2 vocabulary learners as well as English L1 university students, against standardised test scores and in-house placement tests used in language schools and university. This might be helpful for researchers looking to integrate lexical facility into their own vocabulary testing systems, for example to inform in-house test design, or test-design within internationally standardised tests.

In lexical facility, lower CVs with faster mnRTs are evaluated as a possible index of increasing word recognition skill and by implication better L2 performance. In the final chapter, the findings of the studies presented in previous chapters are compared, and the author concludes VKsize to be the most sensitive individual measure, whereas CV is the least sensitive measure and is shown to be a crude measure of proficiency. However, VKsize and mnRT appear more sensitive than VKsize alone, and there is a reliable relationship between recognition speed and vocabulary size. Although CV does not appear to be an effective component of measuring L2 vocabulary, applying VKsize and mnRT in combination to measure L2 vocabulary could be useful to the L2 vocabulary researcher.

The author concludes by discussing the future of lexical facility, the suitability of the timed Yes/No test, and alternative measurement instruments and applications for (L2) vocabulary instruction and assessment. Harrington acknowledges that as the data collected in studies to support his measurement tool stem from Timed Yes/No tests,



issues with this test format will also be problems for lexical facility.

There are several issues that remain to be addressed in future research, which Harrington outlines. These include a better understanding of how vocabulary size and vocabulary speed vary in correlation with one another during language development and whether there is a link between lexical facility and proficiency as learners progress from beginner to advanced stages of language growth. The author also recognises that caution is needed when applying lexical facility to other languages, particularly non-alphabet-based languages, and L1 interference issues can occur. He also acknowledges dimensions which can affect test score interpretation and use including the degree of task independence, the nature of the vocabulary included as test items, the role of context and the perceived importance of test outcomes.

In sum, *Lexical Facility* provides a robust account of a means to measure L2 vocabulary, particularly for researchers involved in studying L2 vocabulary learning within written contexts. It offers an original attempt at measuring L2 vocabulary knowledge in that, unlike traditional approaches, it tries to measure more than just vocabulary size to define an L2 speaker's vocabulary knowledge. This will be of interest to researchers who are looking for measuring tools which analyze vocabulary items out of context, and the author gives a clear account of how the construct can be applied by the reader to their own research.

Andrew Wimhurst, Swansea University, UK and Free University of Bolzano, Italy.



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- Cohen, A. D. (2018). *Learning pragmatics from native and nonnative language teachers*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Evers-Vermeul, J. and Tribushinina, E. (2017). *Usage-based approaches to language acquisition and language teaching*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Ji, M. (Ed.) (2016). *Empirical translation studies. Interdisciplinary methodologies explored*. Sheffield: Equinox.
- Jule, A. (2018). *Speaking up. Understanding language and gender*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Olsson, J. (2018). *More wordcrime. Solving crime with linguistics*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Tatsioka, Z. Seidlhofer, B., Sifakis, N. and Ferguson, G. (2018). *Using English as a Lingua Franca in education in Europe: English in Europe*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Tyler, A., Huang, L., and Jan, H. (Eds). (2018). *What is Applied Cognitive Linguistics? Answers from current SLA research*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
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Unless there is a very special reason, please submit material in Times New Roman, 12pt, left aligned (not justified). Please do not use text boxes, or try to format your contribution in any other way, as this complicates the reformatting. Contributions are limited to a maximum of 1000 words. Thank you.





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Chair

Dawn Knight
School of English, Communication and Philosophy
Cardiff University
Cardiff CF10 3EU
BAALChair@cardiff.ac.uk

Membership Secretary

Jessica Briggs Baffoe-Djan
Department of Education
University of Oxford
Oxford OX2 6PY
jess.briggs@education.ox.ac.uk

Membership administration

Debbie Gilbody
BAAL
C/O Mosaic Events
Tower House, Mill Lane,
Off Askham Fields Lane,
Askham Bryan,
York, YO23 3FS
0330 333 0485
admin@baal.org.uk



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