

# ENGLink

Newsletter of the Department of English  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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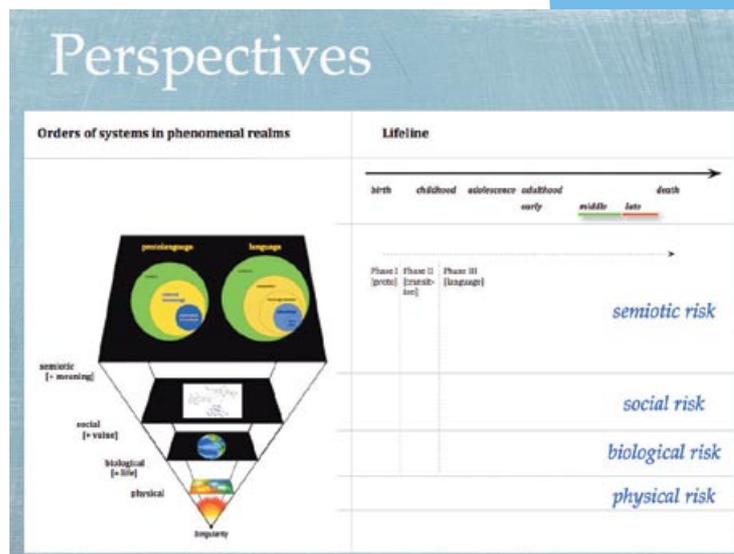
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© Perspectives on health and healthcare in terms of orders of system.

## Enhancing Research Focus on Personalized Healthcare

Personalized healthcare is a focus of research and development at PolyU and with the initiative of Prof. Christian Matthiessen, Head of Department of English, a working group concerned with personalized healthcare in the context of the Department has recently been established. This proactive approach shows the Department is very well placed to play a significant part in the continued development in this particular research area. The members of the working group are Prof. Winnie Cheng, Mr Marvin Lam, Mr Francis Low, Prof. Christian Matthiessen, and Prof. Martin Warren.

The working group aims to cover different complementary aspects needed to develop a framework for dealing with personalized healthcare in the Department, within the Faculty of Humanities (FH). These include healthcare communication as a type of professional communication, the analysis of healthcare discourse, multimodality in healthcare communication, interpersonal relationships, the modeling of disease, and computational systems in support of healthcare professionals.

There are at least three complementary areas of strength in the Department provide a foundation for research into healthcare communication:

- **Professional Communication** – orientation to community, engagement with professional practices and expertise; the general body of practices within which healthcare communication can be located;
- **Corpus Linguistics** – evidence base, data-driven research, empowered by computational tools;
- **Systemic Functional Linguistics** – holistic, meaning-oriented, theory, description and analysis of language and other semiotic systems in context.



© The range of areas within healthcare communication, covering dialogues between healthcare practitioners and patients, interactions among healthcare practitioners, management dialogues, dialogues with policy makers and with the media.

These have been combined in various research projects and will illuminate research into healthcare communication. The tools and techniques of Corpus Linguistics are used both within Professional Communication and Systemic Functional Linguistics.

## Departmental Seminars

### 1 Systemic Functional Linguistics and Translation Studies in Australian Context (2 February 2010)

The talk was given by Dr Mira Kim who is the Senior Lecturer of the School of Languages and Linguistics at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. She discussed how she had used Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) Theory as a primary framework in a number of research projects that she had undertaken to address translation issues in Australia. She also discussed the benefits and limitations of using the theoretical framework referring to three particular projects that are concerned with translation error analysis, readability in community translation and translation quality assessment.



### 2 The Figure of the Flaneuse in *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (18 March 2010)

The seminar was conducted by Dr Roshni Mooneeram from the University of Nottingham Ningbo, China. In this talk, she discussed her research regarding the Chinese flaneuse's spatial and linguistic negotiations of the British metropolis in Xiaolu Guo's novel. She supported the stance that literature, which involved a making strange of the ordinary, was an important tool of consciousness raising. She suggested that the integration of sociolinguistics and literary linguistics in an analysis of contemporary Chinese literature helps to problematise the common sense nature of gender, race and politeness.



## Supporting English Public Speaking Contest

Dr Mable Chan was invited as one of the adjudicators in *The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups The Standard Chartered Hong Kong English Public Speaking Contest 2010* co-organized by English Speaking Union, Hong Kong. The contest, since 2004, has been held to develop young people's English public speaking skills and build up their confidence. Over the past six years, the Contest has benefited a mass of over 7,400 participants – and this number has been soaring – in 2009, they hit a new record of 2,117 applicants, which was a 40% increase from the Contest 2008.

There are two divisions in the contest: Junior (S1 to S3) and Senior (S4 to S7) full-time students in Hong Kong. In the preliminary rounds of the contest, contestants have to deliver a 3-minute prepared speech on a self-selected topic, and the speech is assessed in terms of substance, style and technique, and overall effectiveness. In the grand final stage, contestants have to deliver a 3-minute prepared speech on a designated topic and to answer questions in a 2-minute Q & A session. The champion of the senior division will represent Hong Kong and participate in the *International Public Speaking Competition 2010* held in London in May. In addition to English teachers from tertiary institutions, there are also adjudicators who are lawyers, senior members from English organizations, and other professionals.



Dr Mable Chan (middle) invited her two students to be audience at the Grand Final of the Public Speaking Contest.

The grand final was held on 10 April 2010 this year. Dr Chan was invited to attend the Grand Final cum Award Ceremony with guests, and she brought with her an MAEP student and a BAESP student this year. The students have learned much from the contestants' performance and the quality speeches. Nothing is more effective than young people learning from young people.

## Distinguished Visiting Scholar – Professor Elizabeth Traugott



Prof. Elizabeth Traugott will stay in the Department as Distinguished Visiting Scholar from 22-29 April. She is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics & English at Stanford University, USA and her main research has been in historical syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. She currently focuses on ways to bring the theories of grammaticalization and construction grammar to bear on accounts of micro-changes. Recent publications include *Grammaticalization* (with Paul Hopper, 1993, revised ed. 2003), *Regularity in Semantic Change* (with Richard Dasher, 2002) and *Lexicalization and Language Change* (with Laurel Brinton, 2005). An edited volume (with Graeme Trousdale) on *Gradience, Gradualness and Grammaticalization* is in press.

The below three talks are arranged during her stay:

► **1<sup>st</sup> Talk –**

**Plenary for 3rd Postgraduate Research Symposium (26 April 2010, 9:30 – 10:30 am)**

Title: 'Anyway, that's a pretty ugly design': On why subjectification is a major type of change

► **2<sup>nd</sup> Talk –**

**Department of English Seminar (27 April 2010, 4:30 – 6:30 pm)**

Title: 'All that I can say is...': Recent directions in work on the historical semantics of modals

► **3<sup>rd</sup> Talk –**

**PolyU Humanities Lecture Series – 4 (28 April 2010, 4:30 – 6:30 pm)**

Title: Seeking evidence for interaction as a motivation for language change

## Academic Visitors from Malaysian Universities

Two academic visitors from Malaysia visited the Department on 29 January 2010. They were Dr Souba Rethinasamy, Dean of Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak and Prof. Datin Dr Hajibah Osman, Dean of Language Studies Academy, Universiti Teknologi Mara. During the visit, they obtained an overview of the academic programmes and research activities of the Department. Dr Rethinasamy also shared the Virtual Language Centre developed by one of our colleagues is very useful in helping to improve the English of her students. Upon exchanging views on research, some of our academic staff are expected to have further discussion with them on future research collaboration.



◉ Back row from left: Prof. Martin Warren, Prof. Christian Matthiessen, Dr Yap Foong Ha, and Prof. David Qian have a fruitful exchange with Dr Souba Rethinasamy (left) and Prof. Datin Dr Hajibah Osman during their visit.

## PhD Student from The Netherland Shares Research Interest

Sonja Gipper, a PhD student from Max Planck Institute, Nijmegen, The Netherland, is visiting the Department from 16-29 April. Her PhD project is concerned with evidential system of Yurakaré (a language which is spoken in Central Bolivia), focusing on the use of the evidential in conversations. She will discuss her work with some members of the Department and will also give a seminar on **Expressing who knows what: Intersubjectivity as a dimension of evidentiality in Yurakaré** on 21 April.

# Department Updates

## Departmental Facebook Page

The Department has recently established its presence in one of the most popular social network websites – Facebook. With a departmental Facebook page, we can keep more people posted on our latest news and events and they can also exchange views on topics under the discussion section. We hope this will be a new channel to connect with people who are interested in all aspects of professional communication. Visit our page at <http://www.engl.polyu.edu.hk/facebook> and add us as your “fan” today!



## Academic Staff Shares Tips on Reading and Listening Skills with Secondary Students

On 23 February 2010, Dr Mable Chan was interviewed by e-Education Publishing Limited for a project entitled *Professional Tips on capturing A' of the English Basic Competency Enrichment Programme* for secondary students and teachers in Hong Kong.

E-Education Publishing Limited has been established for over 10 years, working closely with different organizations (including but not limited to The Hong Kong School Net Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, HKedcity, Sesame Publication Co. Ltd. and Holdery Publishing Enterprises Ltd.) to provide nearly 20 online learning platforms for primary and secondary students in Hong Kong. These platforms cover subjects like Chinese, English, Mathematics and General Studies, with over 300 participating schools and over 200,000 student members.

To strengthen the English proficiency of secondary students and to get them well-prepared for examinations inside and outside school, a free online learning platform, temporarily entitled the *English Basic Competency Enrichment Programme* is being

organized to enhance the students' English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Dr Mable Chan was asked to share some tips and advice of enhancing reading and listening skills in the interview. There are also representatives from The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The University of Hong Kong, Baptist University of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong Institute of Education who offer tips to students in writing and speaking. The interview will be released on the online platform in around April in the form of texts, pictures and videos; students, teachers and parents will be able to view the interviews.

E-Education Publishing Limited has rich sources of data concerning primary and secondary students' learning of English in Hong Kong, and is now exploring with Dr Mable Chan ways to make use of the data and conducting research to help promote effective English language learning in Hong Kong.



## Visit by PolyU Council Chairman

PolyU Council Chairman, The Hon Marjorie Yang, visited the Department on 2 March. During the visit, staff representatives gave her an overview about some highlighted areas of the Department while student representatives shared their study at their own programmes. Ms Yang also asked the students to talk about their favourite books to understand what language students like to read.



Staff and student representatives have an enjoyable sharing session with The Hon Marjorie Yang (front row, middle).

## Recent Seminar by the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE)

### Enhancing Communicative Competencies for Securities & Investment Professionals: Delivering Effective Oral Presentations (28 January 2010)

The seminar was jointly organized by the Hong Kong Securities Institute and the RCPCE. The objective of the seminar is to introduce and demonstrate a series of practical communication strategies that securities and investment professionals will be able to apply when planning and delivering oral presentations in English in the business world.

The following topics were discussed in the seminar:

- Key principles of effective oral presentations in professional contexts
- Aspects of oral presentations that Hong Kong professionals find challenging
- Using appropriate 'spoken' language to enhance your message
- Presenting numerical data with visuals

Dr Stephen Evans was the speaker of the seminar and in addition to sharing his insights into the above topics, he analysed video clips and transcripts of oral presentations, and hands-on tasks to apply the key strategies that had been presented and discussed. There were 12 participants at this seminar.

## Recent Publications



### 1. Systemic Functional Grammar: A First Step into the Theory

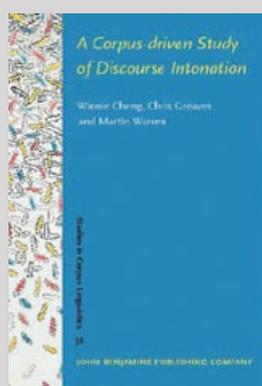
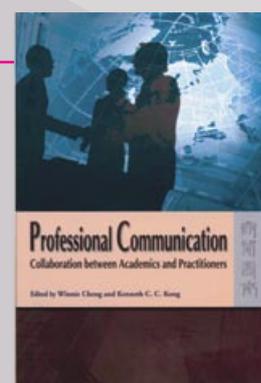
**Authors: Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M (Department of English); Halliday, M.A.K**

This book consists mainly of the booklet entitled *Systemic Functional Grammar: A First Step into the Theory* by Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen and M.A.K. Halliday and its Chinese translation: *xitong gongneng yufa: lilun zhi chutan* (《系統功能語法：理論之初探》), by Huang Guowen and Wang Hongyang.

### 2. Professional Communication: Collaboration between Academics and Practitioners

**Editors: Cheng, Winnie (Department of English); Kong Kenneth C.C.**

One important theme of the book is its emphasis on the collaboration between researchers and professionals. The contributors strongly believe that such collaborative partnership will provide direct implications for improving workplace communication and enhance better understanding of the construction of professional identity and organizational behavior.



### 3. A Corpus-driven Study of Discourse Intonation

**Authors: Cheng, Winnie; Greaves, Chris; Warren, Martin (all from Department of English)**

The book is the first to apply David Brazil's Discourse Intonation systems (prominence, tone, key and termination) to the study of a corpus of authentic, naturally-occurring spoken discourses. The issues raised and discussed are all of importance in Conversation Analysis, Corpus Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Discourse Intonation, Pragmatics and Intercultural Communication.

## Your Storyteller's Voice — Volunteer service sharing by BALSP Year 3 student, Carman Ng

Have you found it? What sees the curious in the mundane, that draws smiles and frowns, that glides from the real world to the imaginary: your voice of a storyteller.

In January, I along with four students – Ming, Sharon, Edith and Ella – had the chance to learn from the Yoda of Storytelling. We volunteered for the English Reading Buddies Program of the Storyland, Hans Andersen Club. For three Saturdays, we squeezed ourselves in the tight-packed train, slipped between keen visitors at the Wong Tai Sin Temple, and walked into the outlandish Storyland, furnished in IKEA style. At 2:30 p.m., children rushed in, laughing.

Laughter is what we hope for. To help children learn English, an active approach matters more than the number of words learnt. We structured each session around a theme, including furniture, animals and environment; and selected books ranging from the classics, Jack and the Beanstalk, to the latest soft-to-touch volumes like Snow Bear's Surprise. Stories were not just told, but pondered. "Why does Little Snow Bear want to surprise his Mom?" We led our paired-readings with questions, which allowed us to interact, recall experiences, and see beyond the printed pages parts of life and relationships.

The children stepped out of their shy shells and quickly warmed up to us. Despite early setbacks, e.g. materials not suiting the abilities of all, we improved. We invited the older participants to help teach the younger ones. Astonishingly, everyone got more involved. Even more so when game time began! Whenever they said, wide-eyed and smiling, "play again?" we knew we had accomplished something. We had sparked their interest to learn.

We learnt. From the open-minded children. They let us see that in the routine adult life, we can channel our creativity; use our storyteller's voice. They are the Yoda of Storytelling.



◉ Kids are enjoying the story that Carman (left) and her classmate Ella share with them.



◉ Playing game is a good activity in helping the kids to learn more from the story.



## MAEP Alumnus Publishes a Book on Oral Communication

Dr Paul Cheung, an alumnus of MA in English for the Professions (MAEP) in 2002, has recently published a book titled *Be an Eloquent Speaker Today*. The book is meant to be an oral communication handbook for all purposes and it comprises the topics of presentation, persuasion, humor, impromptu talk, and small talk. By acquiring the skills to be an eloquent speaker, a person will enjoy a much higher chance of success in all aspects of life.

Paul has a PhD in psychology and holds Master's Degrees in linguistics and education. His research interest is group interaction and communication. Paul has been a mentor in the Department's Mentorship Programme for a number of years and he also hold two workshops for the mentors and mentees on the topics of communication and positive psychology.