

ENGLink

Newsletter of the Department of English
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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Contact for contributions or further
information about the articles:

Email: egdept@polyu.edu.hk

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HKD1.8 Million Granted for Research Projects

In the recent result announcements of the 2010/11 General Research Fund (GRF) by the Research Grants Council (RGC), the Department of English is awarded HKD1.83 million for its two research projects. Congratulations to Dr Stephen Evans and Dr Yap Foong Ha, who are the principal investigators of the projects. This outstanding result is a significant recognition of the Department's research strength.

Below is a summary of the two projects:

1 Project title: **Modelling the development of English in Hong Kong**

Principal Investigator: Dr Stephen EVANS

Approved duration: 36 months

Funding awarded: HKD714,875

The study seeks to trace the evolution of English in Hong Kong since the early 1840s and, in particular, to investigate, evaluate and refine Edgar Schneider's (2007) important new theoretical framework, the 'Dynamic Model', in the Hong Kong context. Schneider proposes that post-colonial Englishes such as Singapore English, Indian English and Hong Kong English have evolved by undergoing a single underlying process which can be described as a diachronic sequence of five progressive stages from foundation to differentiation. The objective of the study is to identify the stages in the evolution of English in Hong Kong since the mid-nineteenth century using hitherto unexploited textual data from English-language newspaper archives, Legislative Council proceedings, government records and other printed primary sources. The study builds on ideas presented in Stephen's recent *English World-Wide* article about the evolution of the English-language speech community in Hong Kong. It is hoped that the study will yield valuable information and insights about a range of issues relating to the acquisition and use of English in colonial and post-colonial Hong Kong and, more generally, make a significant contribution to theories of language variation and change.



2 Stance Marking in Asian Languages: Linguistic and Cultural Perspectives

Principal Investigator: Dr YAP Foong Ha

Co-Investigators: Prof RHEE Seongha (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

Dr KRATOCHVIL Frantisek (Hong Kong Baptist University)

Prof LAPOLLA Randy John (La Trobe University)

Dr POST Mark (La Trobe University)

Prof IWASAKI Shoichi (UCLA)

Approved duration: 36 months

Funding awarded: HKD1,120,000

This research project examines the various stance-marking strategies used by speakers to express their moods, attitudes, and perspectives. It adopts a crosslinguistic and cross-cultural analysis, with a special focus on Asia, and addresses research questions such as the following: *What are stance markers, and what do they do (and in particular, add) to our utterances? How do these markers evolve? Do they interact with each other; if so, to what extent, and with what effect? Are there observable differences in the selections of stance-marking strategies across different language families? Where differences are observed, in what manner and to what extent do these linguistic variations contribute to distinctive cultural affiliations and cultural identities?* This project draws on multiple approaches such as descriptive fieldwork, diachronic reconstruction, discourse analysis, and cross-linguistic comparisons. It seeks to uncover robust common tendencies in the use of stance-marking strategies across different language families, while at the same time paying close attention to subtle language-specific differences and their equally subtle pragmatic differences.



The RGC is an advisory body on research matters within the organizational structure of the University Grants Committee (UGC). It advises the HKSAR Government on the needs of Hong Kong's higher education institutions in the field of academic research and for the distribution of funding for academic research projects undertaken by academic staff of those UGC-funded institutions.

Event Highlights

- Prof. Angelina Yuen, VP (Institutional Advancement and Partnership) (first row, third from right) and Prof. Huang Chu-ren (Dean, FH) (first row, third from left) welcome participants and guests to the Symposium.



3rd Postgraduate Research Symposium

The 3rd Postgraduate Research Symposium: Language and Cultural Studies in the Pearl River Delta was jointly organised by the Faculty of Humanities (FH) and the School of Humanities and School of Foreign Languages of Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, China. The Symposium was held on 26 April 2010 and the Department of English was responsible for the co-ordination work of this year's Symposium.

Two academics from Sun Yat-sen University gave two pre-symposium talks on 25 April; one was by Prof. Wendy Bowcher from the School of Foreign Languages and one was by Prof. Chen Chunsheng, Professor of Chinese History and Vice President of the University. The speaker for the keynote speech on the day of the Symposium was Prof. Elizabeth Traugott, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics & English of Stanford University.

There were 63 participants to the Symposium and the parallel presentation sessions were made up by 47 papers from PhD students from Hong Kong, Macau and Guangdong. The papers revolved around the themes of the Symposium which are (i) Language Studies, Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in Chinese, English, or Other Languages; (ii) Cultural Studies; and (iii) Humanities-related Studies.

Lecture Series at South China Normal University

With the arrangement of Dr Yap Foong Ha, a series of lectures on *Generative and Functional Linguistics* were organized in the spring semester 2010 with School of Foreign Studies, South China Normal University (華南師範大學外國語言文化學院理論語言學2010年春季系列講座). A number of linguists were invited to give talks to students and staff from March to May 2010 on the topics of *Argument Structure and Tense and Aspect*.

There were a total of five talks, two on *Argument Structure* and three on *Tense and Aspect*. Professor Gu Yang from The Chinese University of Hong Kong was invited to be the speaker for 2 lectures on *Argument Structure*. Regarding the topic of *Tense and Aspect*, Professor Christian Matthiessen, Dr Yap Foong Ha and Dr Mable Chan from the Department were invited to talk about *Tense and Aspect* from the perspectives of Functional Grammar, Psycholinguistics and Generative Grammar respectively.

Details of the three talks are given below:

► Language Processing Studies

Time: March 26, 2010 (Friday) 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Venue: School of Foreign Studies, South China Normal University
Speaker: Dr Yap Foong Ha
Title: **Language processing research: Implications for tense-aspect acquisition**

► Systemic Functional Grammar

Time: April 9, 2010 (Friday) 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Venue: School of Foreign Studies, South China Normal University
Speaker: Prof. Christian Matthiessen
Title: **Models for construing our experience of time in different languages: A systemic functional perspective**

► Second Language Acquisition

Time: May 14, 2010 (Friday) 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Venue: School of Foreign Studies, South China Normal University
Speaker: Dr Mable Chan
Title: **Acquisition of be by Cantonese ESL learners: Implications for L2 acquisition of tense**

The series of visits/talks are significant in establishing collaboration and networks with the Pearl River Delta Region. The Dean of SCNU, Professor Zhou would like to invite Professor Christian Matthiessen back so that the University could present him with Guest Professorship. It has been suggested that a series of workshops will be organized to go with the presentation ceremony. Arrangements will also be made to invite Professor Zhou, a psycholinguist and Professor Teresa Xu who is interested in second language acquisition to visit PolyU and give talks to our students and staff in the Faculty.

- Prof. Christian Matthiessen (middle) and Dr Yap Foong Ha (fourth from right) at an official lunch organised by SCNU.



Department Updates

Academic Staff Deliver Workshop for Filipino English Teachers



- Some Filipino teachers share their experience with Prof. Christian Matthiessen (front row, third from left) and Mr Marvin Lam (front row, fourth from left) after the workshop.

On 26-28 April 2010, Chair Professor Christian Matthiessen and Teaching Fellow Marvin Lam delivered a national seminar-workshop for Filipino teachers of English at high school and college levels at De La Salle University, Manila, the Philippines. More than a hundred teachers from different parts of the Philippines attended the seminar-workshop. It was concerned with analysis of texts that were highly relevant to the teaching of English in secondary and tertiary education.

Prof. Matthiessen and Mr Lam explored with the teachers on how students learn language and content in different subjects and disciplines through texts in operating in a variety of contexts. They showed how texts vary according to the contexts they operate in and how they thus form different recurrent text types belonging to different registers (functional varieties of language). A typology of texts based on the nature of the context they operate in was presented, and they used this typology throughout the workshop as they introduced techniques in text analysis and discussed texts that can be used in the teaching of English in secondary and tertiary education. The typology was also used to show the range of texts used in different secondary school subjects and tertiary university disciplines and the implications for the development of curricula and syllabi were discussed.

PhD Student Won Award in LTRC 2010

Weiwei Liu, a PhD student at the English Department was awarded the PhD Travel Award jointly organised by International Language Testing Association (ILTA) and University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations in the 32nd Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC), which took place from 14 to 16 April 2010 at the University of Cambridge.

Organised annually by ILTA, LTRC is regarded as the most influential symposium in the field of language assessment. The theme of LTRC 2010 was Crossing the threshold: investigating levels, domains and frameworks in language assessment. Weiwei's paper entitled "A multi-dimensional approach to the exploration of rater variability: the impacts of gender and occupational knowledge on the assessment of ESP oral proficiency" was accepted by LTRC 2010 and subsequently won the PhD Travel Award 2010.

Sponsored by ILTA, the award is one of the most prestigious prizes in the field of language assessment. Weiwei is currently a fulltime PhD student under the supervision of Prof. David Qian and Prof. Martin Warren. His research project focuses on rater variability in the assessment of speaking performances in the context of English for Specific Purpose.



PolyU Consultation Day for JUPAS Applicants 2010

The PolyU Consultation Day for JUPAS Applicants is an annual event aiming at allowing JUPAS applicants to get more information about different programmes to re-prioritise their choices. They are given this opportunity to do this before the announcement of A-Level results.

The event was held on 22 May this year and the Department has arranged consultation sessions for its BA in English Studies for the Professions (BAESP) programme. About 300 visitors came to the sessions on that day and there were seven BAESP students volunteered to share their experience and study life with them.



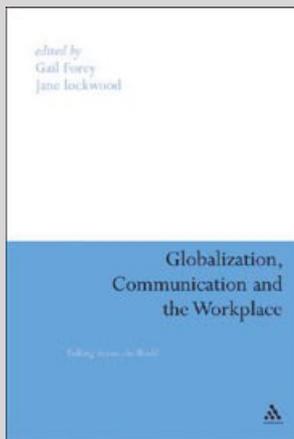
RCPCE News: Corpus of Research Articles (CRA)

The Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE) has recently completed the compilation of a unique corpus of research articles from 39 different academic disciplines. These disciplines include all the areas of scholarly activity at the PolyU as well as areas in the humanities and social sciences that are not currently major foci of PolyU education, such as History, Philosophy and Anthropology. The research team, led by Dr Stephen Evans, collected 20 recent articles from leading journals in each discipline. The corpus, which is accessible from ENGL's website, comprises 780 research articles and totals 5,750,332 words.

Users will be able to examine patterns of language use in research writing in four corpora: (1) the Main Corpus of Research Articles (MCRA), which contains the entire collection of articles; (2) the Subcorpus by Disciplines (SCD), which contains the merged texts of 20 articles from each discipline (Electrical Engineering, Rehabilitation Sciences, Logistics, etc.); (3) the Subcorpus by Fields (SCF), which divides the 39 disciplines into two broad fields, i.e. Engineering & Applied Sciences and Humanities & Social Sciences; and (4) the Subcorpus by Sections (SCS), which enables users to study the linguistic features of the key sections of empirical research articles (Abstract, Introduction, Results, etc.).

The Corpus of Research Articles will help to underpin teaching and learning in ENGL's 'Effective English for Postgraduate Research Students' programme, and will prove to be a valuable resource for students and teachers interested in exploring the features of academic writing.

Recent Publication



Globalisation, Communication and the Workplace

**Edited by: Dr Gail Forey, Associate Professor, Department of English
Dr Jane Lockwood, Visiting Associate Professor, City University of Hong Kong**

The global developments in Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) have transformed customer service encounters which were until recently face-to-face. The major business areas of healthcare, insurance, banking and media are increasingly moving their customer processes to call centres, web based interaction, and email. ITES is set for explosive growth over the next decade, alongside being increasingly outsourced to non-English speaking destinations. The need for good English language communication skills is becoming ever more acute.

This book looks closely at interactive communication in customer-facing services, featuring the voices of both academics and those in industry. It aims to integrate the work of applied linguists, teachers, trainers and businesses. After an initial discussion on the value of research to applied training, the major issues of ITES communications are addressed with either an academic analysis being followed by a training example derived from it, or with an analysis of a workplace problem followed by a research-based solution proposal. Each section will be introduced and summarised by the editors.

The volume strikes a balance between academic discussion of language description, needs, teaching, and research with aspects of language that businesses and their trainers see as crucial. These theoretical and applied perspectives (on service encounters that are essentially dependent on the linguistic aspects of communication since other aspects such as gesture, eye contact are absent) will open up other important avenues of research.

This volume should thus appeal to a wide readership in both academic and business training and HR departments.