

ENGLink

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Summer 2017 Issue

ENGLink is published by the Department of English, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

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Joint Postgraduate Student Symposium on Language, Culture and Cognition (7 – 8 April 2017)



The Joint Postgraduate Student Symposium on Language, Culture and Cognition (JPSSLCC) is a joint research student workshop with presentations from participants from Hong Kong, Macau and France. The event is funded by the Postgraduate Students Conference/Seminar Grant of the Research Grants Council, Hong Kong. Research students in the three departments of the Faculty of Humanities, namely the Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies (CBS), the Department of Chinese Culture (CC) and the Department of English (ENGL), were given a platform to engage intellectually with different research areas related to language, culture and cognition.

Besides students, the event also brought together scholars from various disciplines and socio-cultural orientations, especially on the second day when the Symposium was held in conjunction with the Joint Workshop on Linguistics and Language Processing.

Research students from our Department were actively involved with both the organization of the event and the presentation of papers. Indeed, our PhD student Mark Nartey was presented with The Best Paper Award for his paper titled, *"We must unite now or perish"! Kwame Nkrumah's creation of a mythic discourse?* Another highlight of the JPSSLCC was the paying of a special blessed memory tribute to Prof. Stephen Evans, former associate head and departmental research committee chair of the Department, for his immense contribution to the Symposium.

Additionally, a panel session on how to publish in high quality journals and book series enriched the Symposium. The JPSSLCC was a success, as it provided students, researchers and scholars an excellent platform for stimulating interaction, exchange of ideas and collaboration opportunities.



Our PhD student Mark Nartey receives the Best Paper Award from Prof. Jin Hong Gang, University of Macau.



Dr Dennis Tay of our Department conducts a workshop on the psychophysiology of metaphor processing on the second day of the Symposium.

Event Highlights

Departmental Seminars

1. The Intelligibility, Comprehensibility, and Accentedness of Asian Englishes (10 April 2017)

Dr Jette G. Hansen Edwards from The Chinese University of Hong Kong discussed how English speakers from a variety of backgrounds perceive different Asian Englishes and how listeners from Asia perceive American English. Based on the preliminary results from a study examining the factors that affect intelligibility and accentedness ratings of different varieties of Asian English, as well as how American English is perceived in Asia, she explained there is no correlation between these two factors. In addition, Hong Kong and China English speakers were rated as the most intelligible listeners and the American English speakers were rated as the least. Dr Edwards used the findings to explain further the pedagogical implications for models and methods for teaching English in Asia.



2. Stretching the Nominal Group: From the Early Years to Senior School (11 May 2017)

With expertise in primary, secondary and tertiary education, Dr Beverly Derewianka from the University of Wollongong, Australia, discussed how students in Australia are introduced to the nominal group through such activities as the modelling and joint construction of texts. As students' control over the nominal group plays a major role in reading comprehension and in writing proficiency, the study tracks how the challenges of reading and writing increase as the Australian young learners encounter nominal groups involving greater technicality, density and abstraction.

3. The Discourse of 'Thirdness' in Intercultural Studies (22 May 2017)

Specialising in intercultural communication and discourse analysis, Dr Malcolm MacDonald from the University of Warwick, the United Kingdom, is aware of the metaphors of 'thirdness' that emerged throughout 1990s. These terms are used unevenly, and often in contradictory fashions within the discourse of intercultural studies. He explained the use of an empirical investigation of the ways in which the discourse of 'thirdness' is constituted within the field of intercultural studies. Dr MacDonald first showed the autochthonous conceptualisation of the third space and other realizations of 'thirdness'. Then he reviewed criticisms of the notion of 'thirdness' and the theoretical construction of hybridity. Dr MacDonald concluded with some caveats about their engagement with the 'discourse of thirdness' in intercultural studies and applied linguistics more broadly.



Event Highlights

Methodology Workshop – Methods for working with semiotically-challenging data (3 April 2017)



Professor John Bateman from Bremen University, Germany explained how to meet the challenges of complex communicative artefacts and situations by applying well-specified and principled methodological decisions at the outset of any research design. The workshop was divided into three parts and discussed the kinds of additions and new principles that need to be made in each of the stages to address more complex objects of investigation. The first section introduced the steps for approaching a new area of data to be considered. The importance of multimodal corpora and corpus methods was addressed. The second part discussed the fundamental issues of assessing reliability and the significance of results. The final part showed some examples of how to apply the methodological principles. These included some of the challenges raised by examining language use in the context of other expressive forms and some of the standard questions raised in linguistic text research.

European Cultural Talk / Workshop (April – June 2017)

1. 30y Travel in Media Art Land around Europe heading to Asia (10 April 2017)

With the roles of artist, theorist and curator, Professor Maurice Benayoun from the School of Creative Media at the City University of Hong Kong is a pioneering and prominent figure in the field of New Media Art. He talked about his work exploring the social and aesthetic mutations of technologies during the last 30 years. From video art, 3D computer graphics animation, to VR, AR and large-scale Urban Media installation, his practices developed in parallel of the European boom of new media technology then reached Asia where he finally decided to come and settle.

2. Minor in European Studies Cultural Workshop – European diversity in languages and cultures, implications for doing business in Europe (9 June 2017)

Europe seems to be one big homogenous whole but linguistically and culturally speaking, the differences are big and the heterogeneity presents at all levels. Mr Vincent Merk from the Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e), the Netherlands, discussed how the great variety in languages, cultures and religions has a strong impact on the way people conduct business in the various countries that make up Europe. He used cultural dimensions such as power and hierarchy, communication and relationship, and time perception to show how doing business in Europe is not so homogenous and implied that having some cultural awareness, showing empathy and developing intercultural competence are important.



HK\$1.7m Granted for Research Projects

In the June announcements for the 2017/18 General Research Fund (GRF) by the Research Grants Council (RGC), the Department was awarded about HK\$1.7 million for three research projects. Congratulations to Professor Kathleen Ahrens, Dr Victor Ho, and Dr Phoebe Lin as the principal investigators of the projects. This encouraging result will further drive us to excel in our research work!

1. Project title: The Role of Metaphor in Reasoning

Principal Investigator: Professor Kathleen Ahrens

Approved duration: 36 months

Funding Awarded: HKD639,360

Recent linguistic research on this issue has employed a series of experimental studies using the Mechanical Turk experimental system for gathering participant data. One set of studies has shown that the conceptualization of an increase in crime in a hypothetical city influences people's suggested solutions to a particular social issue, with participants opting for an 'enforcement' solution when crime is conceptualized as a 'beast', and opting for a 'treatment' solution when it is conceptualized as a 'virus'. These studies postulate that metaphors are part of our underlying conceptual system which is activated in ongoing discourse when metaphors are present.

However, another set of studies (again using Mechanical Turk) cautions against overinterpreting the strength of the previous set of results. These additional studies support the idea that metaphors are so conventionalized as to be no longer active in a conceptual system, unless they are explicitly and deliberately used metaphorically.

This project will address these two conflicting sets of findings by manipulating factors unexplored in the previous studies: i) examining the possibility of an interaction between the deliberate signaling of metaphors and their degree of conventionality; and ii) examining the possibility of an interaction between the congruency of the metaphors used in a passage and a target sentence which manipulates the deliberateness of the metaphor.



2. Project title: Dealing with criticisms: A genre-based approach to analyzing hotel management's responses to negative online reviews

Principal Investigator: Dr Victor Ho

Approved duration: 36 months

Funding awarded: HKD580,025

This project is motivated by the increasing influence of travel-related websites on people's choice of hotels while planning their vacations or business trips. Research has found that negative reviews left by hotel customers on these websites during or after their stay are likely to have a negative impact on the reputation and business of the hotels concerned, making it necessary for hotel management to address the negativity in a timely and effective manner. The project aims to (1) identify, and make available to hospitality practitioners, a set of linguistic resources for writing the review responses which can then perform its communicative functions effectively - to achieve service recovery and appeal to potential customers; and (2) inform the syllabus design and teaching of English for specific purposes (ESP) by making available salient discursive features of the review responses to ESP practitioners who can then tailor-make courses accordingly.

Research



3. Project title: Investigating the effects of speech rate and word knowledge on L2 listening comprehension

Principal Investigator: Dr Phoebe Lin

Approved duration: 24 months

Funding awarded: HKD487,500

Few would dispute that authentic and comprehensible input is essential for effective language learning (Zhao, 1996). Yet, finding comprehensible input that matches one's second language (L2) proficiency, vocabulary knowledge, and verbal processing ability amidst the ocean of internet media is not easy. This project will tackle this problem through controlled experiments and statistical modelling.

This is the first-ever project to investigate the statistical significance of and interaction between speech rate (SR) and known word density (KWD) after controlling for the effects of L2 proficiency, verbal processing ability, and sentence length. By applying linear mixed-effects (LME) models, the project will provide a deeper understanding of the factors of L2 listening comprehension and generate empirically valid SR and KWD reference values. The findings will help not only teachers to prepare input better suited students' linguistic abilities, but also the development of computer tools able to match learners automatically with internet media of suitable linguistic difficulty (e.g. Lin, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, in preparation). The challenge of finding comprehensible input for every L2 learner amidst the ocean of internet media can finally be overcome.

The President's Awards for Excellent Performance/Achievement 2015/2016

The Presentation Ceremony for The President's Awards for Excellent Performance/Achievement 2015/2016 and Faculty/School Awards of 2014/15 & 2015/16 was held on 12 May. Our teaching and research efforts were recognised at the Ceremony:

Faculty/School Awards 2015/16

- Research & Scholarly Activities - Individual: Dr Dennis Tay
- Teaching - Individual: The late Prof. Stephen Evans

Faculty/School Awards 2014/15

- Service - Individual: Dr Gail Forey



Our Department Head Prof. Hans Ladegaard (second from left), Dr Gail Forey (left) and Dr Dennis Tay (right) celebrate their achievements at the ceremony.

Recent Research Publications

Albury, N. J. (2017). How folk linguistic methods can support critical sociolinguistics. *Lingua*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2017.07.008>

Chevalier B. A. M., **Watson B. M.**, Barras M. A., Cottrell W. N. (2017). Investigating strategies used by hospital pharmacists to effectively communicate with patients during medication counselling. *Health Expect*. 2017;00:1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.12558>

Cummings, L. (2017). *Case Studies in Communication Disorders*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Feng, D. W. (2017). Moral Education as a Curriculum Goal: The Multimodal Construction of Social Values in EFL Textbooks in Hong Kong. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2017.1356806>

Ladegaard, H. J. (2017). Workplace narratives. In Bernadette Vine (ed) *Handbook of Language in the Workplace* (pp. 242-257). London: Routledge.

Matthiessen, Christian M. I. M. & Pun, Jack K. H. (2017). "Expounding knowledge through explanations: generic types and rhetorical-relational patterns." *Semiotica: Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies / Revue de l'Association Internationale de Sémiotique*. Published online 2017-08-25. <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2016-0045>

Siyanova-Chanturia, A. & **Lin, P.** (2017). Production of ambiguous idioms in English: A reading aloud study. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12183>

Tay, D. (2017). Quantitative metaphor usage patterns in Chinese psychotherapy talk. *Communication & Medicine*, 14(1), 51–68.

Students and Alumni News

PhD Student Shares Research Findings with Professionals in the Business Sector



Our PhD student Esterina Nervino was invited to share the findings from her research project with the digital marketing team of *Liflaza Group* in Hong Kong on 6 Jun. They are a HK-based business that wholesales, distributes and retails both high-end luxury brands like Prada, Fendi, and Burberry and emerging designer brands such as Stella McCartney, Alexander McQueen, and MSGM.

Her 2-hour talk with Q&As, entitled 'Social Media is the New Black', contributed to the debate of how social media is redefining the concept of luxury fashion and the importance of social media platforms in the realignment of brands' market positions.

This was a valuable opportunity for Esterina to discuss findings and managerial implications of her thesis with professionals dealing with digital branding issues daily.

◀ The feedback Ester receives during this talk and Q&As session helped her understand the practical aspect of her research to the industry.

2nd Mentorship Programme Activity – Alumni Talk on Workplace Communication (28 April 2017)

The second activity of the programme in the 2016-17 academic year was a talk on *Job interview, on-the-job training and workplace communication*. The speaker was Mr Alvin Tam, a graduate of the Department in 2007 in the Higher Diploma in English for Business Communication programme. He has six years working experience in delivering internal learning and development training for a listed engineering company in Hong Kong. He discussed with the participants the format of the job interview for different jobs. He also shared how to make use of on-the-job training opportunities like enhancing workplace communication skills to overcome the challenges that university graduates will face when they start their first job.

The talk by Alvin (front row, middle) allows mentors and mentees to exchange their views about job interviews and workplace communication. ▶



PolyU JUPAS Consultation Day 2017: Admissions Strategies (20 May 2017)



The event aimed at helping JUPAS applicants obtain more information about different PolyU programmes to re-prioritise their choices before the release of the HKDSE results. During that day, consultation sessions for the Major in BA in English Studies for the Professions (BAESP) programme were arranged. Some BAESP students acted as student ambassadors and shared their study experience and university life with the visitors.

◀ Our BAESP students did a great job in helping to promote the programme to visitors.