

ENGLink

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Winter 2017 Issue

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

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International Conference on ESP, New Technologies and Digital Learning (7 – 9 December, 2017)

The International Conference on ESP, New Technologies and Digital Learning was held at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University on 7 – 9 December, 2017, organised by the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE), Department of English, in collaboration with TESOL Asia.

The conference aimed to bring together teachers, researchers and students in English for Specific Purposes to contribute to a stimulating and dynamic exchange of ideas in ESP, new technologies and digital learning. The conference was attended by 218 participants, coming from twenty-two regions and countries, including Australia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, United States of America, and Vietnam. There were 154 presentations delivered by 185 presenters.

The five keynote speeches given by Prof. Vijay Bhatia, Prof. Rod Ellis, Prof. Diane Pecorari, Prof. Bernadette Watson and Dr Beata Webb greatly inspired our participants on the trends and developments of research in ESP, language teaching, new technologies in EAP practice, effective communication in the health context, and online education. Four of the keynote speeches are available on the Department's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/englpolyu>.

The event provided a fruitful experience for the participants and offered them a platform to network with people with interest in the same fields.



(From right) Three of the keynote speakers Dr Beata Webb, Prof. Vijay Bhatia and Prof. Diane Pecorari, and Prof. Winnie Cheng, Associate Dean of FH and Professor of ENGL.



Participants socialise with each other during the lunch break.



Participants at the conference

Event Highlights

Research Showcase and Open Talk at the PolyU 80th Anniversary Open Day (2 – 3 December, 2017)

The PolyU 80th Anniversary Open Day was the final public event to conclude the year-long anniversary celebrations. During the two days, the Department showcased two aspects of our research, namely "Language and Technology" and "Healthcare Communication". The Language and Technology section presented Dr Phoebe Lin's project on vocabulary learning from watching YouTube videos as well as Dr Dennis Tay's project on metaphor usage in psychotherapy sessions.

For the "Healthcare Communication" aspect, there was an open talk on 3 December entitled *Research on Communication in Healthcare – Reaching the Community*. Professor Bernadette Watson and Dr Mavin Lam described research that was conducted in Hong Kong public hospitals that enhances their understanding of patients' experiences in the accident and emergency department.



Dr Phoebe Lin (left) and Dr Dennis Tay (right) introduce their research projects to Prof. Chu Hung-lam, Dean of Faculty of Humanities, at the Showcase.



Prof. Bernadette Watson explains how communication is an important factor in improving patient safety and quality of care at the open talk.

Congratulations to Our 200 Graduates at the 23rd PolyU Congregation (11 November 2017)

The Faculty of Humanities (FH) organised three conferment sessions and about 800 undergraduates and postgraduates were conferred degrees or awards. In the English Department, 138 graduates received awards at the postgraduate level or above. Another 59 graduates were awarded Bachelor Degrees. Several awards were also presented at the sessions to those graduates and current students who had obtained outstanding academic performances.

Professor Winnie Cheng, Associate Dean of FH and Professor of the Department gave a congratulatory address to the graduates at the three sessions. In addition, our PhD graduate Dr Isaac Mwinlaaru won the Faculty of Humanities Distinguished Thesis Award for PhD Students 2016/17.

The Department takes this opportunity to congratulate all our graduates and wishes everyone a promising future.



Prof. Winnie Cheng congratulates the achievements of the graduates and encourages them to contribute to society.

PolyU Education Info Day 2017 (30 September 2017)

About 30 staff and students of the Department took part in this annual University-wide event to promote our academic programmes to visitors. There were exhibition panels at our booth to help visitors learn more about our programmes. In addition, our student ambassadors shared their university life with prospective students and parents. Two current students of BA (Hons) in English Studies for the Professions (BAESP) shared their study, exchange, and work placement experiences during the three information seminars for the Programme. The participants found their sharing very useful and practical. The event attracted around 33,000 visitors to the PolyU campus.



Event Highlights

Itinerant Exhibition: “Ever Closer Union” – The Legacy of the Treaties of Rome for Today’s Europe (23 – 30 October, 2017)

The exhibition was organised by the Historical Archives of the European Union, European University Institute and Italian Cultural Institute, and was organised in collaboration with the Consulate General of Italy, Bellissima Italia, and the Department’s Minor in European Studies programme. A total of 14 panels were displayed during the period to narrate the history and successes of the first 60 years of the European Union (1957 – 2017) and to illustrate the historical steps that led to its constitution, taking into consideration its economic, political and social aspects.



Opening Talk for “Ever Closer Union” Exhibition – Sixty Years of European Union Integration: Formation, Evolution, and Challenges (25 October 2017)

Mr Dini Sejko, a PhD candidate and research assistant from the Faculty of Law, Chinese University of Hong Kong, addressed the crucial moments that transformed Europe from an area of multiple conflicts to a peaceful and prosperous region, and a leading global actor. He provided an overview of the events that preceded the cooperation process among European countries. He also explored the recent story of the EU, discussing two levels of problems that European institutions are expected to address in order to improve European governance, and enhance the EU’s international role. The talk came to the conclusion that European integration is a recognised success that has led to the creation of a democratic global political and economic actor.



Departmental Seminars

1. Corpora in the big data era: Challenges and opportunities (16 October 2017)

With expertise in areas including corpus linguistics, multimodality, pragmatics and discourse analysis, Professor Svenja Adolphs from the University of Nottingham, the United Kingdom, outlined some of the ways in which data relating to the spatial, temporal and experiential contexts in which spoken discourse takes place might be used to support corpus-based analysis. Prof. Adolphs discussed different aspects of context collected from multiple sensors and their role in enabling different types of descriptions within the tradition of spoken corpus linguistics.



2. Applying corpus linguistics – CLiC for language and literature research (25 October 2017)

The developments in computing power and the increasing availability of data have contributed to pushing the boundaries of corpus linguistics. Professor Michaela Mahlberg from the University of Birmingham, the United Kingdom, used examples from the CLiC project and teaching of literature to show how the CLiC app was developed in response to questions of applicability and usability. She also introduced the new functionalities of CLiC and the new CLiC corpora in the new release of CLiC 1.6.



Event Highlights

3. English academic vocabulary: How much do students need, and how much do students know? (6 November 2017)

With a research focus on English for academic purposes, second-language writing, and the widespread and growing phenomenon of English medium instruction, Professor Diane Pecorari, Head of the Department of English at City University of Hong Kong, outlined the vocabulary needs of individuals studying in English-medium contexts. She explained a new test of academic vocabulary to students in English-medium instruction provided a measure of their receptive vocabulary, and through other methods productive vocabulary was also measured. The findings have implications for teaching and learning through the medium of English.



4. Expanding pragmatics: Values, goals, and adaptability (13 November 2017)

In this talk, Professor Jacob Mey from the University of Southern Denmark, Denmark, explained the effort of introducing the concept of 'value' in the theory and practice of pragmatics. As pragmatic value is of relevance both to scientific discourse and to our daily practices, it is important to have the value factor placed correctly in relation not only to the context of controversy vs. agreement in academia, but also on a larger societal scale. He argued that the 'value neutral' approach to research and practice will not function appropriately in a pragmatically responsible context and suggested considering pragmatics through the perspective of what he previously defined as 'adaptability' vs. 'adaptivity'.

5. Language use, context, and contrastive 'meaning potential' (22 November 2017)

The founder and Secretary General of the International Pragmatics Association, Professor Jef Verschueren from the University of Antwerp, Belgium, presented work in progress which redefined meaning in a theory of pragmatics/language use in terms of 'meaning potential'. This was an attempt to reconcile the fluidity and negotiability of contextual indexing in interaction. Prof. Verschueren focused on the variability of the related processes across languages, linking up with a tradition of contrastive pragmatics.



Department Updates

Awards for Academic Staff

Dr Dennis Tay and Dr William Feng both received awards in the category of Teaching (Individual) and Research & Scholarly Activities (Individual) respectively under the Faculty Award for Outstanding Performance Achievement 2016/17.

The award presentation ceremony was held during the 23rd Congregation (Faculty of Humanities) on 11 November 2017.



Dr William Feng (left) receives the award from Prof. Chu Hung-lam, Dean of Faculty of Humanities.



Prof. Kathleen Ahrens delivers her keynote speech at the symposium.

Academic Staff Gives Keynote Speech in Political Communication Symposium

Professor Kathleen Ahrens gave a keynote speech on "Political Metaphors, Past and Present" at the Symposium on Figurative Framing in Political Communication jointly held by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), Faculty of Social Sciences at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and the Metaphor Lab Amsterdam on 15 December at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Prof. Ahrens was also a visiting scholar to the Netherlands in 2017, courtesy of Dr Christian Burgers at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and courtesy of funding support from NWO.

Academic Staff Presents at Online Symposium for Learning and Teaching Language

Dr Nathan Albury participated in an online symposium (based at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand) titled the "Third UC Intergenerational Transmission of Minority Languages Symposium: Challenges and Benefits". The presentation of his paper *Epistemology of language as a cause of language shift: Chinese heritage languages in Malaysia* was uploaded to the symposium website for live discussion on 11 December 2017.

The full presentation of Dr Albury's paper is available at <https://goo.gl/oPKXGt>.



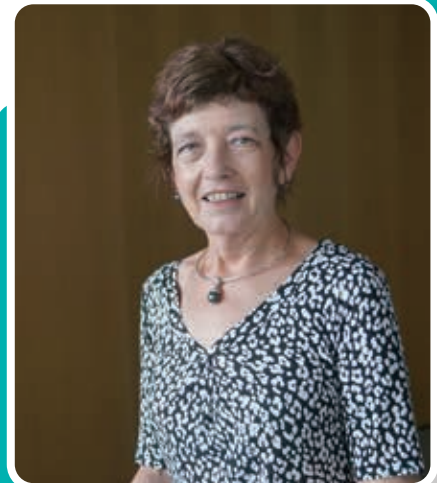
The screenshot shows the LATL (Learning & Teaching Language) website. The main heading is "Epistemology of language as a cause of language shift: Chinese heritage languages in Malaysia". Below this, it indicates the presentation was on 11 December 2017. The presenter is identified as Nathan John Albury, from the Department of English, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. A video player is visible at the bottom, showing a presentation slide with the same title and the presenter's name, Nathan John Albury.

International Research Centre for the Advancement of Health Communication

In December 2017, it was officially announced that the International Research Centre for Health Communication had been renamed as the **International Research Centre for the Advancement of Health Communication (IRCAHC)**. This change in name reflected an exciting expansion of the Centre's work. The Director of IRCAHC, Professor Bernadette Watson, explained the Centre's new focus:

"Health communication is a continually expanding area of research that encompasses work from across many disciplines and includes practitioners, patients and their families and carers. I am excited to have taken up the role of Director at a time when the Centre is broadening its focus to reflect the diversity of this field and to promote improvements in patient safety in hospital and community settings."

The work of IRCAHC has already expanded to include activity related to community health and ageing populations with a particular focus on dementia, quality of care and safety and interprofessional communication, learning and wellbeing. The website has been updated and the winner of the logo design competition is also about to be announced. For details on the work of IRCAHC please visit the website: <https://www.polyu.edu.hk/eng/ircahc/>



Prof. Bernadette Watson is the Director of IRCAHC.

Research Paper Ranks Top 5 in Top Social Media Articles in Language Journal

A paper by Dr Clarice Chan entitled *Investigating a research-informed teaching idea: The use of transcripts of authentic workplace talk in the teaching of spoken business English* is in the top 5 of Top Social Media Articles in the *English for Specific Purposes* journal of Elsevier, according to an analysis conducted by PlumX Metrics.

The paper investigates the impact of using transcripts of authentic workplace talk in teaching spoken business English, which is an idea advocated by researchers for raising learners' awareness of features of spoken workplace discourse. It illustrates that pedagogically-oriented research can help to refine research-informed teaching ideas and to strengthen the link between research and pedagogy in business English.



Recent Research Publications

Ho, V. (2017). Guarding the gate politically and politely: how accreditation teams do facework while gatekeeping. *Journal of Politeness Research: Language, Behavior, Culture* 13(1): 33-60.

Hu, G., & Sun, X. (2017). Institutional policies on plagiarism: The case of eight Chinese universities of foreign languages/international studies. *System*, 66, 56-68.

Jenks, C. J. (2017). *Race and Ethnicity in English Language Teaching: Korea in Focus*. Multilingual Matters.

Ladegaard, H. J. (2017). *The Discourse of Powerlessness and Repression: Life Stories of Domestic Migrant Workers in Hong Kong* (Routledge Studies in Sociolinguistics). London: Routledge.

Ladegaard, H. J. & Jenks, C. J. (Eds.) (2017). *Language and Intercultural Communication in the Workplace: Critical Approaches to Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.

Students and Alumni News

PhD Graduate Receives Faculty of Humanities Distinguished Thesis Award

Dr Isaac Mwinlaaru, our PhD graduate of 2017, was presented with the Faculty of Humanities Distinguished Thesis Award for PhD Students at the congregation in November. The title of his thesis is *A systemic functional Description of the grammar of Dagaare*.

This paper is the first comprehensive, discourse-based description of the grammar of Dagaare (Lobr). Following Michael Halliday's characterization of grammar as the powerhouse of language, the study addressed the question how does the Dagaare language works? That is, how is it organised to perform various functions in the life of the people who use it? The primary focus is on four grammatical systems: MOOD (the grammar of negotiation and interaction), TRANSITIVITY (the grammatical resource for construing experience – or reality and consciousness) and THEME and INFORMATION (the grammatical resources for organising information into text). The study is useful for mother-tongue education, translation, discourse analysis and to people interested in modelling natural language in computational systems.



Dr Isaac Mwinlaaru (left) receives the award from Prof. Chu Hung-lam, Dean of Faculty of Humanities.

Internship Programme in Valencia Lands a Promising Job Opportunity

BSc in Investment Science student Alex Wong took Spanish as an elective subject. He embarked on a 3-month internship programme in Valencia, Spain in the summer of 2017 for his Work-Integrated Education (WIE). Below is his sharing on the experience:

“The internship in NBN23, a sports data company, was something that I could not experience in Hong Kong. It is a start-up company focusing on basketball and swimming pool safety and aims at digitalising the data collection process to provide a new vision to the whole process of sports. The company is now facing rapid expansion with clients from around the world.

I worked as a Sports Statistics Scientist in the marketing team. My responsibilities were mainly to develop the statistics algorithms and handle translation of online and offline marketing materials from English to Chinese. At the later stage, I also involved in translating documents from English or Spanish to both simplified and traditional Chinese.

Through this internship experience, I found myself to be a flexible person who prefers to work in start-up companies which give one more freedom. While I do not have a clear goal on which career pathway I will pursue, I clearly understand the importance of language now. Without fluent communication skills, one cannot survive in the workplace. In addition, the working hours in Spain are much shorter than in Hong Kong because of the 'enjoy life' culture. I learnt to be very concentrated during the short working hours so as to achieve high productivity as well as how to relax after work.”

After Alex returned to Hong Kong, he was offered a job by this Spanish company for their branch in Hong Kong which he will start upon his graduation in June 2018. Congratulations on this exciting job opportunity!



The internship at NBN23 helps Alex to find out his real career interest.

An Unforgettable Study Experience in the Oldest University in Spain

BBA in Accountancy student Joyce Chan took Spanish as an elective subject and went to Spain to study Spanish for one month in the summer of 2017 before she graduates. Below is her sharing on the experience:

“In the antique town of Salamanca, I spent one month at the University of Salamanca, the oldest university in Spain and the third oldest university in Europe, to further my studies in Spanish. The one-month intensive course was very fruitful. I completed an 80-hour course, with 40 hours of grammar classes, 20 hours of oral classes and 20 hours of history classes.

I was very excited at first because I was assigned to an advanced level class after a placement test. I felt the effort that I had spent on learning Spanish in the past two years had paid off. However, the first week was already very tough for me because my grammar teacher spoke very fast in Spanish and taught us verb forms that I had never seen before. Two weeks later, I found out with my A2 level of Spanish in Hong Kong, I should have been assigned to a class one level down. It was already too late for me to change, however. Therefore, I worked very hard to learn the verb forms by myself after school and started to understand the teacher. Although it was quite challenging, I am so glad that I received the 'outstanding' classification, which is the highest award in my grammar examination.

In the oral classes, I learnt more about the daily usage of spoken Spanish, as well as Spanish culture. I also learnt a lot of slang words and phrases that are commonly used among young people. I enjoyed the opportunities I was given in classes to really communicate with others. I liked the way teachers brought up cultural issues in classes. One teacher discussed all cultural issues with us, from the Spanish afternoon nap habit, to the late dining hours in Spain, and to the controversy about bullfighting in Spain. Such discussions made me more engaged in the classes.

My study at the University of Salamanca is definitely an unforgettable one. I have to thank all those who accompanied me on this journey, especially my flatmates from South America. They always pushed me to practise Spanish with them and shared their food with me. Without them, I would not have had such a remarkable exchange journey.”



Joyce finds the University of Salamanca is modern, but that it reveals its history of almost 800 years in many ways.