

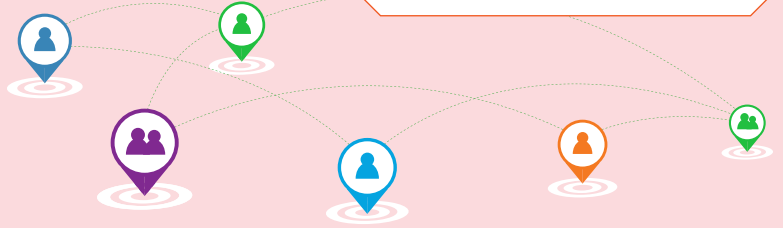
ENGLink is published by the Department of English, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

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HIGHLIGHTS

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- **P.5** HK\$2M Granted for Research Projects
- **P.6** New Corpora by the RCPCE



The 12th International Conference for Researching and Applying Metaphor (RaAM) (27 – 30 June 2018)



Participants of the conference

The Department of English organised the 12th International Conference for Researching and Applying Metaphor (RaAM) from 27 to 30 June, in conjunction with the Faculty of Humanities (FH)'s 10+ anniversary. This marked the first time RaAM, traditionally the largest international conference for applied metaphor studies, has been held in Asia.

The theme of the conference was "Metaphor across contexts and domains: from description to application." The invited speakers included Professor Zoltán Kövecses (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary), Professor Raymond Gibbs (University of California, Santa Cruz, USA), Professor Elena Semino (Lancaster University, United Kingdom), and Professor I-Wen Su (National Taiwan University, Taiwan).

By attracting about 200 participants from over 30 countries/regions, including a strong contingent of FH colleagues and postgraduate students, the outcome of this conference will be greater international visibility for PolyU researchers and students.

The stimulating three-day program also featured a cocktail reception supported by the Hong Kong Tourism Board, a PhD dance party, a dinner banquet, and a social event at Nanlian Gardens where international participants experienced a taste of authentic Chinese cuisine and culture.

Professor Kathleen Ahrens of the Department has recently been elected president of the association and will continue to find ways of increasing departmental and university visibility.



The cocktail reception on the first day of the conference allows participants to mingle with each other.



Professor Kathleen Ahrens (front row second from left) of the Department is elected as the new President of RaAM at the Annual General Meeting during the conference.



One of the plenary speakers Prof. Elena Semino gives a speech on the topic of "Applying metaphor in healthcare".

Interactive Talk by IRCAHC to Encourage Healthcare Workers to 'Speak Up' (14 June 2018)

The International Research Centre for the Advancement of Health Communication (IRCAHC) is committed to working to improve safety for patients and reducing medical errors in hospitals. They know from the literature that encouraging healthcare workers to 'speak up' can help prevent errors and improve safety. However, the act of 'speaking up' (that is, sending a message) is only half of the process. These practitioners also need to focus on how messages will be received by listeners. Ms Melanie Barlow, Director of Simulation with Mater Education, Brisbane, Australia, is researching the role of receiver behaviour in promoting patient safety and reducing medical errors.

Ms Barlow presented an interactive talk on this topic for IRCAHC. Twenty-six participants including academic and clinical staff attended the session. Ms Barlow introduced some of the theories associated with studying receiver behaviour and also facilitated workshop activities to encourage people to think about how they would respond to a co-worker who raised concerns about safety or errors. Professor Bernadette Watson, Director of IRCAHC, emphasised the importance of this type of research that contributes directly to the improvement of patient safety.



Participants find the case studies discussed at the seminar practical and useful.

Digital and Virtual Workplace Communication Workshop (30 April 2018)

Thirty-two participants from local businesses and institutions attended a seminar entitled 'Digital and Virtual Workplace Communication' organised by the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE) on 30 April 2018. The seminar was delivered by Dr Jane Lockwood, Adjunct Associate Professor of the Department and Associate Director of RCPCE, and Ms Carol Yu, PhD student of the Department. The seminar introduced the impacts and challenges of business communication due to technological advancement. A case study on web-chat in an outsourced customer service account and two telephonic case studies were shared, and a few communication strategies were suggested to the audiences.

Departmental Seminars

1. Ecological Challenges in Learning Cantonese by South Asian Children in Hong Kong (9 April 2018)

With research interests on child language development, developmental language disorders, and childhood bilingualism, Professor Cheung Hin Tat from the Education University of Hong Kong discussed the development of L2 Cantonese in a sub-group of ethnic minority children of Hong Kong, who are commonly known as South Asians (SA hereafter). By conducting a study with 89 SA children, from age 7 to 14, it was found that these children mainly used their heritage languages at home and in the neighbourhood. It was also shown that their Cantonese performance in expressive vocabulary, receptive grammar, and narrative production were far below the standard of six years olds. Prof. Cheung concluded with a suggestion that education authorities should incorporate an ecological viewpoint when planning how to enhance the Chinese language learning experience of these children.

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Language befriending, language plenty, refugees and the post-Brexit world: New pedagogical practices from Scotland (16 April 2018)

With research expertise in languages and intercultural studies, Professor Alison Phipps from the University of Glasgow, the United Kingdom, outlined the policy context and contestation out of which the developments in multilingualism led to refugee and migrant integration in Scotland. A pilot programme entitled “Sharing Lives Sharing Languages” aimed to build connections between those whose first language is not English and the host community by developing a participatory approach to language learning. She also highlighted her research findings from a large Arts and Humanities Research Council grant which resulted in policy shift and a pilot project.

Discourse and long-term effects of isolated and combined structured input and structured output on the acquisition of the English causative forms (19 April 2018)

Specialising in second language acquisition, Professor Alessandro Benati from the University of Portsmouth, the United Kingdom, discussed discourse and long-term effects of structured input and output when delivered in isolation or in combination on the acquisition of the English causative. He shared a classroom experiment that was done with Greek learners aged 10-12 who were randomly split into three groups: a structured input only group; a structured output only group; and a combined structured input and structured output group. The results showed that those who received structured input both in isolation and in combination benefitted more than learners receiving structured output only.



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4. The inscrutability of translingualism (29 May 2018)

Translingualism refers to an orientation in scholarship that recognises the fluidity of language boundaries and endorses a greater tolerance for the plurality of Englishes worldwide. Dr Jerry Lee from the University of California, Irvine, USA, offered inscrutability as an alternative epistemological framework to make sense of “difference” in language. He utilised theories of illiteracy (Acosta 2014), intelligibility (Butler 1990, 2001), and disidentification (Muñoz 1999) in order to develop inscrutability as an acknowledgement of our inability to read translingual practices through the evaluative purview of normative Englishes.



Dr Tay (second from right) receives the award at the Outstanding Student Awards cum Dean's List Presentation Ceremony of the School of Science and Technology at OUHK held on 2 May 2018.

Academic Staff Receives Outstanding Award in External Course

Dr Dennis Tay attended a Postgraduate Certificate course in Quantitative Analysis at The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK), sponsored by the Department's staff development fund. He was awarded the 'Outstanding Student Award' for topping the cohort in the courses titled 'Quantitative Methods for Decision Analysis' and 'Multivariate and Time Series Analysis'.

The courses provided consolidation of foundational statistics knowledge and introduced methods and skills. Dr Tay found they can inspire new avenues to study language and discourse data. He can in turn pass on these methods and skills to broaden students' perspectives.

Invited Speech Delivered at the 16th Asia TEFL International Conference (27 – 29 June 2018)

Professor Hu Guangwei gave a speech on *Cultural influences on EFL/ESL learning: The case of peer feedback* as an invited speaker at the 16th Asia TEFL International Conference, which took place at the University of Macau.

A salient line of research has attempted to interpret EFL/ESL learners' perceptions and practices in terms of national and/or ethnic cultural traits. This received view of culture, however, does not comport well with the often-reported conflicting findings about learners with the same national or ethnolinguistic backgrounds, and has been criticized for its essentializing and stereotyping nature. Thus, if culture is to remain a useful construct in EFL/ESL research and praxis, it needs to be reconceptualized. In this presentation, Prof. Hu borrowed the conceptual tool of "scale" from social theory and sociolinguistics to view culture as existing on different scales. He applied this scalar conception of culture to demonstrate how cultures on different scales can account for both the similarities and differences in perceptions and practices of peer feedback observed in three empirical studies of Chinese EFL/ESL learners. He concluded by outlining a way of exploiting the affordances of scalar culture for understanding EFL/ESL learning in a globalized world.



During the panel discussion, Dr Mable Chan (second from right) and the other two speakers answer participants' questions about publication.

Academic Staff Shares Experience at Publishing Seminar (9 May 2018)

Dr Mable Chan was invited to be one of the speakers of a talk entitled *From Conference Poster to Publication in Language and Teaching Journals: Tips from Editors*, which was co-organised by the English Language Centre (ELC) and PolyU Library (LIB). The other two speakers were both from the Chinese University of Hong Kong: Professor Jette G Hansen Edwards from the Department of English and Professor Icy Lee from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. As a journal editor and reviewer, Dr Chan shared with the participants tips for getting published in ELT and education journals. After all presentations, there was a panel discussion where participants asked questions concerning publication. The seminars attracted about 30 participants from different departments, mostly from the ELC and the Department. Many appreciative comments were received after the talk and many participants approached the organisers, saying that they found the talk extremely valuable. The department head of the ELC commented that "it was very much a timely and needed seminar".

HK\$2M Granted for Research Projects

In the April announcements for the Research and Development Projects 2018-19 of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR), the Department was awarded HK\$2 million for two research projects. Congratulations to Professor Kathleen Ahrens and Dr Mable Chan as the principal investigators of the projects. The results once again showed the strengths of our academic staff in various research areas.

1. Project title: Children’s Literature in English Language Teaching for Primary Students in Hong Kong (CLELT)

Principal Investigator: Professor Kathleen Ahrens
Funding Awarded: HK\$1,149,214

Learning a new language, be it native or foreign, by using authentic children’s literature can offer extra motivation for young learners to engage with stories in ways that are both meaningful and language rich. Literature also allows young readers to identify themselves on the pages of a book, letting them know they are understood and valued in society.

The goal of this project is to develop teaching materials for Hong Kong children’s literature written in English. The project will focus on books for children and young adults following the general criteria: 1) authors who have lived in Hong Kong; 2) books produced in Hong Kong; and/or 3) stories set in Hong Kong. Building on insights from narrative theory, books will be analyzed as a whole, in order to select a suggested list of books to be used in English language teaching (ELT) in Hong Kong primary schools (P1-P6). We will also use relevant ELT methodology to develop sample teaching materials for using Anglophone Hong Kong children’s literature in the classroom to develop students’ literacy and intercultural awareness. Professor Ahrens is being assisted in this project by a Postdoctoral Fellow, Dr Marija Todorova, an expert in children’s literature and translation.



2. Project title: Communicative needs of Chinese professionals in Hong Kong

Principal Investigator: Dr Mable Chan
Funding Awarded: HK\$882,286

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of language and the communicative needs (spoken and written) of Chinese professionals in Hong Kong using both quantitative and qualitative data. The target participants include Chinese professionals from the four key industries in Hong Kong. Around 250 participants will be invited to fill in a questionnaire and 60 to join the subsequent interview.

The study is significant in collecting systematic and comprehensive data to reveal contemporary language use and needs of working adults in the local workplace. Findings from this study will help inform the government of relevant language policies that should be introduced to improve the language proficiency/standard of Chinese professionals. There are also pedagogical implications for curriculum design of business and communication-related courses and programmes that will benefit business English learners.

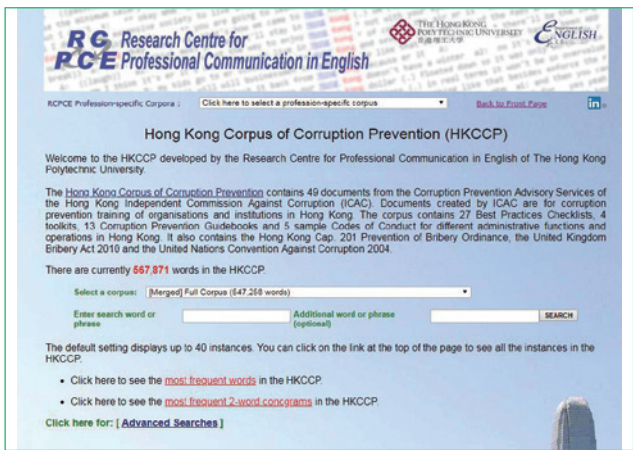


New Corpora by the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English

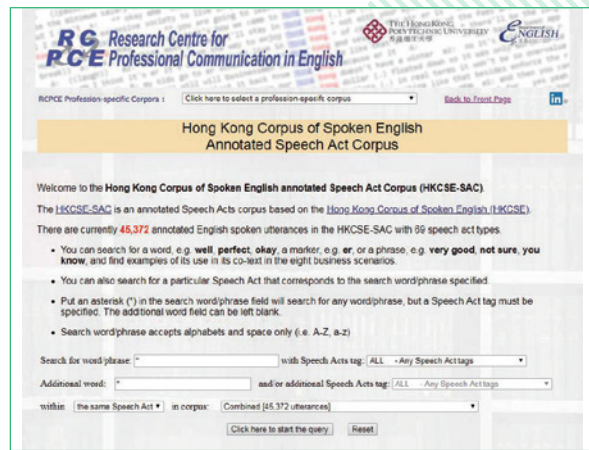
The Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPE) has added two new corpora to the group of online RCPE Profession-specific Corpora. The first is the Hong Kong Corpus of Corruption Prevention, a half-million-word corpus that contains training materials covering fifteen sectors/industries in Hong Kong from the Corruption Prevention Advisory Service, ICAC Hong Kong, and the respective legislation of Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. The second is the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English Annotated Speech Act Corpus that contains speech-act tagged analysis on the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English.

The RCPE Profession-specific Corpora website has served almost 3,000 users from 79 regions and countries from September 2017 to March 2018 and is ranked 4th, 5th and 7th on Google search queries for the strings "corpus of research", "English corpus" and "corpus" respectively.

Visit the RCPE Profession-specific Corpora at <http://rcpe.engl.polyu.edu.hk> for more information.



The Hong Kong Corpus of Corruption Prevention



The Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English Annotated Speech Act Corpus

Recent Research Publications

Chan, C. S. C. (2018). Proposing and illustrating a research-informed approach to curriculum development for specific topics in business English. *English for Specific Purposes*, 52, 27-46. doi: 10.1016/j.esp.2018.07.001

Feng, D. & Zhang, S. (2018). Language, attitude and party politics: A critical analysis of the representation of Republicans and Democrats in presidential weekly addresses. *Pragmatics and Society*, 9(2), 232-251.

Ho, V. (2018). Using metadiscourse in making persuasive attempts through workplace request emails. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 134, 70-81.

Hu, G. (2018). The challenges of World Englishes for assessing English proficiency. In E. L. Low & A. Pakir (Eds.), *World Englishes: RE-thinking paradigms* (pp. 78-95). New York: Routledge.

Ladegaard, H. J. (2018). Globalizing and changing culture. In J. Nussbaum (ed.) *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication* (pp.32). New York: Oxford University Press.