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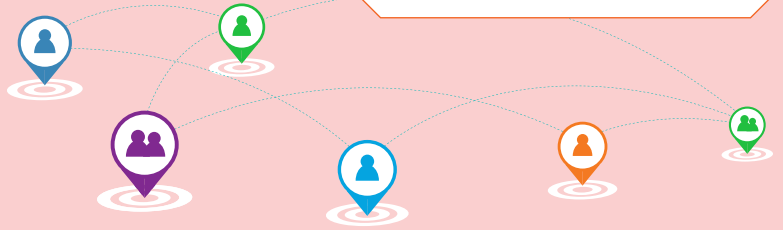


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## HIGHLIGHTS

- **P.2** 6<sup>th</sup> 'TALKING ACROSS THE WORLD' Symposium
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## 16<sup>th</sup> International Pragmatics Conference (9 - 14 June 2019)



The conference's six plenary lectures attract 300 – 400 participants each.

The 16<sup>th</sup> International Pragmatics Conference (IPrA 2019) was organised by the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA) and hosted by the Department of English from 9-14 June 2019, with sponsorship from the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE), the Hong Kong Academy of the Humanities (HKAH), and John Benjamins Publishing Company. This year's theme – Pragmatics of the Margins – reflects Hong Kong's unique position as a place where post-coloniality, marginalisation, and entanglement inform public discourse. The conference is an important networking platform for interdisciplinary scholarly exchange and collaboration in the field of linguistics. It also provides scholars with a snapshot of current trends and developments in the academic fields of inquiry and teaching. The conference was attended by over 950 scholars from 55 countries and regions.

Plenary lectures were given by Professor Eric Anchimbe (Universität Bayreuth), Professor Jonathan Culpeper (Lancaster University), Professor Louise Cummings (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University), Professor Gu Yueguo (The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing), Professor Meredith Marra (Victory University of Wellington), and Professor Marina Terkourafi (Universiteit Leiden). Videos of several of the plenaries are available for viewing on the Department's YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/englpolyu>.

Over 800 conference papers explored topics on the themes of margins and entanglements, including quotation in political discourse; the pragmatics of 'global centres' and 'peripheries' in healthcare communication research; gender, employment, language, regionality, and class transition; emancipatory pragmatics: probing language usage in diverse contexts; language and legal practice; and workplace discourse and intercultural pragmatics, to name a few. A special highlight of the IPrA conference was the poster session, which was held on the penultimate day of the conference and provided conference participants with opportunities to meet up and discuss the posters with the presenters. Other highlights included the presentation of the John J. Gumperz Life-time Achievement Award 2019 to Professor Elizabeth C. Traugott during the opening ceremony and presentations for the Best Student Paper Award and Best Student Poster Award during the closing ceremony.



IPrA President Professor Stephen Levinson welcomes attendees at the opening of the conference.



Participants actively discuss related topics during the parallel presentation sessions.



Local site committee members toast with participants during the conference dinner.

## 6<sup>th</sup> 'TALKING ACROSS THE WORLD' Symposium – Communication Skills in Hong Kong and Regional Contact Centres (16 May 2019)

The Talking Across the World (TAW) Symposium focuses on professional communication practice in the regional contact centre industry. Practitioners and academics share and exchange their observations and research findings related to the contact centre industry. The 6<sup>th</sup> TAW Symposium was organised by the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE), Department of English, with support from the Hong Kong Call Centre Association (HKCCA) and Future Perfect. The symposium serves as a platform for lining up theoretical research and industrial practices which influence each other.

The one-day symposium had eleven local and international speakers from contact centres operations (including American Express, AXA General Insurance, and HKT Limited), and related research was discussed to provide insightful sharing of the latest developments and challenges in the field.



Participants at the symposium



Dr Jane Lockwood gives a plenary speech titled *The Perpetual Fantasy: From offshoring and outsourcing to Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the contact centre industry, which examines current quality assurance mechanisms in call centres and shows how the research demonstrates that a best practice is needed for the industry.*

## Academic Staff Member Gives Talk on Metaphors (4 April 2019)



Professor Kathleen Ahrens, Director of the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE), gave a talk at the First Cross-Disciplinary Roundtable Workshop on Language and Finance with participants from the School of Accounting and Finance (AF) and the Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies (CBS).

The workshop was titled *Examining TRADE metaphors in State of the Union addresses*. During the workshop, Prof. Ahrens briefly introduced metaphorical framing and then used a diachronic approach to discuss how economic metaphors describing trade changed in a corpus of 225 years of US State of the Union addresses (1790–2014). Three key issues regarding the use of trade metaphor were also addressed in this presentation.

## Non-Chinese Speaking Students Learn Hands-On Linguistics Skills (17 April 2019)



The students have an enjoyable afternoon by learning new English knowledge that can be applied in everyday life.

The Department organised a workshop on practical English skills for a group of 26 non-Chinese speaking students. They were participants of the 'Providing Life Planning Education Activities for Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Students in Secondary Schools' 2018/19 service sponsored by Caritas Youth and Community Service. Dr Dennis Tay, Programme Leader of the BA (Hons) in English Studies for the Professions (BAESP), gave the students an overview of the programme. The workshop was conducted by Dr Phoenix Lam, Associate Programme Leader of the BAESP, on the subject of authorship studies – an area of linguistics. She explained to the students how authorship studies can help solve crime in authentic settings. Students were given a case to solve together, which allowed them to apply what they learnt from the workshop.

## Departmental Seminars

1

### The role of pragmatics in the diagnosis of dementia (1 April 2019)

With a research focus on the areas of communication and pragmatic disorders and public health reasoning, Professor Louise Cummings of our Department reported some preliminary data from a study of English-speaking clients with neurodegenerative conditions other than Alzheimer's disease. While their performance in discourse production tasks suggested the clients were experiencing early disruption of pragmatic language skills, Prof. Cummings highlighted that none of the participants had received a diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment or dementia. She further discussed the development of pragmatic language criteria that can supplement current diagnostic systems in dementia.



2

### Understanding the use and learning of synonymy: A corpus/cognitive linguistic perspective (30 April 2019)

Specialising in the description and teaching of English grammar and vocabulary using cognitive- and corpus-linguistic approaches, Professor Liu Dilin from the University of Alabama, United States, explained that the use of synonyms are important for effective communication and language learning but present difficulties for second language learners. Drawing on his own studies as well as current corpus/cognitive linguistics-based research, Prof. Liu discussed effective ways to understand both native English speakers' and ESL learners' use of synonyms, especially what cognitive, contextual, and linguistic factors drive their synonym-choice decisions, as well as the challenges that ESL learners face and the process they follow in their acquisition of synonyms.



Department Head Professor Hans Ladegaard gives students an overview of the Department and explains to them the benefits of having an English major for their future academic and/or professional careers.

### Special Gathering for BDLCC Students (8 April 2019)

The Department organised a special gathering for students from the Broad Discipline of Language, Culture, and Communication (BDLCC) to get to know them better and to give them more information about the BA (Hons) in English Studies for the Professions (BAESP) programme. By learning about the structure and content of the programme, students can see how the BAESP may be a good fit with their interests and aspirations. This can help them to make a decision on their choice of major in June.

The event also included a game session and an interactive quiz session where participating students won various prizes. Two final-year BAESP students hosted a sharing session about their study experiences and participation in other programmes, like Student Exchange, WIE, and Service Learning. Our teachers and other students were also there to answer questions related to the curriculum and graduate employment opportunities.

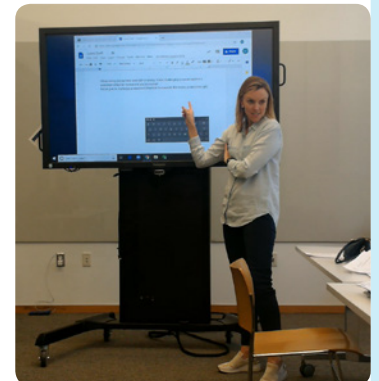
## Academic Staff Member Visits Yale University for Teaching Development

Dr Angela Tse received funding support from the PolyU Overseas Scholarship Scheme (Teaching Development) and had four weeks of study visit at Yale University in the United States between 24 March and 19 April. The visit aimed to explore how the use of newly renovated interactive learning spaces in PolyU can help promote students' learning of literary texts.

As active learning and the use of interactive classrooms in the teaching of literature are still budding at PolyU, learning and seeking advice from experienced teachers in an internationally reputable institution like Yale University, which has been using innovative methods and classrooms to teach similar subjects, would help to maximise the functions of newly renovated classrooms in literature teaching.

With Professor Heather Klemann, Director of Expository Writing from the Department of English at Yale University, as the main collaborator, the visit was comprised of a variety of activities which facilitated pedagogical exchange between Dr Tse and academics and staff from various disciplines. The undertaken activities included: class observation and post-observation evaluation, interviewing representatives from different education-related units, and visits to classrooms and a variety of learning spaces, including museums and galleries.

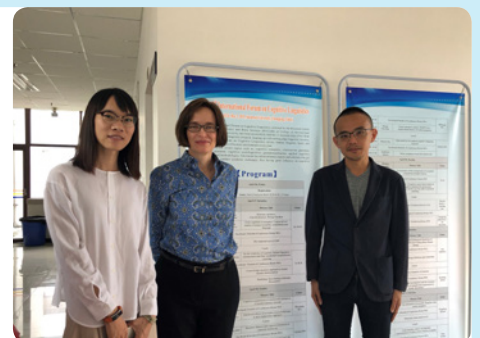
The four-week project visit to Yale University far exceeded the original objectives of Dr Tse's project. She found that while the teaching of literary texts inevitably involves substantial passive transmission of knowledge, literature subjects, as a channel to enhance students' literacy and awareness of the humanities, can be delivered in a variety of flexible classroom settings so that complex literary, social, and humanities issues can be discussed in stress-free ways by students of all language, intellectual, and affective levels.



Prof. Heather Klemann, the major collaborator of the project, uses a mobile computer-media touchscreen display called 'The Cart' in the Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning to teach the subject 'Styles of Academic & Professional Prose'.

## Presentations at International Forum on Cognitive Linguistics (26 April – 3 May 2019)

Professor Kathleen Ahrens and Dr Dennis Tay were keynote speakers at the 12<sup>th</sup> International Forum on Cognitive Linguistics held at Southwest University in Chongqing, China. Prof. Ahrens gave two speeches, titled *A knowledge-structure approach to source domain determination* and *When metaphors break the fourth wall*. Two other speeches were delivered by Dr Tay, titled *Data analytics for applied cognitive linguistic research* and *Emotional effects of metaphor in psychotherapy: A skin conductance approach*. PhD student Molly Pan also presented a paper titled *Multimodal construction of depression in Chinese video ads*.



Dr Dennis Tay, Prof. Kathleen Ahrens, and PhD student Molly Pan at the Forum.



## HK\$424K Granted for Research Project

In the June announcements for the 2019/20 General Research Fund (GRF) by the Research Grants Council (RGC), Dr Dennis Tay was awarded HK\$424,000 for his research project. Congratulations to Dr Tay for his outstanding research work. Below is an overview of the project.

### Project title: Diachronic discourse structure and typology with time series models

**Principal Investigator:** Dr Dennis Tay

**Approved duration:** 24 months

**Funding Awarded:** HKD424,000

There is long-standing interest in how discourse forms, functions, and use change over time. However, different approaches to time-based or diachronic discourse analysis face collective issues with i) connecting temporal to discourse variables in clear and replicable ways, ii) handling complex change patterns in more spontaneous discourse contexts over shorter time frames, and iii) limiting the analysis of change to a small number of time intervals, without considering possible interdependences or autocorrelations between them.

This project applies and evaluates how Time Series Analysis methods (TSA) can address these issues and develop novel conceptualizations of discourse across time. TSA is widely used in finance and engineering to understand naturally-occurring variables like stock prices in terms of their key components (trends, seasons, cycles, and irregular fluctuations) and autocorrelation structure. This information is used to build a suitable time series model that reveals how successive observations are mutually related, and forecasts future values based on historical values. This project will i) show that the frequencies of discourse phenomena across contexts and time scales (e.g. metaphors in psychotherapy sessions, thematic keywords in newspapers, or pronouns in social media) resemble canonical time series, and can thus be analysed with TSA methodology; ii) apply the Box-Jenkins TSA methodology to multiple discourse datasets and critically evaluate how well the models fit the data; iii) interpret the models in ways that draw upon



and enrich qualitative analyses of discourse content and structure, and iv) develop a novel discourse typology using time series model types as a basis of categorization.

The project advances discourse analytic methodology through an approach established in empirical social sciences but less familiar to discourse analysts, directly addressing the methodological issues outlined above. It also makes theoretical contributions by combining quantitative modelling with qualitative interpretation of discourse and developing an innovative classification of diachronic discourse types for future research purposes. The specific discourse datasets to be analysed, covering a range of contexts (e.g. psychotherapy, classroom discourse, newspaper discourse, political speeches, social media) and phenomena (e.g. metaphors, pronouns, non-informational markers, thematic keywords, rhetorical questions) will furthermore address specific issues of interest in their respective areas.

## RCPCE Supports the First Hong Kong Linguistics Olympiad Award Ceremony (14 April 2019)

The Department and its Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE) co-sponsored the first Hong Kong Linguistic Olympiad (HKLO). The International Linguistics Olympiad (IOL) is one of 12 International Science Olympiads for secondary school students. It has been held annually since 2003. Each year, teams of young linguists from around the world gather and test their minds against the world's toughest puzzles in language and linguistics. This year is the first time Hong Kong took part. Professor Kathleen Ahrens, Director of RCPCE, gave a talk at the award ceremony and encouraged high school students to continue to aim high in their linguistic endeavours.



## Recent Research Publications

Ahrens, K. (2019). First Lady, Secretary of State and Presidential Candidate: A comparative study of the role-dependent use of metaphor in politics. In Julien Perrez, Min Reuchamps and Paul Thibodeau (Eds.) *Variation in Political Metaphor*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Chevalier, B. A., Watson, B. M., Barras, M.A., and Cottrell, W. N. (2019). Developing preliminary steps in a pharmacist communication – patient outcome pathway. *Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, 72(4), 271-281.

Lei, J., & Hu, G. (2019). Doctoral candidates' dual role as student and expert scholarly writer: An activity theory perspective. *English for Specific Purposes*, 54, 62-74.

Tay, D. (2019). Language in Mental Health Disorders. *Oxford Bibliographies in Linguistics*. doi: 10.1093/obo/9780199772810-0246.

## Fruitful Exchange Experience in Germany

Funded by the Erasmus+ Student Exchange Programme, PhD student Winnie Zeng went on a five-month study exchange at Freie University Berlin (FU Berlin) in Germany from March to July 2019. This was an eye-opening experience for her in terms of both academic and personal growth.

▮▮ I improved my academic skills by auditing courses at FU Berlin, including Construction Grammar and Corpus Linguistics. I also regularly attended the colloquia held by my host supervisor Professor Anatol Stefanowitsch, where I had many chances to exchange ideas with his other PhD students. I have received valuable comments from Prof. Stefanowitsch and his research team on the topic of my PhD thesis. Another benefit from this exchange study was that it provided more convenient ways to travel to other European countries for studying or attending academic conferences. On 15 May, I went to the University of Liège in Belgium to attend an academic seminar: the 7<sup>th</sup> RaAM Specialised Seminar. I presented a study titled 'Applying time series analysis to study metaphors across time: The case of public speeches by principal officials of Hong Kong SAR (1997-2017)' with my PhD supervisors, Professor Kathleen Ahrens and Dr Dennis Tay. During the seminar, I had many chances to meet with other European scholars in the same field.

I feel truly honoured to have had this chance to go on exchange in Germany. I am really thankful to the Faculty of Humanities and the Erasmus+ programme. Having an international exchange experience is definitely rewarding for students, as they can take the opportunity to explore the world, broaden their visions, and expand their knowledge at both intellectual and interpersonal levels. ▮▮



Winnie visits a historic site in Germany: the East Side Gallery.



Winnie meets European scholars at the RaAM 7<sup>th</sup> Seminar in Liège, Belgium in May.



## MA Alumnus Wins New Researcher Award

Dr Jack Pun, graduate of our MA in English Language Studies in 2011, has recently been presented with the New Researcher Award by the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences of City University of Hong Kong (CityU) in recognition of research excellence. He is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at CityU.

After finishing his MA in our Department, Dr Pun went to the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom in 2013 and studied for almost four years for a DPhil in Education (Applied Linguistics and Science Education). His primary research interests focus on Language Education and Health Communication.

He works within the field of Applied Linguistics, with research interests in English as a medium of instruction (EMI), English language education, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and systemic functional linguistics. As a bilingual speaker of Chinese and English, he is also motivated to investigate the effectiveness and patient satisfaction of health communication from a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary perspective.

