

PRESENTATION

Sailing On

The second volume of *Language Studies Working Papers* comes at a time of major change for the School of Languages and European Studies and we trust that the future of the publication will be enhanced by inclusion of content from the English Literature section of the new School. In line with such developments, the contributions presented here reflect the wide-ranging interests of students and staff engaged in applied linguistics research.

The three papers in Part I deal with various aspects of grammar and discourse. J. Laws systematically explores the behaviour of auxiliaries associated with Italian unaccusative verbs, based on data collected from native speakers enrolled at the University of Reading. The results generally confirm the validity of the gradient framework, whose semantic subclasses follow the sequence Appearance > Directed Motion > Internally-Caused Change-of-State. Further research is needed, however, to identify dialectal influences and the role of animacy on auxiliary-selection variability.

Moving from grammar to sociolinguistic variation, H. Pichler and S. Levey examine the use of discourse features in interviews conducted in north-east England (Berwick-upon-Tweed). Their in-depth analysis of corpus data shows that the likelihood of such items as *like* or *you know* co-occurring with general extenders varies across age groups. These findings may point to a generational shift in interactional style and/or to ongoing discourse-pragmatic changes within contemporary spoken English.

Speech is also the theme of P. Cutrone's work on Japanese EFL learners and American teaching assistants. The focus here is on 'backchannelling', i.e. on the responses/ reactions given by a listener to the primary speaker. By developing an analytical framework for the description of such items, the author hopes to gain insights that will lead to improved pedagogical tools and fewer misunderstandings in intercultural encounters.

In Part II, which targets the construction of written academic texts, L. D'Angelo examines academic posters, an often-overlooked genre the use of which calls for closer scrutiny. Albeit its more formal features are often mentioned in handbooks and EAP guides, the poster's communicative purpose can be fully understood only through a multimodal semiotic analysis, capable of accounting for its visual as well as textual content. The framework suggested by the author is illustrated using a poster presented at a recent applied linguistics conference.

Finally Liu X. investigates a group of Chinese EFL learners and their knowledge of audience, discourse conventions, and metacognitive writing strategies in Business English. The evidence gained from interviews with 25 undergraduates indicates that argumentative writing can be fully mastered if its teaching includes genre-specific guidance and metacognitive instruction.

This brief overview offers the reader a taste of the diverse nature of research which has been, and continues to be, undertaken in the area of Language Studies. It is hoped that the establishment of the new School of English Language and Literature will add to this diversity, while still allowing the incorporation of papers dealing with languages other than English.

For each contribution in this volume credit goes of course to the authors (whose patience and adherence to deadlines can only be commended) and to the reviewers for their valuable feedback. J. Laws has once again been of great help with the online editing process.

As promised, the names of colleagues who served as referees on Vol. 1 (2009) of *Language Studies Working Papers* are listed alphabetically below:

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