

# Clinical Language Sciences at Reading: An Overview

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This presentation focuses on the development of the Department of Clinical Language Sciences (CLS) at the University of Reading between 2003 and 2015. It presents an outline of the main changes which occurred in the course of the years and how these have led to the establishment and growth of the CLS. I will consider the period between 2003 and 2015 because I joined the University of Reading in July 2003 as a lecturer in clinical linguistics at what was then known as the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, hence I have personally experienced the developments that have occurred in this period.

## 1. From Clinical Section to Department of Clinical Language Sciences

When I joined the Clinical Section of the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies in 2003, there were two clinically qualifying programmes: a BSc and an MSc in Linguistics and Language Pathology (which became Speech and Language Therapy in 2004). The Clinical Section was led by Prof. Susan Edwards and I was at the time the only clinical linguist directly employed there. In 2005 there was a major restructuring of the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies and the Clinical Section moved to the Earley Gate side of campus (from central campus) and joined the Department of Psychology to become the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences as from August 2005. The first Head of the Clinical Language Sciences Department (CLS) was Prof. Susan Edwards, starting in August 2005, who held this position until her retirement in September 2010. Prof. Doug Saddy took over as Head of Department in October 2010 and then Prof. Theo Marinis took over as Head of Department in August 2012.

The location of the Department of Clinical Language Sciences moved from Central Campus to the Earley Gate side of the university campus. Given that the members of staff from Clinical Language Sciences maintained links with the Applied Linguistics Department, which remained to be based on central campus, an opportunity arose for some much needed physical exercise, which involved a 10 minute walk or a short cycle ride from one site to the other for meetings or social events. To facilitate time efficiency in reaching the Applied Linguistics department or any other part of the university, Prof. Susan Edwards brought a bicycle which was permanently parked in the bicycle rack outside the Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences building and which was available for any member of staff who was keen to use it. I was one of these staff who regularly used the bicycle to get to other parts of the university.

## 2. Academic and clinical staff and current programmes

Since 2005, the CLS has been growing rapidly in terms of staff and student numbers. In August 2005 there were six academic members of staff. This number doubled by 2015. Currently (September 2015) the department has 12 academic staff members (Dr Arpita Bose, Dr Ian Cunnings, Ms Carol Fairfield, Dr Tom Loucas, Prof. Theo Marinis, Dr Lotte



Prof. Theo Marinis, Head of Department

Meteyard, Dr Christos Pliatsikas, Dr Holly Robson, Prof. Jason Rothman, Prof. Doug Saddy, Dr Vesna Stojanovik and Dr David Ward). Of these, six members of staff hold clinical qualifications (Dr Bose, Ms Fairfield, Dr Loucas, Dr Meteyard, Dr Robson and Dr Ward). There are ten clinical tutors (Allison Biddle, Linda Chitty, Alison Cox, Sara Fincham-Majumdar, Melissa Loucas, Helen Marlow, Kate Munro, Katherine Pritchard, Theo Read, and Andrea Szego) who support students on clinical placements and carry out a lot of the clinical teaching in the department. There are also two teaching fellows: Dr Mirjana Sokolovic-Perovic and George Pontikas, both of whom are linguists.

There are currently four programmes of study in the department: two clinically qualifying programmes, a BSc and an MSc in Speech and Language Therapy, and two non-clinically qualifying programmes (a BSc in Language Sciences and Psychology and an MSc in Language Sciences). The BSc in Speech Language Therapy has 32 NHS-funded places and the MSc equivalent has ten funded places. The BSc in Language Sciences and Psychology is a relatively new programme which started to run in October 2014. This programme has proven very popular and it recruited 29 students in its second year (the target was 20), suggesting that there is a need for a programme which is flexible and offers students the opportunity to pursue careers in a wider range of fields, including psychology, education, speech and language therapy, linguistics, etc. The MSc in Language Sciences started with two registered students in 2007, under the name of Neuroscience of Language. The name was changed in 2013 to make it more general and appealing for a wide range of interests. The programme currently has eight students and three strands: (1) neuroscience of language; (2) language development and disorders; (3) multilingualism.

### 3. Facilities and resources

The CLS boasts outstanding facilities for teaching and research. There is a new state-of-the-art speech and language therapy clinic, which comprises four clinic rooms with observation and recording facilities. The new clinic was purpose-built in 2005 when the Clinical Section moved to the Department of Psychology to form the new School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences. It originally had three clinic rooms but was later expanded and a fourth room was created. These rooms are regularly used for observation purposes to support the teaching of the clinical modules and they are also used for data collection or other research related activities.

There is a large Assessment Library which houses a wide range of paediatric and adult standardised assessments and therapy materials. The library is updated annually and is used by all students in the department as well as staff. There is also a new Speech Research Laboratory which is used to support the teaching of Instrumental Phonetics and Instrumental Clinical Phonetics, as well as for research. It contains nine dedicated computers which have speech analysis software as well as equipment such as a laryngograph.

The Department has close links with the Centre of Integrative Neuroscience and Neurodynamics (CINN), which was established in 2006, and has state-of-the-art facilities for brain imaging using a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scanner and electro-encephalography (EEG) and eye-tracking and is widely used for research on both typical and atypical populations. The



PCLS fMRI scanner

Department also has close links with the Centre for Literacy and Multilingualism (CeLM), which was established in 2013. The School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences also has excellent research laboratory facilities, including a preferential looking-and-listening laboratory and children's EEG laboratory.

#### **4. Areas of research**

Staff within the CLS are engaged in a wide range of research topics covering typical lifespan development as well as atypical/clinical populations. Within typical lifespan development, staff address questions of long-standing relevance such as: "How do children acquire grammar, vocabulary and use of language? What influences changes in children's cognitive abilities? What aging-related changes do we find in the cognitive abilities of healthy adults? And how do these cognitive changes relate to neural changes?" Examples of questions being addressed within the area of atypical/clinical populations include: "Why are some cognitive abilities affected more than others in developmental disorders and do they change over time? How do conditions of the nervous system (for example stroke, dementia, or Parkinson's Disease) affect language and other cognitive functions in these populations?"

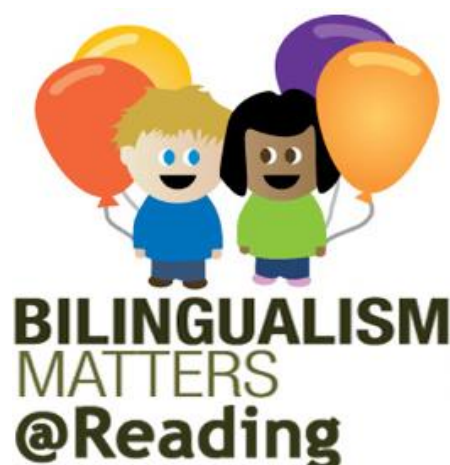
#### **5. Examples of ongoing research projects and interests**

The following are some examples of ongoing research projects carried out by members of staff.

Theo Marinis and Elizabeth Shirley are investigating how children with specific language impairment process language in real time and whether they process language structures similarly or differently from children who do not have specific language impairment. Vesna Stojanovik and Emily Seager (a PhD student) are investigating whether an early intervention focusing on improving joint attention skills can optimise language learning outcomes for children with Down syndrome. Holly Meteyard, Arpita Bose and Holly Robson have been investigating the causes and nature of acquired language impairments, using mixed methodologies and emerging neuroscience techniques such as Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS), fMRI, eye-tracking and EEG.

Carol Fairfield has been involved in collaborative research with the Food Sciences department, looking at identifying optimal thickeners and thickness of fluids and increasing the density and palatability of pureed food given to patients with swallowing disorders (dysphagia). David Ward has been doing research on stammering and cluttering, Jason Rothman and Christos Pliatsikas have been investigating second language processing in bilingual and trilingual individuals, as well as in heritage speakers. Ian Cummings has been working on language processing in children with autism spectrum disorders, specific language impairment and those who are bilingual.

Many members of CLS staff (Theo Marinis, Ian Cummings, Jason Rothman, Christos Pliatsikas, Vesna Stojanovik, Arpita Bose and others) are closely associated with the recently-formed Centre for Literacy and Multilingualism (CeLM). This is a research centre which aims to generate new insights into the workings of the multilingual mind and to offer new perspectives on how literacy skills develop in monolingual, bilingual and multilingual individuals. CeLM @ University of Reading hosts a



new branch of Bilingualism Matters. Bilingualism Matters provides advice and information on child bilingualism to anyone interested in raising, educating and caring for bilingual and multilingual children.

In 2014 the Centre for Autism Research Studies was launched; Tom Loucas (CLS) and Fiona Knott (Psychology) are its co-directors. This is a regional centre providing excellence in research on autism-spectrum disorders and is a hub for wider engagement of academia, clinical research and non-government organisations in and around the Thames Valley. The centre also functions as a diagnostic clinic, providing diagnostic services for children and adults. It offers a full range of expertise for industry, education and other institutions.

## **6. Looking into the future**

Drawing on the research and expertise of its academic and clinical staff, the CLS department is planning to develop Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes for practising speech and language therapists in the near future. Another future plan is to increase the number of undergraduate students on the non-clinical BSc in Language Sciences and Psychology, because this programme has proven to be in strong demand and the number of students who entered the programme in its second year has more than doubled. Another possible future venture is to develop an MSc programme in Speech and Language Therapy at the University of Reading Malaysia ([www.reading.edu.my](http://www.reading.edu.my)).

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