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Catching Up with Allan Luke

SAAL Quarterly will be featuring an interview section where researchers and practitioners from the different fields of applied linguistics will be profiled. We are inviting all of you to suggest applied linguists you'd like us to profile.

Our first interviewee is Prof. Allan Luke. He is a Professor of Education at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). He was the Foundation Dean of the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice at NIE from 2003-2005. He is currently developing new research projects in early literacy, accountability and assessment, and comparative pedagogies. He is co-editor of: *Teaching Education* (Routledge), *Review of Research in Education* (American Educational Research Association), *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* (Routledge) and *Pedagogies: An International Journal* (Erlbaum). This is the first part of his interview.

1. What have you been up to since you went back to Australia?

I have a PhD seminar of Queensland teachers, school principals, and ministry people now and I wish I could bottle the discussions and debates, which run the gamut from theory to practice, history to the present - we're discussing everything from Dewey to Sen to the work of critical urban planners and social geographers like Mike Davis, David Harvey and Edward Soja. The discussions range from ecological issues to urban demography and then back to schools as social spaces. We've recently had the Brisbane Festival of Ideas, which included UK sociologist Frank Furedi, digital science fiction writer Corey Doctorow, lawyers, Aboriginal community elders, urban planners and teachers all in public debates. It attracted over 10,000 people and was broadcast over public radio. It acted as a civic and community 'amplifier' for a free ranging debate and discussion of these issues. Incredibly stimulating, alternatively exciting and irritating - but the level of public intellectual debate around community and social 'futures' in Australia is at a pivotal, important moment: and teachers and students are increasingly active participants. Every talk I've given in Australia since returning leads to hard questions, vigorous debate from the floor: education is THE hot topic. The 'cultural cringe' and localism that characterised the old Queensland is going very fast. This is what's entailed in Brisbane and Australia becoming 'world places'. The great thing is that we're seeing these debates filtering back into universities, schools and lounge rooms.

More to the academic point, I'm busy finishing a couple of publication projects on educational policy in new times and curriculum theory, writing up articles and

chapters with Singapore and US colleagues, and I'm starting a new project on textbook analysis with Teun Van Dijk. Also, I'm editing the American Educational Research Association annual yearbook: Review of Research in Education, and working on the International Encyclopedia of Education and the Sage Handbook of Curriculum. Also, soaking up the ambiance of Brisbane as it becomes a world city.

2. Tell us about your current work at QUT.

I'm one of 21 new international research professors at QUT in key areas - which is pushing ahead very quickly to develop a different, non-traditional intellectual culture. QUT is an interesting 'seedbed' in the making. It quit trying to be 'the traditional university' and is pushing bravely into new economies, new cultural forms, new social futures. This means I'm getting more dialogue with people working in other fields - health, economics, creative arts, IT - than most educational researchers would have. We're just now bringing together work in 'creative industries' with education, discussing and debating new workforce competences for digital and performing arts, and the use of the arts to generate different and better approaches to educating kids and adults who start from economically marginalised positions. The teams that are forming are fascinating: musicians, artists, video game writers, teachers, cultural studies theorists, economists and urban planners. The orientation is to bring together fields that haven't been talking to each other to begin this process of remaking education. It's an extension of the work on multiliteracies we did in the New London Group's Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (Harvard Educational Review, 1996) - and there's a new 'New London' paper that we've got coming out in the Harvard Educational Review in the new year.

3. What research projects are you currently working on?

I'm working as part of a team of Australian and Aboriginal researchers looking at using digital arts, new technologies, with rock/rap, dance, drama, plastic and visual arts in both a government funded QUT school and in lower socioeconomic community schools, some that were involved in the New Basics 'rich task' trials I worked on in 1999-2000. Some of the people we've had in and around are Julien Sefton-Green (London), Tara Goldstein (Toronto), but there are a lot of interesting researchers on the ground here in Brisbane. It's a curious combination of community activism, education and digital arts. It's in formation - we've got funding and support but are now looking at putting some bones on the research and development designs. I'm spending time developing research projects in four of the schools which pick up the bottom 5% of kids and are re-engaging them

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through digital arts, music production, and so forth. I'm also working on a new curriculum design paper for a major Australian state system that projects what the relationships between curriculum and equity might be in their next curriculum reform about 5-10 years off.

4. How is the music scene in Brisbane compared to the music scene in Singapore?

There's a lot of great music in Singapore - great players and great writers. What's happened in Brisbane is that there are more and more venues for playing. Through a great discourse analyst, scholar, songwriter, musician - Professor Phil Graham (a colleague of Fairclough and Wodak - currently editor of *Critical Discourse Studies*, visit his website), I'm getting to meet and play with some great Brisbane musicians who were around in the 1960s and 70s. Many are working day jobs, have put kids through university, and are retired - and they sit at home with incredible compositions, incredible music. Phil is busy using his work with ACRO (see the website) to archive and record this 'new folk tradition' that will be lost unless we move quickly.

5. Any gigs lately?

Just in peoples' garages and lounge rooms. Recommendation: go see Neil Young's new movie directed by Jonathan Demme, *Heart of Gold* - moving, Canadian and emotionally rich experience.

Second Report on the Singapore Child Language SIG

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The Singapore Child Language SIG had its first meeting in September 2005, reported on at <http://www.saal.org.sg/sq72.pdf>. The present report concerns SIG-related developments since that meeting and up to the end of April 2006. These developments were regularly announced to SIG members through the SIG network. More on this network below:

Research on Norming of Child Language in Singapore

In the first SIG meeting, norming of child language in Singapore emerged as the SIG's prime area of interest, on the understanding that child speech targets language uses that occur naturally in the child's actual linguistic environment. Academic or clinical assessment of active and passive linguistic development, in all four official languages in Singapore, is best served by a solid, empirically normed database.

As far as I was able to ascertain, this is the current state of affairs concerning child language norming in Singapore.

- Chris Brebner (Flinders University) has norming data for the *Renfrew Action Pictures Test* for local English in Singapore kindergarten children.
- K Ramiah (NIE) has corpus data on kindergarten Tamil Children.
- Susan J. Rickard Liow (NUS) has collected picture naming norms in Malay for adults. The data will be used to develop vocabulary tests suitable for children.
- Seetha Lakshmi (NIE) has data on 1 to 3-year-old Tamil children.
- Tan Seok Hui (NUS) is the PI in a project researching vocabulary development in Singapore English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil, using the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories (CDI). Research assistants are Denise Liu and Haryani Binte Mohamed Affandi.

Tan Seok Hui is still looking for baby informants for this project. If you have, or know of, babies between 8 months and 3 years of age who could 'volunteer' for her study, please check details and contacts on the project website at http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/psyts/infantlang_home.htm.

Tan Seok Hui has also recently initiated contacts for prospective collaboration with the *Singapore Twin Project*. This project is managed by the Centre for Molecular Epidemiology (NUS), with Prof Chia Kee Seng as PI and Sharon Wee as research assistant. The project website is at <http://www.med.nus.edu.sg/cof/stp.html>. If you are a twin, or know of any twins, you may want to make yourself known to the researchers on this project through this website.

Seminars / Conferences

Several seminars and international conferences of interest to the SIG took place, or will soon take place, with the active participation of SIG members.

Seminars

- Nov 2005, at the NUS. Laura M. Taylor (Coventry University, UK), ‘Shape constancy and Theory of Mind: Is there a link?’
- Jan 2006, at the NIE. Loke Swee Kin (ETD/MOE), ‘ICT in Primary EL curriculum in Singapore schools.’
- Feb 2006, at the NIE. John S. Matthews (NIE/CRPP), ‘Early use of symbols: What can we learn from chimpanzees?’
- Feb 2006, at the NUS. Tan Seok Hui (NUS), ‘Vocabulary Development and Flexible Categorisation in Infancy.’
- Mar 2006, at the NUS. Chou Tai-Li (Chung Shan Medical University, Taiwan), ‘Developmental Changes in the Neural Correlates of Semantic Processing.’
- Apr 2006, at the NIE. Norhaida Aman, Wendy Bokhorst-Heng & Viniti Vaish (NIE/CRPP), ‘Singapore’s Multilingual Hothouse: Multilingualism and the challenges for pedagogy and practice.’

Conferences

- April 2006. *LangScape - Exploring Ways of Teaching Language and Literature*, Singapore. Conference website: http://www.stu.org.sg/ProfDevPros_14.htm
- May 2006. *ERAS Conference 2006* (Educational Research Association of Singapore), Singapore. Conference website: http://www.eras.org.sg/index_conference2006.htm
- June 2006. *JLSL2006* (Japanese Society for Language Sciences), Tokyo, Japan. Conference website: <http://www.cyber.sccs.chukyo-u.ac.jp/JLSL/JLSL2006/>

Bibliography of Child Language Research in Singapore

The Bibliography of Child Language Research in Singapore was first presented in *SQ* 70 and 71. The latest version, broader in scope, updated and with a revamped presentation, is now available at <http://www.saal.org.sg/sigs.html>.

I have recently received confirmation that this bibliography will be incorporated in the CHILDES overall Child Language Bibliography. The CHILDES/BIB, with over 26,000 records, is hosted by Carnegie Mellon University, USA, and is downloadable from <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/bibs/>

The bibliography will be contributed in EndNote format, which allows browsing and searching (by keyword, author, title, etc.). All references for which I could find abstracts and URLs will include them. All references on child language in

Singapore will be easily identified through inclusion of the word 'Singapore' in the EndNote keyword field.

Master of Science in Speech and Language Pathology

This programme has finally been approved. It is the first SLP programme offered in Singapore, highlighting the significance of reliable norming data for purposes of clinical diagnoses. The programme will be jointly offered by the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (SoM) and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), NUS. The planned start of the course is January 2007, and a course website will soon be available.

SIG Network

The SIG network started as a small group of interested people who keep in touch via email. The SIG has now grown to over 70 members, who are students, professionals or simply curious about child language in Singapore. They hail from several different countries and their activities and enthusiasm far exceeded my expectations. It is therefore my great pleasure to announce a new Discussion Group, the SCLSIG (Singapore Child Language SIG), with a dedicated website at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sclsig>.

The creation of this discussion group appeared to me to be the most flexible way of keeping everyone in touch with everyone else in the SIG, instead of forcing members to initiate contacts through me. This will also avoid mass-mailings, in that all postings will be available at the SCLSIG archives online.

Membership in this group is of course voluntary. As with all Yahoo groups, you will have to create a Yahoo ID to join this group. My email address is permanently at the disposal of SIG members, if you prefer to go on receiving SIG information via email, or if you encounter any difficulties registering on Yahoo.

Requests and Acknowledgements

Finally, I have two requests and an acknowledgement to make. First, a request for correction of any inaccuracies in this report or in the bibliography. Second, a request for references on research, published or ongoing in Chinese, Malay or Tamil, that concerns child language in Singapore. I cannot be of use in collating this material, because I am illiterate in all three languages. Your help will be most appreciated.

The acknowledgement concerns all the people, SIG members or not, who reported back to me with information (or the lack of it), forwarded my queries, or in any

way helped me put together this report. My sincere thanks to Norhaida Aman, Chris Brebner, Chen Ee San, Chia Kee Seng, Lee Cher Leng, Lee Cheuk Yin, Low Ee Ling, Ng Bee Chin, Susan J. Rickard Liow, Seetha Lakshmi, Shaharuddin Bin Maaruf, Rita Elaine Silver, Tan Seok Hui, Linda Thompson, Sharon Wee, and to many others for their encouragement.

Not least, many thanks to all of you for making this SIG possible.

BOOK REVIEW

Cambridge Grammar of English: A Comprehensive Guide. Spoken and Written English Grammar and Usage.

Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 973. ISBN 0-521-67439-5.

Over the past few decades, huge corpora of English have been collected, and this has enabled dictionary compilers and writers of grammars to base their work on real language usage rather than the preconceived ideas of experts about how it should be. Indeed, these corpora nowadays often include substantial quantities of spoken data, so description of the structure of English can be based on conversational as well as written language. This book is a fine example of this new generation of grammars, as it is derived from detailed analysis of the CANCODE corpus of British speech.

However, there are some obvious problems in basing a grammar on real spoken data. Inevitably, speech involves lots of hesitations and stuttering repetitions, so should these be included in the grammatical description? One can argue that such phenomena are extremely common in actual speech, so a comprehensive grammar of English should deal with them, for instance by specifying which words are most often repeated and where in an utterance a pause particle such as *erm* is most likely to occur. And indeed, in this book, some consideration is given to such issues, including the following examples:

I, I'm, I'm not sure he'll he'll be able to arrange that at such short notice.
(p. 173)

I, erm, I'm not sure what we should do here, are you? (p. 173)

Furthermore, there is even a brief discussion of clausal blends, in which an utterance is completed in a different way from how it began, such as:

They've nearly finished all the building works, hasn't it? (p. 171)

However, the question remains: should these examples be regarded as part of the grammar of English or are they simply errors? No doubt their inclusion in this book will prove controversial for many readers who will regard them as aberrations from the grammar of English rather than part of it.

This book actually adopts a commonsense approach, and despite the inclusion of a brief discussion about stuttering, pauses and clausal blends, most of the examples are in fact substantially sanitised to ensure that they effectively illustrate the grammatical structures being described. Indeed, even though all the examples are apparently derived from real language, the spoken extracts on the accompanying CD have been re-recorded specially for the book and are not the original data from the corpus, and, one suspects, at least some of them are partially edited. The authors say that their grammar book is informed by the corpus (p. 11) rather than being controlled by it.

The book starts with an alphabetical coverage of about 100 words, such as *about*, *above*, *according to*, and *across*, discussing their usage and sometimes including information from a learner corpus about how they may be misused by non-native speakers. Next it progresses to a consideration of the nature of spoken language and discourse. The bulk of the book then analyses nouns and noun phrases, verbs and verb phrases, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, clauses and all the usual topics that one would expect in a comprehensive grammar of English. Finally it concludes with appendices that deal with a range of issues such as punctuation, spelling, irregular verbs, units of measurement, and differences between British and American English. Overall, the book represents a massive collation of detailed information all presented clearly and with great authority, not just because the corpus has provided such invaluable information about the structure of English but also because of the vast experience of the two authors in describing the language. Even those who might question the rationale behind some of the coverage should be impressed by the wealth of detailed information presented here as they are sure to be able to find plenty of fascinating material to browse through or to refer to for advice.

Mention has been made above of the CD that accompanies the book, but in reality it might be more accurate to describe this as a book that accompanies a CD, for the design seems to be largely tailored for computer use, with lots of links that work best with a click of the mouse rather than laborious leafing through the pages of the book. Unfortunately, however, some of the links do not work quite right, so if you search for *hopefully*, it takes you to section 269 on the sentence and the clause, a search for *basically* takes you to a discussion of *each* and *every*

in section 34b, and searching for *cannot* takes you to section 305 on independent and dependent clauses. The relevance of any of these links is somewhat mysterious. In addition, if you search for something like *sausages*, you are taken nowhere at all, which is fine except that in cases such as this where there is no entry for a word, a message informing you of this absence would be helpful, as currently there is simply no feedback. One other irritating aspect of the CD version is that clicking in the right scroll-bar takes you down not one page, as is normal in most computer software, but a jump forward of about ten sections, which rather interferes with the ease of navigation through the material.

It is hoped that such glitches can be fixed soon, as both the CD and the book offer massive amounts of fascinating information, representing a huge, invaluable compendium of material about the structure of English and how it is actually used.

Reviewed by:

David Deterding

Department of English Language and Literature, NIE

Current Research by SAAL Members

Students' Choice of Organizers based on their Perceptual Operations (Conference Paper), Chien-Ching Lee, Language and Communication Centre, Nanyang Technological University

Students were asked to use graphic organizers for three writing processes i.e. categorizing and extracting information, integrating information and drawing conclusions. They were given the choice of two organizers for each process, one which offered the perceptual operations of computational offloading, re-representation and constraining and one which did not. The results of the pilot study show that students consistently chose to use organizers which offered perceptual operations. In addition, students used the organizers most to categorize and extract information as opposed to the other two processes.

Bridging Theory and Pedagogy: One Approach to Academic Reading (Staff Seminar), Chitra Varaprasad, Centre for English Language Communication, National University of Singapore

According to Haas and Flower (1988), entering college students have a narrow conception of text as one of conveying mere facts. They fail to look at how a "text

hangs together” (Burns, 2004). However, the good reader does not merely decode text but uses “integrative comprehension processes” (Stanovich 1980, p 64). Roehler & Duffy (1991) advocate a more cognitively based approach where teachers “mediate student mental processing” to help tertiary level students learn about learning, while Shih (1992, p 289) urges EAP programs to devise “more holistic, task and text-specific, strategy oriented approaches for reading instruction”.

With reading research and literature abounding in many such ideas and theories, it is not surprising that explicit teaching of reading strategies is a daunting challenge for the classroom teacher.

This presentation addresses the above concerns by showing how both theory and pedagogy can converge to form the basis for a cohesive structure strategy. This strategy was devised and shaped for teaching reading explicitly in the classroom. Theoretical concepts from both the cognitive and social perspectives on reading, which provided the basis for the strategy, will be shared to show how falling back on theory and research can provide solutions for the many pedagogical issues confronting the classroom teacher.

The strategy will be used to analyse sections of an expository text that formed part of the curriculum. The analysis outcomes will also show that it is possible to design testing questions that enable students to view texts, not as discrete pieces of information, but as one large coherent whole. Implications for teaching, learning and testing will be discussed.

Writing Portfolios? What? Why? How? (Conference Paper), Carmel Heah, Sujata Kathpalia, Huang Minting and Tam Moh Kim, Language and Communication Centre, Nanyang Technological University

This paper discusses the use of portfolios as an alternative form of writing assessment. It examines different types of portfolios such as the documentation portfolio and the showcase portfolio. Evaluation involving self, peer, and tutor evaluation is described. The learning benefits of portfolios are discussed, in particular the long term benefits of an emphasis on process rather than on product; the use of self-reflection and peer-evaluation which provide students with critical insights into their own and others’ writing process and thus encourages learner autonomy. The transferability of the skills learned to other areas of learning and disciplines as well training students how to create portfolios which are increasingly required and expected in the “real world” by prospective employers. The paper concludes with a detailed look at how to create portfolios and introduces e-portfolios as a viable alternative to traditional portfolios. Examples

of portfolios by students taking an academic writing course in Nanyang Technological University will be used to illustrate.

What is PacCALL?

PacCALL stands for Pacific Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning.

Pacific CALL/PacCALL promotes the use and professional support of CALL throughout the Pacific region, from North, East, and Southeast Asia, to Oceania, and the coastal countries of the Americas. In bringing professionals together from this tremendously diverse cultural and linguistic area, we hope to recognize the interconnected nature of the region and the tremendous possibility for CALL to assist both language learners and educators around the Pacific.

PacCALL supports Country/Region/and Language Chapters to foster dialogue at local and national levels that enhance the international forum of the association. Recent developments in Online Communities have allowed the association's workspace to become a truly interactive context for lively debate, networking, research, and other forms of collaboration. As befits a CALL association, they endeavour to expand traditional notions of the academic journal, conference, website, and society by incorporating virtual environments to reduce traditional limitations of distance, time, and cost and enhance the efficacy of the association

The association publishes a fully refereed E-Journal, PacCALL Journal; the inaugural edition debuted in 2005. Their inaugural annual conference, [**PacCALL@CLaSIC 2004 - CALL Around the Pacific**](#), was held in conjunction with the inaugural CLS International Conference at the Centre for Language Studies at the National University of Singapore.

Information was taken from the PacCALL website at: <http://www.paccall.org/main/index.php>

CALL FOR PAPERS

11th English in South East Asia (ESEA) Conference English in Asia: Asia in English

Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia
12 - 14 December 2006

Abstracts are now being invited for the 11th English in South East Asia conference, to be held at Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Western Australia. The deadline for submissions is **31 July 2006**.

Papers are welcomed on multicultural perspectives on language teaching, English in its socio-cultural contexts, academic English and critical literacies, language and new technology, language and gender, and critical pedagogy .

Keynote speakers are Jo Lo Bianco and Kate Burridge. Jo Lo Bianco is professor of language and literacy education at Melbourne University and has published numerous scholarly papers, reports and books. Kate Burridge is professor of linguistics at Monash University and is a regular presenter on ABC radio on language matters.

Abstracts should be 200 words in length, written in Times New Roman font (double spacing) and sent to p.mercieca@curtin.edu.au together with a 50-word biographical summary and your contact details. Presentations will be allocated 30 minutes followed by a 10-minute question and answer session.

Registration opens on 1st June 2006. The conference fees are as follows:

Early bird fee (until 10th October) AU\$231

Standard fee (from 11th October) AU\$297

For more information, please visit the conference website at:

<http://info.dolie.curtin.edu.au/ESEAconference.cfm>