

BELP Conference Programme

Friday 29th April 2022

All timings are given in British Summer Time (BST). Please consult a Time Zone Converter to check the timings in your own time zone.

8:50-9:00	Welcome
9:00-10:00	Session 1 – Plenary Chair: Ashley Blake Laurence Romain Simplicity, learnability, openness: an interdisciplinary approach to the English articles
10:00-10:05	Break
10:05-11:35	Session 2 – Presentations Chair: Ashley Blake Stephen Appleton Per ardua ad alta? The highs and lows of a PhD in corpus linguistics Keith Wilson Keyness isn't just a (single) number Magdalena Grose-Hodge Is early bilinguals' output in their heritage and dominant languages less fluent and less complex than that of their monolingual counterparts?
11:35-11:45	Break
11:45-12:45	Session 3 – Workshop Chair: Alicia Wickert The FORRT Project Raising awareness of Neurodiversity in Academia: Navigating Open scholarship for neurodiverse researchers
12:45-13:30	Lunch
13:30-15:00	Session 4 – Presentations Chair: Ellie Vivian

	<p>Ell Wilding 'You don't ever have to describe garlic': An exploration of metaphor in descriptions of sensory experience</p> <p>Ashley Blake Cognitive Predictors of individual differences in children's language acquisition</p> <p>Ashwaq Alsulami Narratives of Saudi women: A corpus-assisted analysis of the discursive construction of personal identities on Twitter in the context of Saudi Vision 2030</p>
15:00-15:10	Break
15:10-16:10	<p>Session 5 – Presentations Chair: Magdalena Grose-Hodge</p> <p>Fei Xie Exploring the Value of Learner Corpora in Corpus-based EAP Writing Materials Design</p> <p>Maram Asiri Narrowing the Gap between Teachers' and Students' Attitudes Towards the Communicative Approach</p>
16:10-16:15	Break
16:15-17:15	<p>Session 6 – Presentations Chair: Kärt Roomae</p> <p>David Callaghan "I am starting to wonder": The pragmatic effects of constructions and collostructions in relation to rhetoric and irony</p> <p>Alicia Wickert Investigating Impoliteness and Impoliteness Reciprocity in Political Language: The Case Study of Donald Trump</p>
17:15-17:20	Break
17:20-18:05	<p>Session 7 – Roundtable Chair: Eloise Parr</p> <p>Akira Murakami, Viola Wiegand, Laurence Romain Post-doc and Early Career Researcher Roundtable Discussion</p>

18:05-18:15	Closing Remarks
18:15-19:30	Dinner Break
19:30-20:30	Quiz and Social

Abstracts

Session 1: Plenary

Simplicity, learnability, openness: an interdisciplinary approach to the English articles

Laurence Romain

In this talk, I will present an example of multidisciplinary work that goes from the manual annotation of data to creating teaching guidelines and materials after obtaining results from computational simulations of learning. A key element of this research is that it combines insights from a variety of disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, and computer science.

Taking the article system in English as a case study, I will present our findings from corpus annotation and learning simulations: which cues/contextual elements guide article choice in English. Then I will compare these findings with the results from a survey (cloze test) taken by L1 speakers of English which showed us that article choice is really a matter of context and construal. Finally I will show how we used this information to propose innovative ways of teaching the article system and I will present our ideas for the implementation of this approach. I will also discuss how we chose to disseminate our research through registered reports.

Session 2: Presentations

Per ardua ad alta? The highs and lows of a PhD in corpus linguistics

Stephen Appleton

The University of Birmingham motto describes a process of reaching the heights (alta) through effort or struggle (ardua). The concept of sustained hard work being needed to reach the highest academic qualification is familiar to doctoral researchers. However, if the university motto suggests a linear climb from the start to the end of a PhD, the lived experience is more typically of an undulating path to the peak of achievement.

A survey published in Nature highlights what it describes as the “tortuous truth” of studying for a PhD (Woolston 2019). It identifies feeling isolated, overextended, stressed and anxious as common problems facing PhD students, while uncertainty about job prospects and difficulty maintaining a work-life balance also feature prominently in respondents' answers.

This presentation, by a researcher in the final months of a PhD in corpus linguistics, will firstly offer a personal reflection on these issues, juxtaposing them with some clear highlights of the PhD experience. Secondly, it will consider some subject-specific challenges around obtaining and analysing data and writing up the thesis, including how setbacks led to successful changes of approach. Thirdly, it will look at the interaction between PhD-related challenges and other areas of life including social and family life, finance, health and the effects of the pandemic. It will conclude by offering a provisional and hopefully reassuring answer to the question “Was it worth it?”.

References

Woolston, C. (2019) 'PhDs: the tortuous truth', Nature, vol. 575, no. 7782, pp. 403–406 [Online]. DOI: 10.1038/d41586-019-03459-7.

Key Words

Linguistics, Corpus, Student Experience

Keyness isn't just a (single) number

Keith Wilson

Comparison of corpora is a mainstay of corpus linguistics and is at the heart of my research project, which seeks to determine distinctive characteristics of the language used by a specific discourse community.

Corpus comparisons are typically operationalised using keyword/keyness techniques. Keyness is most often assessed in terms of the significance of the frequency difference of the keyword in the corpora being compared, measured using log likelihood or a similar statistic. This yields a single value for each keyword, often reported as the word's 'keyness'. Although it is said to produce 'nice results' this method has little theoretical justification, and it is worth considering whether 'nice results' is actually a synonym for 'expected results'.

An improvement can be made by considering effect size, a measure of the magnitude of the frequency difference between the corpora. And there is another important yet frequently neglected factor – dispersion – which looks at how widely the keyword is distributed throughout the texts making up the corpora. I contend that, for a principled examination of keyness, all three factors – log likelihood, effect size and dispersion – should be taken into account. This can be done using the latest version of AntConc corpus analysis software.

A small set of keyword results will be presented to illustrate this approach. Rather than a single number for keyness, this method produces a set of three numbers for each keyword. A brief explanation will be given of how this provides researchers with increased flexibility and greater confidence when interpreting results. Since this approach also has a sounder theoretical grounding than 'single number' keyness measures, it is hoped that other researchers whose work involves corpus comparisons will find it a useful and potentially more revealing technique for keyness evaluation.

Key Words

corpus linguistics, keyword, keyness, dispersion, effect size

Is early bilinguals' output in their heritage and dominant languages less fluent and less complex than that of their monolingual counterparts?

Magdalena Grose-Hodge

With an estimated half of the world using more than one language every day, bilingualism is a norm rather than an exception. Research into differences between monolinguals and bilinguals has produced conflicting findings, which fuels the existing social ambivalence relating to the acquisition of two languages in childhood. Therefore, studying heritage speakers (early bilinguals of a minority language, Montrul, 2006:161) is crucial for educational policymaking and theoretical linguistics. What makes heritage speakers interesting is that they acquire their HL in childhood, yet their linguistic competence is often different from that of monolingual native speakers, which has led to the formulation of the Incomplete Acquisition Hypothesis (Polinsky, 2006; Montrul, 2008). According to it, certain patterns are not fully acquired in HS's minds. This resulted in HS' language being perceived as deficient.

The study focuses on 7-9-year-old children growing up in Polish families living in the UK, whose speech samples have been collected, coded for complexity and fluency, and subsequently analysed. The results are compared to monolingual control groups through multiple regression modelling.

Results: Although bilinguals are slightly less fluent, they generally fall within the norms for monolingual speakers for most variables. The most interesting finding, though, is that their language is more complex syntactically than that of monolinguals in both languages. This provides further evidence that HS' language is not incomplete. It could also shed light on the role of creativity and imitation in language acquisition and cultural transmission, and provide further evidence that children imitate selectively when they have a better understanding of the function of a given construction or linguistic element. When the function is not fully understood, they imitate more faithfully (Klinger, Mayor and Bannard, 2016).

References

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Key Words

Heritage Language, Early Bilingualism, Speech Analysis

Session 3: Workshop

Raising awareness of Neurodiversity in Academia: Navigating Open scholarship for neurodiverse researchers

The FORRT Project

Recent coverage in higher education newspapers and social media platforms implies that disclosure of chronic conditions, illnesses and disabilities are becoming less taboo amongst academics. Despite this, neurodiversity is among the most neglected aspects in academia while having disproportionate disruption to their work.

The proportion of neurodiversity in academia is also widely under-estimated (see e.g., Farahar, 2021), likely due its stigma. But one thing is for sure, there is a stark under-representation of disabilities, chronic conditions, invisible illnesses and neurodiversity amongst academic staff. Moreover, people feel they cannot be honest about their issues or health concerns and keep them secret. These socially constructed constraints are embedded in both academia and funding bodies. Often, discrimination is not overt or even intentional but based on the shared expectation of normality and a culture of ableism. Disabled academics, from their perspective, may feel misunderstood or undervalued or may not realize they have a right to identify as disabled or neurodiverse.

It is our hope to discuss the issues surrounding Neurodiversity, provide an online platform for resources, and build a supportive community at FORRT (Framework for Open and Reproducible Research Training), a community-led group that promotes diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in academia (FORRT, 2019). We intend for our lightning talk to strengthen the link between open scholarship pedagogical reform and the tenets of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility to generate buy-in to the goals and awareness of neurodiversity in the open science community. This has implications for advancing inclusive pedagogy and disrupting a discourse of normalcy that is pervasive in higher-education settings. Implications for future research are offered.

Key Words

academia; disability; neurodiversity; open scholarship

Session 4: Presentations

'You don't ever have to describe garlic': An exploration of metaphor in descriptions of sensory experience

Ell Wilding

It has been well-established in linguistics that people use metaphor to express themselves when describing something difficult (Fainsilber & Ortony, 1987; Ortony, 1975). Existing metaphor research has used qualitative interviewing to study how people use metaphor to talk about topics such as illness or grief (Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Littlemore & Turner, 2020; Turner et al., 2020). Like the topics of illness and grief, sensory experience can be somewhat ineffable, with some senses being easier to describe than others (Winter, 2019b).

Literature in sensory linguistics has often discussed examples of 'synaesthetic metaphor' or 'cross-sensory metaphor' such as sweet melody, loud shirt, or sharp cheese (Ramachandran & Hubbard, 2001; Strik Lievers, 2015; Ullmann, 1945, 1957), but in recent years this terminology has been called into question. (Winter, 2019a, 2019b) argues that these phrases are neither synaesthetic, as they do not bear resemblance to the neurological cross-sensory condition of synaesthesia nor metaphorical, stating that they may be better understood as metonymy or literal language.

This project uses qualitative semi-structured interviews to explore how people use metaphor to describe sensory experience when there is an increased communicative need. Participants were probed into describing sensory experiences as though to someone who had never experienced them before. The transcripts were coded for metaphor using an adapted version of the PRAGGLEJAZ Group's (2007) Metaphor Identification Procedure, and cross-sensory language using the Lancaster Sensorimotor Norms (Lynott et al., 2020). The following categories were devised through inductive coding: scenarios; source-based language; physical, cognitive, or emotional responses; personification; 'shouldness'; and reflections. Salient examples from each of the categories are presented and analysed. In particular, examples of 'cross-sensory metaphor' are analysed using these alternative explanations: conventional metaphors; multisensory words and literal language; and mappings of intensity. Some remaining examples of creative cross-sensory metaphor are discussed.

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Key Words

Metaphor; sensory linguistics; synaesthesia; metonymy; communication

Cognitive predictors of individual differences in children's language acquisition

Ashley Blake

Consensus from children's language acquisition literature suggests that grammatical processing is entirely implicit. Grammatical deficits, typically seen in children with developmental language disorder (DLD), are attributed to impairment of the neural regions that underlie procedural memory (Ullman & Pierpoint, 2005; Ullman, Earle, Walenski & Janacsek, 2020). Whilst we support this theory, we believe that implicit and explicit processes are involved in language acquisition, in different stages and in different degrees (Dąbrowska, 2010; Dąbrowska & Blake, 2021). Our research investigates implicit learning in children with and without DLD, and how this predicts differences in linguistic ability. 97 children (73 typically developing children and 24 children with DLD), aged between 6;9 and 10;8 years took part in our online study. We used the Tower of Hanoi puzzle as a measure of the speed of automatization, together with cognitive tasks measuring statistical learning, non-verbal intelligence, and working memory. These results were compared with children's performance on language tasks including grammatical processing, vocabulary, production, and lexical and fluency measures derived from a narrative and spontaneous speech task. We adopted a hybrid approach where we posted a Tower of Hanoi puzzle to each child prior to the sessions and the researcher guided them through the tasks online. Initial results indicate that intelligence and working memory are robust predictors of linguistic ability in both groups. Grammar and vocabulary were strongly correlated overall, indicating that they do not rely on distinct learning processes. In the DLD group, we found a strong correlation between intelligence, working memory, and grammatical ability, but no relationship between intelligence and vocabulary. Implicit learning did not predict linguistic ability in either group, and the speed of automatization showed an unexpected negative relationship with grammar in the DLD group. Overall, our findings support that intelligence is a strong predictor of children's grammatical processing ability.

Key Words

children's language acquisition, implicit learning

Narratives of Saudi women: A corpus-assisted analysis of the discursive construction of personal identities on Twitter in the context of Saudi Vision 2030.

Ashwaq Alsulami

This study adapts a postmodern orientation towards the nature of identity, a philosophy that views identity as a dynamic and continuous construct perceivable via the narratives produced by individuals in specific sociocultural settings.

The purpose of this study is to determine the processes by which Saudi women navigate and construct their identities through discursive practices on Twitter. A dataset of 4,000 tweets in English and Arabic will be collected in two sub-corpora from tweets posted between September 2017 and January 2021. A mix of quantitative (word frequency information) and qualitative (analysis of concordance lines along with small story narrative analysis) will be applied to the collected corpus. Analysis will also be performed through the lens of positioning theory.

The analytical frame to be adopted is narrative positioning analysis, which examines narratives on three levels: (i) the level of the taleworld, examining how Saudi women, in general, are described as responding affectively to the social changes initiated by the new legislative provisions; (ii) the level of the storyrealm, examining how Saudi women position themselves within the mediated discourse; and (iii) the level of the self, seeking to answer the questions ‘How do women position themselves to themselves?’ and ‘How do women address the question of “Who am I?”?’ The results of these analyses will indicate how identity is discursively navigated and constructed by Saudi women in the personal narratives and stories they share on Twitter about their experiences in the context of the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative.

The proposed study will be novel in two respects. First, it will provide a metric for determining the effectiveness of the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative in transforming the lives and freedoms of Saudi women and will contribute to the evolving research literature on Saudi women who have long struggled to overcome discrimination, patriarchy, and other social tensions inherent in their society, especially in this transitional era. Second, it will be the first study to utilise narrative analysis—small story narrative analysis in

particular—and narrative positioning analysis with corpus analysis techniques as an analytical framework to investigate the discursive construction of Saudi women's identities on Twitter.

Key Words

Saudi women, small stories, Twitter, discourse, identity, positioning Theory, positioning levels, corpus linguistics, Saudi 2030 vision

Session 5: Presentations

Exploring the Value of Learner Corpora in Corpus-based EAP Writing

Materials Design

Fie Xie

Along with the development of corpus linguistics since the mid-1980s, there is an increased interest in using corpus data to construct language learning materials. Until very recently, the discussion and the studies have almost still focused on native speaker (NS) corpora and the learner corpora is considered to play a modest role. These days, there is no question that NS corpora are indeed helpful in materials development. However, they should not be the only criterion for the materials construction, as Flowerdew (2001, p.364) argues that, for materials design, insights gained from learner corpora should also be used in conjunction with those from expert or NS corpora to help learners address the language difficulties they encounter.

To fill this research gap, the present study investigated the value of learner corpora in EAP materials development that operationalized epistemic lexical verbs (ELVs) as a specific language use difficulty. In the experiment, two types of corpus informed materials were implemented with two groups of Chinese participants. The materials for the control group was informed by NS corpora, and the experimental group's learning materials was developed by learner corpus findings. Both students' performance was evaluated and compared via pre-, post, and delayed post-tests. The test results were triangulated with participants' perceptions of applying learner corpora in EAP materials development elicited by a semi-structured interview and questionnaire.

The findings of the tests indicate that the experimental group's knowledge of ELVs has improved more than the control group, especially in the area of categorization ELVs and grammar patterns. Also, the majority of participants in both groups showed a preference for including learner corpus data in their learning materials. The triangulation of results overall, suggests that learner corpora could be a useful and effective source in EAP materials development for helping students tackle language learning issues.

References

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Key Words

Learner corpora, EAP materials development, epistemic lexical verbs

Narrowing the Gap between Teachers' and Students' Attitudes Towards the Communicative Approach

Maram Asiri

Extant studies have discussed communicative language teaching (CLT) in the context of teaching English as a foreign language. However, few studies have addressed learners' attitudes towards CLT principles (Khatib & Tootkaboni, 2019), and even fewer have examined the gap in those attitudes between teachers and students (Nhem, 2019). This study attempts to add knowledge regarding this gap by examining teachers' and students' attitudes towards CLT principles, specifically in the context of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

The study, which included 122 students and 20 teachers, used a mixed-methods approach and ensured triangulation by comprising three phases. In the first phase, questionnaires were administered to explore teachers' and students' attitudes towards the main principles of CLT. In the second phase, four teachers were observed during classes, and in the third phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers and students involved.

The study presents some key findings: (1) a mismatch between teachers' and students' attitudes, in that the teachers consistently displayed positive attitudes towards CLT principles, while the students' attitudes were mixed; and (2) the teachers' tendency to practice more traditional approaches and only infrequently attempt to use CLT principles and encourage students to use them. Further analysis revealed an interesting contradiction between the teachers' and students' perspectives regarding the challenges experienced when implementing CLT. For instance, where teachers perceived a lack of motivation by the students to use the communicative approach, the students attributed their silence to the Saudi cultural tradition of respectful silence. This finding differs from past studies due to the inclusion of students' perspectives regarding CLT as opposed to just the perspectives of teachers.

The findings in this study have implications for the way CLT is contextualised in the KSA. Teachers, institutions, and policy makers can use the study's insights to ensure that CLT is adapted in a way that accommodates Saudi students' cultural traditions, such as those regarding student–teacher relationship dynamics.

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Key Words

attitudes, communicative approach, communicative competence, EFL, listening and speaking classes

Session 6: Presentations

"I am starting to wonder": The pragmatic effects of constructions and collocations in relation to rhetoric and irony.

David Callaghan

Since its inception, construction grammar has sought to identify the intrinsic relationship between form and function (Goldberg 1995, Kay and Fillmore 1999), blurring the boundaries of lexis and grammar and providing a breakaway from more syntactic theories of language such as Chomsky's Universal Grammar. For construction grammarians, it is the construction which underpins language. Furthermore, corpus methodology has proved central to developing and supporting various theories of construction grammar, with Stefanowitsch and Gries' (2003) concept of collocation being a prime example. Collocational theory widens the idea of collocation simply being a lexical phenomenon by demonstrating how constructions can often collocate with certain lexical items. In this manner, the construction and lexical item inform and influence each other, and, as a result, both mutually affect the pragmatic function of an utterance.

This presentation seeks to further illustrate the power of such collocational relationships by exploring how constructions can also reflect meanings above the lexical or syntactic level. I will briefly introduce my own corpus-based research which focuses on the tropes of evaluation and irony. Secondly, I will highlight real-world collocations which, I argue, have particular pragmatic functions related to these tropes. Such theories concerning collocation demonstrate the significance of not only how constructions shape discourse but also how corpus linguistic methods can be utilised to explore pragmatic aspects of language. As such, I hope to demonstrate how corpus linguistics and construction grammar may develop in the near future, and that they still have much to offer for linguistic research.

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Key Words

constructions, collostructions, construction grammar, corpus linguistics, pragmatics, rhetoric, irony

Investigating Impoliteness and Impoliteness Reciprocity in Political Language: The Case Study of Donald Trump

Alicia Wickert

When the aim of political communication is consensus-building, it is imperative to investigate the circumstances where impoliteness is adopted instead of cooperation. This study will use discourse analysis methods to offer a comprehensive account of how impoliteness works in Trump's discourse, contributing to our broader understanding of the workings of conflict, consensus, and reciprocal relations in political discourse.

A single case study will examine President Donald Trump's White House Coronavirus Press Briefing held on the 23rd of April 2020, focusing on the interaction between the President and journalists. The transcript will be manually annotated for impoliteness super strategies (derived by Culpeper 1996) and for instances where (im)politeness reciprocity is not afforded by an interactant (Culpeper and Tantucci 2021). The manual annotation process will include labelling present impoliteness super strategies and events of (im)politeness reciprocation.

The data collected will then be quantified to present how many linguistic types are evident and in what speech event. A qualitative and interpretive approach will be adopted to discuss the impoliteness strategies used, any patterns that emerge within these interactions, and how the reciprocal relations are managed by the interactants.

The anticipated results are likely to yield several impoliteness strategies, by both Trump and the journalists. Strategies such as interruptions, ignoring, being disinterested are a few of many features that are likely to arise. In this setting, impoliteness can be used as a form of rebuttal, to save face or to maintain power. Moreover, due to the power imbalance between a sitting president and a journalist, there are likely to be occasions where impoliteness is identified but not reciprocated due to social pressures and expectations. Similarly, when an interactant has more power, impoliteness reciprocation may occur due to a lesser need for redressive action.

References

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Key Words

FACE, impoliteness, reciprocity, interaction, discourse analysis

Session 7: Roundtable

Post-doc and Early Career Researcher Roundtable Discussion

Akira Murakami, Viola Wiegand, Laurence Romain

To support those nearing the end of their doctoral programme, a panel of early career researchers at the University of Birmingham, in the field of linguistics, will share their personal experiences of post-doctoral research and teaching. The panel will also provide advice for those hoping to pursue a career in academia beyond a PhD. This roundtable discussion will feature questions from the panel chair as well as a chance for audience questions.