

## COMMITTEE FOR LINGUISTICS IN EDUCATION

### Minutes of Meeting no. 66 (DRAFT - Long version for members)

Thursday 2 November 2000

at The University of London Institute of Education

#### 1. Introductions and apologies for absence (RI)

*Present:* Mary Auckland (RCSaLT), Sue Barry (LAGB), Deborah Cameron (co-opted), Keith Davidson (NATE), Charlotte Franson (NALDIC), Anthea Fraser Gupta (LAGB), Dick Hudson (LAGB), Roz ivanič (BAAL, Chair of CLIE), Ewa Jaworska (LAGB, Secretary of CLIE), Constant Leung (BAAL), Andrew Spencer (LAGB, President), Brian Street (co-opted), Alison Dickens (Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies)

*Guest Speaker:* Alan Moys (Secretary, Nuffield Languages Inquiry)

*Apologies:* Richard Aplin (ALA), Mike Baynham (BAAL, Chair), Celime Castelino (BSA), Henrietta Dombey (Brighton), Ros Frazer (UKRA), George Keith (NEAB/AQA), Janet Maybin (BAAL), Teresa O'Brien (BAAL), Lindsay Peer (BDyA), Alison Sealey (BAAL), Helen Sunderland (NATECLA)

#### 2. Minutes of Meeting 65 (RI)

##### 2.1. Item 4.1

Corrections (with apologies to the Guest Speaker):

Alan Moys

*The Nuffield Languages Inquiry*

##### 2.2. Item 6.4(c)(i)

Wray & Medwell references details (thanks to RA & ASe):

Wray, D. & J. Medwell (1997). *English for primary teachers: an audit and self-study*

*guide*. London: Letts Educational. ISBN 1-85805-317-X

Add: This book was recommended with caution.

Other potentially relevant books by the same authors:

Wray, D. & J. Medwell (1994). *Teaching primary English: the state of the art*. London:

Routledge. ISBN 0-415-08670-1

Wray, D. & J. Medwell (1991). *Literacy and language in the primary years*. London:

Routledge. ISBN 0-415-04211-9

##### 2.3. Items 7.3(c) & (d)

Rephrase (c) as follows and delete (d):

(c) materials for the teaching of writing at KS2 (*Grammar for writing*) for teachers of Years 5 and 6 and trainee teachers; they have the form of about 160 double-page spread lesson plans on different topics and are currently being piloted, ready for general distribution to schools in September.

#### 3. Matters arising

##### 3.1. The style of the minutes (EJ)

This is more elaborate than might be expected, recording details of the information and the discussion contents of the meetings. The secretary welcomes suggestions for improvement.

##### 3.2. Organisations' exposure at meetings (EJ)

Previous minutes suggest that our discussions at meetings might not fully reflect the interests of some member organisations, focusing largely on mainstream classroom education issues. Members felt that this perception was inaccurate.

##### 3.3. A perceived gap between teachers' knowledge of language and literature (RI)

On reflection, the concern expressed in item 6.2(a) of Minutes 65, is not worth pursuing at present in view of the on-going developments, especially the extension of the NLS to secondary schools.

##### 3.4. A-level English Language syllabi (RI)

Following the suggestion in item 6.4(a) of Minutes 65, this should be a topic for discussion in the near future. In advance of this, a handout was distributed with website details of A-/AS-level awarding organisations, from which details of syllabi can be obtained. A request was made for the handout to be e-mailed to members. A copy is enclosed with the minutes.

**ACTION:** (1) RI to organise the discussion in due course.

(2) EJ to e-mail the handout.

#### 4. Dates of future meetings and choice of speakers (RI)

##### 4.1. Dates

Following the preference of most of those present, a recent change of CLIE-day from Wednesdays to Thursdays was reversed. Next two meetings will be on Wednesday, 21 February 2001 (AGM) and Wednesday, 20 June 2001.

##### 4.2. Speakers

It was confirmed that one meeting in a year should be free of guest speaker for members to catch up on discussion of major current issues. RI reported that Ron Carter (Nottingham) cannot now come until the June 2001 meeting. His provisional title is *Where is linguistics in education going? A personal view*. The February meeting will have no guest speaker but see item 8 below.

**ACTION:** (1) RI to keep in touch with RC.

(2) EJ to send minutes to RC.

#### 5. CLIE membership and communications: update (RI, EJ)

##### 5.1. Membership

(a) George Keith of NEAB/AQA, a co-opted member, has retired. He's indicated who to contact at AQA in pursuit of a possible replacement. Two co-opted members' slots are now vacant.

(b) Alison Sealey has been replaced as a BAAL rep by Janet Maybin (Open University).

(c) Mike Baynham (University of Leeds) replaced Jill Bourne as the Chair of BAAL in September.

- (d) Other changes: Keith Davidson replaces Henrietta Dombey as NATE rep and Ros Fisher replaces Pam Hulme as UKRA rep. Ann Miller (ALL) plans to attend next two meetings but will resign subsequently; Richard Aplin (ALA) will then be also an ALL rep.
- (e) 'Lost' members: Stephanie Bell (NAAE) and Ali Houas (NCMTT) – no contact; Greg Brooks (NFER) – is about to leave NFER and hence CLIE; Helen Sunderland (NATECLA) – has not been receiving mail due to change of address two years ago but contact has now been re-established and she will continue; Sue Unger (BDeA) – has left the country, a replacement is being sought.
- (f) Membership list dated 2 November was distributed.

## 5.2. Communications

- (a) EJ is compiling a CLIE members' e-mail list: all the confirmed members have an e-mail address.
- (b) It was agreed that, given the wide-spread use of e-mail, CLIE information, consultations and other business between meetings could be increasingly conducted via e-mail. Those with no access to e-mail will have e-mail printouts sent by post.
- (c) We will be making an increased use of website references to direct ourselves to sources of background and further information relevant to our topics.
- (d) A CLIE website is an urgent issue. Asp was very concerned, however, that the site be professionally designed. Two aspects are to be considered: the initial setup and maintenance/updates. CLIE should seek LAGB and BAAL Committees' advice on the project. Meanwhile, members should think of ideas about the contents, links and possible design features.

## **ACTION:** (1) RI to write to GK thanking him for his association with CLIE.

- (2) RI to invite a chief examiner from AQA to join as a co-opted member.
- (3) RI to invite NFER to nominate a new CLIE rep.
- (4) RI to invite BDeA to nominate a new CLIE rep.
- (5) RI to consult LAGB and BAAL Committees about the setting up of a CLIE website.
- (6) EJ to collect members' suggestions about the contents, links and design features of the future site.

## 6. **Reports from representatives of organisations (All)**

### 6.1. BAAL

- (a) Annual meeting was held in September 2000 at Homerton College. The programme and the abstracts can be found following <http://www.baal.org.uk/>.
- (b) Next meeting is on 6-9 September 2001 at Reading.

### 6.2. LAGB

- (a) Linguistics at School session *Grammar teaching and the development of writing skills* (detailed in Minutes 65, item 6.1(b)) took place in September 2000 at the Autumn Meeting at Durham. An article based on the session is in preparation for the journal of the Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar, *Syntax in the Schools*. (ATEG: <http://www2.pct.edu/courses/evavra/ATEG/>)
- (b) Next Linguistics at School session, *Phonics and accents of English*, will be on Wednesday, 6 April 2001 at the Spring Meeting at the University of Leeds (5-7/4/01). (See item 7 below.)

### 6.3. ALA

The conference at Leicester was highly successful, with about 100 participants, 40% from overseas. Plenary speakers were Ron Carter, Peter Downes and Bill Littlewood. Selected papers will appear in a special issue of *Language Awareness* in 2001.

### 6.4. NATE

- (a) The annual conference will be on 2-4 February 2001, at UMIST. It will include some 20 practical workshops on aspects of English teaching, seminars and a couple of keynote speakers. Workshop themes will include: the new A-/AS-level syllabuses, the NLS in the secondary school, the multicultural/multilingual classroom, and ICT and English.
- (b) Current concerns:
- (i) NLS at KS3 – there is considerable disquiet in the piloting of the scheme;
  - (ii) unpicking GCSE 'English' – separating 'language' from 'literature' to accommodate a 'language study' component. (See also item 11 below.)

### 6.5. NATECLA

The London Language and Literacy Unit was founded in 1975. The first issue of its newsletter *Networking* was published in October 2000. LLLU is based at South Bank University: [www.sbu.ac.uk/caxton/LLLU](http://www.sbu.ac.uk/caxton/LLLU). Contact Lesley Jacobs (020 7815 6293 or [jacobsl@sbu.ac.uk](mailto:jacobsl@sbu.ac.uk)) for information about subscription.

### 6.6. UKRA

- (a) UKRA held a successful conference in Oxford last July with the main theme addressed being the teaching and learning of writing. As in the previous year, we held a research day on the day before the main conference. This had grammar as its focus and was very well supported. Katherine Perera acted as Chair and for many people proved both how far we had come since LINC and how much our thinking then has been proved right, especially in the consistent referencing of grammar to context and meaning by all the speakers. In particular, Debra Myhill and Ron Carter moved us on by challenging, respectively, mechanistic assessments of grammatical ability in writing and assumptions that grammatical knowledge relates only to writing.
- (b) UKRA conference *Reading and writing for life* will be at Edinburgh University, Saturday, 17 March 2001. Application forms from Catherine Kerr, South House, Old Mill, Ormiston, East Lothian EH35 5LN.
- (c) UKRA Annual International Conference *Reflecting on language and learning* will be at Canterbury Christ Church University College, Canterbury, Kent, 6-8 July 2001. Details of the conference and call for papers are enclosed with the minutes.

### 6.7. D. Cameron

Has been involved in consultations at QCA on the effectiveness of revisions to the speaking and listening components of the English curriculum.

### 6.8. D. Hudson

- (a) Over the summer, DH was involved at TTA in preparing a CD-ROM for non-specialist KS5 English teachers. TTA already have a CD-ROM for specialist English teachers.
- (b) DH (and Asp) are among nine members of the Linguistics Specialist Advisory Group within the Centre for Linguistics, Languages and Area Studies. (See item 13 below.)

### 6.9. R. Ivanič

- (a) The Lancaster Corpus of Children's Project Writing. The front pages are being finalised but the data are already available via the Lancaster page <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/contents.htm>. The downloading and the grammatical annotation should be operational on 20 November 2000, at <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/lever/index.htm>.

- (b) The URL for the revised NLS Glossary (revised by LAGB members: David Denison, Dick Hudson and Catherine Walter): [http://www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/literacy/NLSframework\\_R-6/glossary/](http://www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/literacy/NLSframework_R-6/glossary/) (NB: Note the underscore character in this address – 'NLSframework\_R-6')  
(c) A message from Catherine Walter about a British Council initiative to support British students who go abroad as (English) language assistants during their university course. The project is a contribution to the European Year of Languages in 2001. An outline of the project is enclosed with the minutes.  
(d) Introducing Charmian Kenner (ULIE and Goldsmiths College): information about three forthcoming conferences/seminars on modern languages in the European Year of Languages 2001. Full details are enclosed with the minutes.

### 6.10. B. Street

- (a) BERA (British Educational Research Association: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/>) is considering setting up a Special Interest Group (SIG) in Language in Education.  
(a) Cross London Seminar in Language and Literacy is based at King's College London. Recent talks: Gemma Moss (Southampton): 'Reading non-fiction texts as work or play' and Peter Freebody (Griffith University, Australia): 'Homes and classrooms as literacy learning settings: partnerships or protectionism?'. Information from BS ([brian.street@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:brian.street@kcl.ac.uk)).  
(b) *Multilingual Literacies*, ed. By Marilyn Martin Jones & Kathryn Jones is the latest publication in the series Studies in Written Language and Literacy, edited by Brian Street, Ludo Verhoeven and David Bloome, published by John Benjamins: [www.benjamins.nl/jbp](http://www.benjamins.nl/jbp).  
(c) ALA (International Association of Applied Linguistics: <http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/ala/>) held its conference in Tokyo in Autumn 1999. A Scientific Commission on Literacy was set up.

### 7. Non-RP accent and phonics (SB) (Postponed from June 2000 meeting.)

#### 7.1. Introduction

Accent variation is a serious issue because NLS implies - unintentionally - that RP is the proper way to speak. Although current teaching materials (sampled from the NLS Training Module 3 and Teachers' notes Unit 2) are not necessarily confusing to non-RP speakers, some scrutiny reveals that they are based on ill-understood phonological analysis.

#### 7.2. Some weaknesses

- (a) It is misleading to offer an unqualified list of grapheme-phoneme correspondences for English because of regional accent variation in the inventory and the distribution of phonemes.  
(b) The materials give essentially the phoneme inventory of RP with certain additions. They account for some of the features of regional accents, but not comprehensively and systematically.  
(c) The use of sound symbols is inconsistent and confusing through mixing the orthographic and phonological representations.

- (d) While the materials acknowledge the existence of regional accent variation, RP is presented as the base, which is problematic.  
(e) Areas of potential confusion in a multi-accent literacy classroom arising from differences between RP and non-RP accents are listed in the enclosed handout (*hard copy only*).  
(f) Linguistically inaccurate and confusing materials may be off-putting for teachers in non-RP accent(s) classrooms although such materials are not necessarily problematic in the practicalities of phonics teaching.

### 7.3. Comments

- (a) Where English is an additional language, NLS assumes accommodation; extra notes are produced locally for particular accents with the involvement of NALDIC. (CF)  
(b) A useful resource at the level of teacher-education is Vivian Edwards's pamphlet *The other languages of England* (Linguistic Minorities Project). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. More materials are needed, e.g. generic and case studies in phonics teaching. (BS)  
(c) All training materials presuppose that children create their own sound-symbol correspondences but it is also possible that children with non-RP accents create their own special accent for reading. (AFG)  
(d) The Government seems to rely on advisers but maybe the wrong ones, perhaps this could be changed. (CL)  
(e) It must be possible to put things right through linguists' collaboration with agencies involved in teacher (re-) training, e.g. ITA, and publications on 'real phonics'. (DC)  
(f) Linguists can certainly promote training in knowledge about language and while there is no need to seek NLS permission to do so, it might be beneficial to contact Laura Huxford of the NLS to inform her about the potential contribution linguists are willing to make in the area of phonics; there are two elements to this: purely linguistic resources (e.g. John Wells's work on regional accents) and educational training materials (DH);  
(g) A good starting point would be to re-write the section of NLS materials from SB's sample to demonstrate the nature of linguists' potential contribution. (DC, DH)

**ACTION:** (1) AFG to draft a revised version of the NLS section from SB's sample for possible submission to the NLS team.

(2) In due course, RI to write to Laura Huxford offering CLIE expertise in the linguistic background of phonics, enclosing a sample of work.

*Phonics and regional accents* will be the title of LAGB's Special Session in April 2001. (See item 6.2(b) above.)

### 8. Ideas about how to do the 12 hours of KAL on ITT courses (RI) (Postponed from June 2000 meeting.)

Members wish to address this topic in a future meeting. Henrietta Dombey (Brighton) and Alison Sealey (Reading) will be invited to lead the discussion of the teaching of knowledge about language in ITT courses, an issue which they both raised as recent CLIE members. The DREE publication *Grammar for writing* should be included in this discussion.

**ACTION:** (1) RI to invite HD and AS to introduce and lead the discussion.  
(2) Members to contribute items for discussion (via RI).  
(3) EJ to send minutes to HD and AS.

**9. RAE panels dealing with language-and-education (BS) (Postponed from June 2000 meeting.)**

9.1. The Linguistics, Education and English panels do not have a specialist for assessing research on language/linguistic aspects of education. In the summer, BS coordinated a letter to the chair of the RAE, signed by a number of academics concerned, about this unsatisfactory situation. As panel membership had already been confirmed, educational linguistics work will be assessed at the Linguistics and the English panels. CLIE should perhaps flag the issue for the RAE for the next assessment round by writing a letter requesting that the Linguistics and the Education panels include suitable experts. This possible action has to be cleared with the BAAL and LAGB Committees.

9.2. It would be instructive to identify academics working in education departments as linguists. Greg Myers (BAAL Secretary) might be a good person to contact. (CL)

**ACTION:** (1) BS to send RI a copy of his earlier letter to the RAE panel.

(2) RI to clear the RAE matter with LAGB and BAAL.

(3) RI to draft a letter to RAE on behalf of CLIE in consultation with BS (if approved).

(4) CL to contact G. Myers and possibly collect information to present at next meeting.

**10. The new NLS initiative: Grammar for writing (RI)**

Members had a quick look at the publication, with only one copy circulating. Discussion postponed until February. (See item 8 above.)

**11. QCA's draft criteria for GCSE English Language (Papers were circulated with the Agenda.)**

11.1. Background From September 2002, GCSE English will be split into English Literature and English Language, both compulsory for most 16-year olds. Full QCA proposal can be viewed at [www.qca.org.uk/gcse/](http://www.qca.org.uk/gcse/). Consultations on the draft document ended on 23 October.

11.2. NATE is unhappy about the separation of Language and Literature GCSEs. There is concern about possible marginalisation of literature study, detail of subject specification (yet to be published) and assessment model. (KD) A full statement on NATE's behalf is enclosed with the minutes.

11.3. LAGB wrote positively, with critical comments on details of the specification and the criteria. (DH) A copy of the submission was circulated with the agenda.

11.4. CLIE members would welcome QCA's invitation to assist during subsequent stages of the implementation of the programme but a CLIE offer to this effect has to be cleared with the LAGB and BAAL Committees.

**ACTION:** (1) RI to clear with BAAL and LAGB CLIE's potential involvement in QCA's initiative on GCSE English Language.

(2) RI to offer help to QCA (if approved).

**12. CLIE contribution to the BAAL/LAGB overlap day in Reading in September 2001 (RI)**

The overlap day is Thursday, 6 September 2001: the last day of the LAGB meeting and the first day of BAAL's. Preparations are under way under the leadership of Asp and MB. RI volunteered to act for CLIE/BAAL in the preparation of a joint CLIE-related session and invited a CLIE/LAGB volunteer, possibly EJ. CLIE to take no action before an actual invitation arrives from the Organisers of the overlap with further details of what sort of contribution they would like from CLIE.

**13. Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (Alison Dickens, DH)**

13.1. General This Subject Centre is one of 24 within the national Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN: [www.ltsn.ac.uk](http://www.ltsn.ac.uk)), which has been set up by the UK HE funding bodies to improve teaching and learning at university level, and promote good practice and innovation. Linguists are increasingly delivering courses relevant to teacher education. Pedagogical research at HE level is becoming important although it has not been a traditional area for research funding. The Centre will gather information about any such research – submissions of information are welcome ([adickens@lang.soton.ac.uk](mailto:adickens@lang.soton.ac.uk)).

13.2. Seminar The Centre is organising a seminar *Teaching grammar: perspectives on language learning in higher education* for linguists, foreign language and teacher training practitioners. The seminar, to be held at CLT, London, on 18 January 2001, will be chaired by Prof. Richard Towell. The seminar takes the findings of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry and the Government's National Literacy Strategy as the starting point for an exploration into the current situation in language education in higher education in the UK and asks how HE can benefit from a closer cooperation among language professionals in the teaching of grammar to students of foreign languages, linguistics and education. Approaches to grammar in the HE curriculum will be evaluated through case studies and seminar discussions with a view to identifying new directions in language education in HE.

Offers of 20-30 mins presentations (particularly on case studies into current practice in grammar teaching) to be submitted by 30 November. Contact address and further information about the seminar is via [www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/lings/ling.html](http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/lings/ling.html). This website is very informative about the Centre and offers a range of excellent links.

**14. A.O.B.**

None.

**15. The Nuffield Languages Inquiry**

SPEAKER: Alan Moys (Secretary, The Nuffield Languages Enquiry)

Background information: <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/language/index.html>.

**15.1. Background**

(a) The NLI began officially in 1998 with consultative document *Where are we going with languages?* The final report *Languages: the next generation* was published in May 2000. The Inquiry investigated issues in language education and languages beyond education, in particular the business world and the world of global communication. The coverage was U.K.-wide. Consultations were open and inclusive: evidence included submission of documents, on-line contributions, and surveys (especially of employers). Press coverage was good. Because of its campaigning nature, the Inquiry attracted international interest.

(b) Summary of the report (including the terms of reference, main findings and main proposals) is available at the above website. Copies of the report can be ordered from The English Company (UK) Ltd. via the website or on tel. 01908 220183. A CD-ROM with the full documentation will be published shortly.

#### 15.1. About the Inquiry

- (a) Despite its campaigning nature, the Inquiry report does not set out an agenda for future action.
- (b) Rather, it seeks to establish collaborative links between the government, agencies and employers in the interest of the recognition of the role of languages in the U.K.
- (c) There is a lack of encouragement in schools to continue languages post-GCSE because of low grades, poor careers advice on languages.
- (d) Employers select foreign applicants with specialist knowledge and languages, which causes public dissatisfaction.
- (e) Languages ought to be designated as a key skill, like literacy, etc., essential for employability.
- (f) Languages ought to be taught from an earlier age and continued in higher education - language competence should be a component of graduate qualifications.
- (g) At present, Modern Languages departments provide remedial courses in languages rather than pursuing a more ambitious curriculum.
- (h) Pro-languages attitudes of the general public are emerging as seen in adults' increasing demand for ML courses, parents' demand for languages provision in schools and the popularity of private schools with an extended languages provision.
- (i) The report commends the model of the existing language colleges and recommends the creation of up to 100 international primary schools per year, which would conduct education through the medium of a new language.
- (j) Languages education should be seen as beneficial for intercultural communication, greater social and political tolerance; and speakers' increased awareness of their own language, including grammar.
- (k) Responses to the Inquiry and the report, and the future:
- (i) positive from the language professionals and employers;
  - (ii) mixed from the Government: Prime Minister's advisers for education - positive, DTI - positive, set up an inter-departmental committee on languages; DfEE - mute, seems to be a major slowing down force although this may change at the turn of the year;
  - (iii) the appointment of a languages supremo (at Government level?) is a possibility;
  - (iv) the trustees are pleased with the public's response to the Inquiry and the general message of the report; it's essential to continue implementing the message;
  - (v) investment is expected for the carrying of the message after the Inquiry ceases to exist in December 2000.

#### 15.2. Comments

- (a) Why are students getting bad marks in language GCSEs and A-levels? Has language teaching lost its intellectual content and hence attractiveness for bright pupils? (DH)
- (b) Quality of languages education has to be improved; much depends on the attitudes within schools' Modern Languages departments. (AM)
- (c) Attitudes are also important within the community to community languages (including languages of the deaf); note the European focus on indigenous languages. (AFG)
- (d) On community and heritage languages, the report reflects a compromise between extreme positions but highlights inclusion, richness, diversity and the value of these as a resource (see report sections 3.2 and 3.3). (AM)

- (e) It is important to keep the message and continue the debate through contacting local MPs, local press and employers, and talking to the general public. (AM)
- (f) Academics can build bridges between the English teaching and the languages teaching worlds, and between these and the DfEE. It has to be noted, however, that the latter are stretched to capacity at present with the current projects. (DH)
- (g) Pursue the idea that foreign language competence improves native literacy. (DH)

EJ, 10/11/00-13/12/00-20/12/00

**A future topic for CLIE: A-level English Language syllabi**  
Some useful [www resources](#)

U.K.'s regional education boards with responsibilities for A-/AS-level examinations were reorganised in the late 1990s. New syllabi were introduced in schools in September 2000. The following web sites are useful sources of information:

**OCR – Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations**

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/>

Information about obtaining subject specifications documentation by post at

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/news/article7.htm>

**AQA – Assessment and Qualifications Alliance**

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/index.html>

A/AS subject documentation can be downloaded following

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa.html>

**EDEXCEL – (An amalgamation of several institutions.)**

<http://www.edexcel.org.uk/>

Documentation can be ordered by post from an on-line publications catalogue.

**WJEC – Welsh Joint Education Committee**

<http://www.wjec.co.uk/>

English Language and Literature syllabus is downloadable from

<http://www.wjec.co.uk/syllabus.html>

**CCEA – Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment**

<http://www.ccea.org.uk/>

Follow the 'post-16 education' page

<http://www.ccea.org.uk/gee.htm>

**QCA – Qualifications and Curriculum Authority**

<http://www.qca.org.uk/menu.htm>

Follow general description of A-/AS-level at

<http://www.qca.org.uk/a-as-level/>

**UKRA Annual International Conference**  
*Reflecting on language and learning*  
at Canterbury Christ Church University College, Canterbury, Kent, U.K.  
6-8 July 2001

Speakers to include: Tricia David, Geoff Williams, Anthony Brown, Susan Closs, Charles Desforges.  
Commissioned workshops with Robert Fisher, Gemma Moss, Elaine Millard, Jackie Marsh.

The conference critically explores the way in which learners reflect upon language and literacy and the need to find imaginative ways forward.

**Key themes:**

- metacognition and thinking skills
- creativity and imagination
- interaction and pedagogy
- talking, writing and reading
- learning in communities
- learning for life

**Call for papers**

Proposals for presentations, seminars and workshops are invited by 30th November 2000. Request for Proposal Form to Maureen Johns, 10, Hastingfield Road, Hariton, Cambs CB37ER.

RF, 2/11/00

### **The British Council Increasing the Impact of Language Assistants**

The British Council is undertaking an initiative to support British Students who go abroad as language assistants during their university course and who are called upon to teach English. The person managing this project is

Andrew Thomas  
Special Adviser  
ELT Group  
The British Council  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7389 4990  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7389 4464

The project is part of the Council's contribution to the European Year of Languages in 2001.

Increasing the impact of Language Assistants

Purpose and Impact (Strategic objectives 1, 3, 5 (and 2))

- Increase effectiveness of the 2,200 assistants' teaching and promotion of English language and British culture
- Develop positive attitudes overseas to, and effective learning of, English
- Create positive image of the UK (and use assistants as ambassadors for UK higher education) abroad
- Enhance the British Council EYL 2001 effort

Audience

- All 2,200 Language Assistants, mainly in Secondary Schools in W/S Europe
- Language Assistants' teaching colleagues and institutions
- Language Assistants' school students

Products and Media

- A practical support manual
- A website
- E-groups
- EYL 2001 badging and participation
- Formative evaluation after one academic year

Timing

- Start production November 1 2000 to be implemented in May 2001 and sustained partners BBC on-line English
- W/S European BC offices supportive and willing to be involved

Andy Thomas  
October 16, 2000

### **Information about conferences/seminars on modern languages (from Charmian Kenner (IoE & Goldsmiths College))**

#### **LANGUAGES POLICY IN THE ISLES A seminar organised by Scottish CILT in collaboration with CILT to launch the European Year of Languages in Scotland 22-23 January 2001, at the University of Stirling**

This seminar will bring together academic and professional experts in languages policy and research. The seminar will consider policy in relation to the learning, teaching and use of modern foreign languages, second languages, and heritage and community languages. There will be two intertwining themes: policy implications for Scotland (since the conference marks the Scottish launch of EYL) and broader policy implications for the Isles as a whole where all other languages are confronted by the dominance of English.

The aim of the seminar is to develop strategic thinking in an area which is currently fragmented across linguistic and national boundaries. Participants will be able to share their knowledge and understanding of their own areas of activity and learn from others' experiences. Common themes or goals may emerge in the course of the seminar, and ways of pursuing these collaboratively may be identified.

Participants invited to give papers will be asked to develop their papers in response to a series of generic questions:

- What are the key features of current policy?
- What are the aims?
- Who determines policy?
- Who benefits and who loses out?
- How should current policy develop?
- How can, or might, policy in the field in question benefit from links with other fields or greater understanding of developments throughout the isles?

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#### **CONFERENCE ON LINGUISTIC POLICIES IN EUROPE**

To be held in October 2001 in Britain.

Further details from Fiona Bird, [eyl@cilt.org.uk](mailto:eyl@cilt.org.uk) and the CILT website [www.cilt.org.uk/eyl2001/](http://www.cilt.org.uk/eyl2001/).

#### **PROMOTING MULTILINGUALISM IN THE UK AND IRELAND**

Towards an educational agenda

A conference for European Year of Languages 2001  
Goldsmiths College, November or December 2001

##### **RATIONALE**

In order to function effectively within a global economy, children need to become fluent in more than one language. The Nuffield Languages Inquiry has highlighted the current shortcomings of Britain as a largely monolingual nation, and the Government is determined to tackle this deficit. The conference would bring together researchers, educationalists and policy-makers to discuss how the following complementary goals could be achieved:

- maintaining and developing the language competence of bilingual children in the UK/Ireland; and
- enabling monolingual children to become enthusiastic and competent language learners.

##### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

In the UK and Ireland, bilingualism is now receiving official support in the educational mainstream in Welsh, Irish and to some extent in Gaelic. However, the bilingual knowledge of many other children in Britain - in 'community' languages - is not yet being valued as an individual or a national resource. Meanwhile, in recognition of the need to promote language skills in Britain, Government-funded pilot projects are being set up to teach languages from primary school onwards. The conference would enable participants to learn from situations in which bilingualism is currently being promoted, and to consider how these successes can be extended to a wider range of languages and a greater number of pupils within the education system.

The conference would draw together discussions from the Scottish CILT conference in January and the European conference in October, and urge policy-makers to take action to expand multilingualism in the UK and Ireland.

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Committee for Linguistics in Education  
Meeting 66, 2/11/00

### agenda item 7: Non-RP accents and phonics

These comments are based on the following NLS materials (attached):  
Training module 3: Writing (1999) (circulated at the Feb 2000 meeting)  
Teacher's notes Unit 2: phonics (module 2: word level work) (1998)

The training module gives a list of vowel and consonant phonemes, with example words representing the common graphemes associated with those phonemes. These are presented as the phonemes of "English". Given, however, that accents differ both in the inventory of phonemes and in their distribution, it is impossible to give a single list in this way. What is given is basically the phoneme inventory of RP (or Southern British Standard), with some additions:

- /wh/<sup>1</sup> as in *where* is included (marked as "regional")
- a distinction is made between /or/ (examples given: *torn*, *door*, *warn*; marked as "regional") and /au/ (examples given: *haul*, *law*, *call*).
- /ar/ (/ɑ:/ ph.) *cart fast* is marked as "regional", which I have interpreted as referring to the fact the example *fast*, with others in this set, would contain instead the phoneme /a/ (/æ/ ph.) in many (northern) varieties (although other regional variation concerning the /a/ /ar/ (/æ/ /ɑ:/ ph.) contrast exists).
- the /ʊə/ (ph.) of conservative RP, as in *cure*, is omitted.)

In the Teacher's Notes Unit 2 example sets of words are given for some of the vowel phonemes, four of which are marked "Modify according to regional pronunciation": /u:/, /ɑ:/, /ʊ/, /ɔ:/ (ph.). No details are given as to which modifications to make to which sets of words.

The NLS materials therefore recognise that regional variation exists, and some attempt has been made to encompass it. The fact that the RP system is presented as the default, and phonemes present in other accents are presented as regional modifications, is in many ways unfortunate. It must be said, however, that terms such as 'RP' or 'standard' do not appear anywhere (to many such terms are often loaded), and any impression that might be given that RP is the "correct" system is, in my view, unintentional. It seems that the problem is one of potential confusion rather than prescriptivism. The treatment of regional variation is half-hearted, and the comments and distinctions made are not always clear. Other differences between accents occur in the inventory and distribution of phonemes, mainly vowels. The problems these may cause in practice, however, will depend on the degree to which teachers are aware of the differences (they may well share at least some aspects of their pupils' accent) and can adapt materials accordingly. In addition, the features of a particular accent may not be present for all speakers or all the time. For these two reasons, the differences between RP and other accents mentioned below are only *potential* areas of confusion.

Some areas of potential confusion:

- /a/ and /ar/ (/æ/ and /ɑ:/ ph.). There may not be a contrast for some speakers in parts of Britain, eg south west England: the words *cat*, *cart*, *fast* and *palm* would for these speakers contain the same vowel.
- accents with post-vocalic /r/ ("rhotic") (eg south west England, Scotland, parts of Lancs). There will be an /r/ in words such as *cart*, *burn*, *sister*, *bear*, *beer*. This has implications for the work children will carry out on the analysis of words into phonemes (p 36-37 of *Teacher's Notes*).

<sup>1</sup> symbols and examples given are those used in the NLS; symbols more generally used by phoneticians (as in *Gimson's Pronunciation of English*) are marked as ph.



- vowel systems of Scottish accents of English are fundamentally different and could not be dealt with by an "RP with modifications" approach. Eg there is may be no contrast between long and short vowel pairs such as /u:/ & /ʊ/, /ɑ:/ & /æ/, /ɔ:/ & /ɒ/ (ph.); the words *burn*, *first*, *term*, may each contain a different vowel; etc.

- the distinction made in the inventory between /ɔr/ and /aʊ/ is not present in RP. It *may* be intended to reflect the difference which may occur between [ɔ:] and [a:] in a north east accent, as in *torn* and *walk*. There is a distinction in a London accent between /ɔə/ and /o:/ (ph.), but the two example lexical sets do not match. If it is intended to reflect a difference made in some rhotic accents between these two sets of words, then why not make this distinction in, for example, /er/ (wooden, circus, sister)?

- /u/ (/ʌ/ ph.) not present in many northern accents. This may not be too serious a problem in practice if /oo/ (/ʊ/ ph.) can be substituted in material, and many speakers may make a distinction of some kind between /ʊ/ and /ʌ/.

- other potential confusions mentioned in the literature:

The distinction between /ʌʊ/ (eg *nose*, *road*, *toe*) and /u:/ (eg *knows*, *rowed*, *tow*) for some speakers in Norwich (both /oe/ (/əʊ/ ph.) in RP) (Trudgill, 1975)

The lack of distinction between /a/ /e/ and /ow/ (/æ/, /e/ and /aʊ/ ph.) in *shall*, *spell*, *owl* for some speakers in Reading (Cheshire, 1982)

#### Conclusions:

The problems for speakers with non-RP accents do not arise from a phonics-based approach *per se*, nor even English spelling itself. As soon as a phonological analysis is carried out for phonics materials, however, that analysis will be of one particular system. The problems mentioned above may not in practice prove to be obstacles, depending on how teachers deal with them but they have the potential to be. Greater clarity in the materials as to what the major aspects of regional variation are would surely help.

#### References and relevant reading:

- Cheshire, J. (1982). Dialect Features and Linguistic Conflict in Schools. *Educational Review* 34, 53-65.
- Foulkes, P. & Docherty, G. (1999). *Urban Voices: Accent Studies in the British Isles*. London: Arnold.
- Milroy, J. & Milroy, L. (1999). *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Trudgill, P. (1975). *Accent, Dialect and the School*. London: Arnold.
- Wells, J. (1982). *Accents of English*. CUP.

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A footnote to Item 11**QCA's draft criteria for GCSE English Language**

- 11.1 The perceived problem is the burgeoning content of GCSE 'English', now to take on 'language study' in the terms of the literacy strategy being extended to the secondary school. The political imperative is the notion that 'language study' somehow equates with 'standards' in English. There is 40 year history to this - briefly:

The condemnation by the Lockwood Report in (1964) of 'English Language' at O level, separate from 'English Literature', as inept and inadequate; and the subsequent:

- introduction of 'unitary' CSE 'English' - language and literature - (1965)
- conflation of the two systems into 'unified' GCSE 'English' - language and literature, plus, in an unsatisfactory compromise, further 'English Literature' as an optional extra (1988)
- introduction of the national curriculum core subject 'English' - language and literature - (1989)

- 11.2 We seem to have come full circle. NATE's concern at unpicking GCSE 'English' will be the likely marginalisation of literature, reified as just an optional extra to a core language examination, and so separated, no doubt, in teaching and learning - contrary to the aims of the unified national curriculum subject
- 11.3 CLIE's concern - NATE's also - will be whether the 'language study' component makes sense. It is bland enough as outlined in the draft Criteria, and at but 10% of the overall assessment may not seem to matter much, except in the messages it gives - attracting a disproportionate amount of course time? But the devil will be in the detail of the awarding bodies' (examination boards) subject specifications (syllabuses) and assessment models. It is in the actual examinations that 'language study' could become seriously silly; SCAA/QCA's ham-fisted GRASP (Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation) in the pilot tests at KS3 (1997, 1998) hardly inspires confidence.
- 11.4 Reverting to the kinds of trivial, decontextualised short answer questions on items and features condemned in the Lockwood Report, albeit with up-dated terminology, would be the worst model - at best, offering the negative virtue of regression to the mean in the marks awarded, and so negligible effect on the final grading! Perhaps QCA's *Grammar for Writing* (Literacy Strategy at KS2, September 2000) gives some pointers to what QCA might be looking for five years down the road?
- 11.5 No doubt CLIE could again 'offer to help' QCA on this one, in its consideration of the awarding bodies' submissions, but whether QCA would take this up for but a 10% component...? Obviously CLIE - and NATE - will want to keep an eye on what emerges.

KD (NATE) November 2000

\*CLIE Committee for Linguistics in Education - joint committee of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) and the Linguistics Association of Great Britain (LAGB) - on which NATE is represented.