

(2)

COMMITTEE FOR LINGUISTICS IN EDUCATION

MINUTES OF MEETING 74

**Wednesday 11th June 2003
2.00-5.00 p.m.**

at The Institute of Education, University of London

1. Welcomes, introductions and apologies for absence (RI)

PRESENT: Sue Barry (LAGB, secretary), Keith Brown (LAGB), Keith Davidson (NATE), Ros Fisher (UKRA), Dick Hudson (LAGB), Roz Ivanič (BAAL, Chair), Terry Lamb (ALL), Constant Leung (BAAL), Janet Maybin (BAAL), Tim Shortis (University of Bristol), Brian Street (Kings College)

APOLOGIES: Richard Aplin (ALA), Mary Auckland (RCSLT), Deborah Cameron (Institute of Education), Billy Clark (LAGB), Sharon Curry (ALL), Charlotte Franson (NALDIC), Teresa O'Brien (BAAL), Marina Spiegel (NATECLA)

Mary Auckland sent her apologies and also relayed the news that RCSLT have decided not to send a representative to CLIE, as they feel that "many of the items are of interest but not of direct relevance to Speech and Language Therapists" (MA's quotes). The committee thanked MA for all the very welcome contributions she had made as representative of RCSLT, and received with much disappointment the news that the organisation will no longer be sending a representative.

It was also reported that Deborah Cameron had resigned as coopted member, and Teresa O'Brien had resigned as BAAL representative, because of difficulties in attending arising from other unavoidable commitments. The committee thanked both members for their very welcome contributions.

2. Amendments to Minutes of Meeting 73 (RI)

The minutes were agreed as a correct record

3. Matters arising (RI & SB)

Item 3 (Matters arising: item 3.5i: communication with Laura Huxford):

Alan Howe had been copied in to the communication between RI and Laura Huxford. DH to take over Action: to write to Alan Howe offering assistance in the development of the English strand

ACTION: DH

Item 3 (Matters arising: item 3.5ii: discussions between NALDIC and NS KS3):

RI received an update from CF on the EAL strategy:
Autumn 2002 DfES launched (a) training package for EAL teaching assistants and (b) EAL/ethnic minority achievement

component in the KS3 strategy (entitled "Unlocking potential: raising ethnic minority attainment at KS3"). Additional materials were published: (i) Grammar for Writing: Supporting Pupils Learning EAL, to complement (b) above; and (ii) individual subject booklets (for Science, English, ICT, Maths) for KS3 subject leaders and EAL staff. Downloadable versions of (i) and (ii) are available on the KS3 website.

TL reported that an EAL strategy for MFL is due out soon. CL reported that the EAL booklets on individual subjects aim to provide some support for subject teachers, but do not provide a thorough preparation for teaching EAL students. It was felt (BS) that many teachers regarded the EAL strategy as one more area which they have to become familiar with in order to practice; and (TL) that the documentation is flawed by being imposed, with no time to bed in and (RF) with only small scale research informing it.

Current interest at the DfES is in individual subjects rather than cross-curricular strands (TL), and in the role of subject associations. DfES is running a consultation exercise on subject specialisms (dfes.gov.uk/consultations).

There is a need (RF) for short practical digests of research for the classroom, and (DH) to put together the practitioner and the researcher, and that CLIE could act as a channel for this.

Item 3 (Matters arising: item 10: AS/A level English Language):

TS reported he had received comments on his draft briefing paper *Recent Developments in Advanced Level English Language AS/A2*.

Item 8 (CLIE membership):

TS had been asked to be coopted onto CLIE and had agreed.

Ron Carter had thanked the committee for the invitation but was unable to accept. It was agreed that Mahendra Verma would be invited to be coopted:

ACTION: DH

Item 4 (Language Alliance):

TL reported the preliminary meeting of the LA had been held, and also a meeting with CILT. The next meeting would be in November to discuss progress regarding the National Languages Strategy. Other organisations are to be included in the Alliance.

4. Change of officers and representatives (RI)

DH (LAGB) is to be Chair of CLIE, and Jill Bourne (BAAL) will be Secretary.

BAAL representatives: JM will be a rep for one more year. A ballot amongst BAAL members is currently being held for the two vacancies for representatives.

LAGB: the representatives remain DH, BC, KB, SB

Coopted members: Brian Street and Tim Shortis are currently on CLIE; there is one vacancy (in addition to the invitation given to Mahendra Verma) arising from the resignation of Deborah Cameron.

UKRA: RF has resigned from the executive of UKRA, and will therefore no longer be a representative on CLIE. The committee thanked her for all her work for CLIE.

5. Discussion Paper: Teaching about grammar (RF & DH)

RF talked to paper (Attachment 1 below). Subsequent discussion covered a range of issues:

- (RF) often in primary schools the teacher tried to do too much in view of the limited knowledge they had. Teachers' anxiety about learning about language was reflected in the pupils' fear of using the technical words in case they were used incorrectly.

- (DH) the research carried out by Chipere supports the case for linking on the one hand attention to grammar and on the other reading. There is a DfES document in preparation 'Grammar for Reading', addressing the task of paying attention to grammatical structures when reading. (KB) Research by Gleitman & Gleitman demonstrated that pupils of different educational levels had different problems in the understanding of complex nominal structures; research by Gillian Brown on reference tracking (based on videos of spontaneous language usage) showed that pupils in lower ability groups needed explicit guidance on how to do reference tracking. (DH) this raises the question of where children get feedback on the failure to carry it out appropriately, since such a failure (in contexts outside the classroom as well as in it) would not be naturally apparent. (TS) A problem in the direction of the curriculum at present is that it is focussed on forms, not on functions and meanings. The NLS does not allow exemplification from non-standard varieties, therefore students are learning a particular type of knowledge which is non-contextualised. (BS) Students need an understanding of discourse features such as deixis; (DH) deixis is covered in the NLS under text level grammar. (BS) there is very little discourse level analysis in the NLS.

- (TL) there may not be a direct link between relevance and learning outcome, but there is between relevance and motivation; and it cannot be taken for granted that students will automatically grasp the relevance of KAG. Where KAG is covered within MFL teaching, the context of correctness leads to students being unwilling to participate because of the fear of making a mistake.

- (KB) teachers need to have the metalanguage to talk about the task being carried out; (RF) there is a danger that teachers just learn the labels and have no understanding of the concepts. (DH) teachers need the forms in order to talk about the functions: the distinctions between the two are in the Glossary.

- (TL) the quality of a plenary (summing up at the end of a task) is vital: it should enable pupils to reflect on what they have learnt. (RF) Many problems arise from teachers trying to explain using poor examples which result from oversimplification.

6. Recent Initiatives for Research and Development in Adult Literacy and ESOL (RI)

Roz Ivanic reported on the setting up of the National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC). It is part of the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit's 'Skills for Life' strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy in the UK, which is a response to the findings of the International Adult Literacy Survey, which compared scores on a standardised test across 22 countries in the OECD. Substantial 'Skills for Life' funding has led to large increases in publicity (the 'Gremlins' campaign) and provision for adult literacy and numeracy in England and Wales (a parallel, but somewhat different initiative has been put in place for Scotland by the Scottish Executive). The NRDC is responsible for undertaking research and providing professional development to complement these expansions.

The NRDC consortium partners include the Institute of Education, London, Lancaster Literacy Research Centre, the Basic Skills Agency, colleagues at Kings College, London, the University of Nottingham, and the University of Sheffield. Research and development projects are grouped into five research programmes:

1. Economic development and social inclusion;
2. Participation: agency, motivation and engagement;
3. Effective teaching and learning;
4. Professional development and the *Skills For Life* workforce;
5. The content and infrastructure of *Skills For Life*.

Although ESOL is not named in the NRDC, it is included in many of the projects.

As part of the work of the NRDC, Lancaster Literacy Research Centre is undertaking a variety of projects. The Adult Learners' Lives (ALL) project focuses on the role of literacy in people's lives and what it means to them, and relates this to their experiences of adult literacy and numeracy classes: this project particularly contributes to programmes 1 and 2. The Teacher Research Fellowship Programme provides 6 practitioners with the opportunity to conduct their own research within the broad framework of the ALL project. The Centre is developing a distance learning Diploma Effective Practice in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL, and is conducting an ESOL case study, small-scale projects on literacy and health, and on literacy in prisons.

7. Reports from representatives of organisations

LAGB: DH announced a new mailing list for educational linguistics: Edling-L, based on the Educational Linguistics Forum at the University of Pennsylvania

(<http://dolphin.upenn.edu/~pennelf>). The email address is edling@dolphin.upenn.edu, and the website is <http://dolphin.upenn.edu/~pennelf/ELF/listserv.htm>

Tim Shortis: reported he would prepare draft of the briefing paper for the next meeting. In addition, he is to work with DH and Andrew Moore amongst others to develop knowledge base for AS/A2 English Language.

UKRA: is to be renamed UKLA (UK Literacy Association)

Reports from ALL, LAGB and BAAL (as with the agenda papers) are attached again below.

DH announced a new mailing list for educational linguistics: Edling-L, based on the Educational Linguistics Forum at the University of Pennsylvania (<http://dolphin.upenn.edu/~pennelf>). The email address is edling@dolphin.upenn.edu, and the website is <http://dolphin.upenn.edu/~pennelf/ELF/listserv.htm>

Brian Street: BERA (British Educational Research Association) have a Special Interest Group 'Language and Literacy'. CLIE could consider inviting a member of this SIG to come to meetings.

8. Dates and topics for future sessions

Dates are as previously agreed (November 5th 2003; February 18th 2004; June 9th 2004).

Alan Howe is to be invited to speak in November on the English strand at KS3

ACTION: DH

Other suggested speakers were: Lynne Cameron, on EAL and writing, and Deborah Myhill, on writing.

9. AOB

The LAGB Education Committee, and RI, had been approached by B. Reid (a member of the NLS) for comments on NLS materials for Initial Teacher Training (for a unit on Language Variation). The deadline for comments (one week) was extremely short.

Teaching about grammar

Discussion paper for CLIE June 2003 by Ros Fisher and Dick Hudson

A. **Benefits.** Does explicit knowledge about grammar (KAG) improve writing, reading or speaking/listening? Does greater explicitness increase the benefits?

1. This is a very controversial issue, where a substantial body of research (Macauley 1947, Cawley 1957, Harris 1962, Kennedy and Larson 1969, Elley et al 1975,1979) appeared to show that KAG had no effect on **writing**. (For reading see the end of the paragraph.) Other research has shown positive effects of (a) sentence-combining exercises, without KAG (O'Hare 1973, Hillocks 1986);(b) KAG , with direct teaching of a specific writing skill (Williams 1995, Bryant et al 1997, 2000; Nunes et al 1997a,b); (c) KAG learned through modern and formal grammar teaching (Gale 1967, Mellon 1969).
2. It seems likely that KAG can improve writing, but whether or not it does depends on **how** it is taught and (perhaps to a lesser extent) **what** particular version of grammar is taught.
3. Regarding benefits for **reading**, a recent study by Chipere (2001, 2003) has shown that late adolescents understand complex constructions better after explicit grammatical instruction and practice.
4. A related question is whether KAG-teaching has any **other** justification than in terms of its effects on literacy skills - e.g. benefits for MFL or EAL learning, or for general self-understanding. If it does, then this strengthens the case based on literacy skills, but are these other benefits enough to justify teaching KAG in the absence of strong evidence for benefits for literacy skills?

B. **Teacher-knowledge.** How should teachers build their own KAG? While it's developing, what's their best strategy for damage-limitation?

Teacher knowledge is a tricky concept. Some research (eg Medwell et al. 1998) found that teachers could not answer questions about subject knowledge but had the pedagogical knowledge to apply it in the classroom. Who said, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing"? I [RF] see this in the classroom frequently - "verbs are doing words"; "adjectives describing words" and so on. I tell teachers to:

- ◆ avoid **explanation** - get the children to say why they think something sounds good.
- ◆ use technical terms themselves but avoid **defining** these - E.g. a teacher working with children on their stories had as success criteria "use of adjectives". The children offered examples of 'describing words', e.g. "tears pouring down her face", "the stars were sparkling in the sky". In this case the teacher would have been better to focus on the effectiveness of the writing, showing what function adjectives play in the text.
- ◆ allow children to 'play' with language in a **safe** context and to use terminology with examples so that the child can't go wrong, as in 'change the adjective 'hairy' to another word that tells us what the dog is like in 'the hairy dog' - "the ?... dog".

C. **Teaching.** How can grammar study be integrated as well as systematic?

1. In the bad old days of traditional grammar, KAG was taught as a separate strand within English; this allowed it to be taught **systematically**, but it wasn't integrated into other strands so it generally had little effect on children's writing (or any other skill).

2. In reaction it is often suggested that KAG should always be **integrated**, i.e. taught as needed (for improving writing). The weakness of this view is that most points of grammar are too complex to teach in this way, so it generally means that KAG is never taught.
3. The NLS tries to **combine** systematic teaching with integration by linking every item of grammar directly to a writing skill; this is very clear in Grammar for Writing, and ultimately it may be possible for almost all of KAG to be taught in this way.
4. However an important principle is that there is a logical progression in KAG which must be respected; e.g. you can't teach about tense until you've taught about verbs. It is important to be free to **sometimes** teach grammar 'straight' without feeling obliged to tie it point by point to some writing goal (which may be trivial and even counter-productive - e.g. "write a story containing as many X's as you can," where X is what we've been looking at today).

D. **Curriculum.** How satisfactory is the curriculum for grammar topics in the NLS framework?

1. **Punctuation** is very poor- it is about making marks not about expressing your ideas in units. I'd rather see more emphasis on the use of language related to genre and register.
2. **Terminology** should follow usage. Teachers should give examples of grammar in use and explore with children how they work. For example, it's no good saying 'today we are going to learn the future tense'. Rather teacher should let children play with changing statements from past and present to future and discuss what happens. Only then is the term any help. There's no point having a label if you've nothing to hang it on!
3. A problem with the overall approach to language is the concern for **correctness**. Thus, subject-verb agreement is mentioned very early. In reality this is a dialect issue rather than KAG but this is not understood by many teachers.
4. A topic such as 'passive voice' illustrates a problem of grammatical patterns that may not be **familiar** to all children. Teachers tell me [RF] that some children who read a lot and come from certain backgrounds where its usage is common have no problem with this; but that some children do not grasp the idea however much it is explained. The syllabus should distinguish between grammatical patterns that are familiar to all, and those that need to be taught to at least some children.
5. It is not the content that is the problem; it is the behaviourist approach to teaching and assessment that causes problems. Having a **list** of objectives implies that each objective is to be taught and ticked off, rather than integrated for future use. Although many of the objectives make statements using terms such as 'investigate, classify, explore', in practice teachers plan using shorthand e.g. 'Sentence level term 3.2 pronouns' and then tick off pronouns when they've taught them and children can say what they are.

E. **Theory.** Is the word-sentence-text structure helpful?

1. This three-part structure has the great benefit of keeping **word-level** and **text-level** KAG in focus; there is a strong tendency to identify grammar with sentence-structure.
2. It is a little confusing because each level builds on the analyses of the next level down (e.g. sentence-level grammar involves the grammatical distinctions made at word level) but the **boundaries** between the levels are not important.
3. Word-level grammar allows discussion of **vocabulary** and lexical relations (word families) as well as morphology. Text-level grammar allows discussion of **cohesion** and how all the sentence-level patterns contribute to it.
4. However, having the three levels ignores the wider aspect of language that goes **beyond** text level.

F. **Assessment.** Should KAG be assessed? If so, how? Separately or in the way it is applied in performance?

1. In the way it is applied in **performance**.
2. What we want to achieve is **control** over language - KAG should help the child to control the writing process, whereas some teaching encourages the child to put grammar in control by favouring particular grammatical patterns (e.g. subordinate clauses or modifying adjectives) regardless of purpose.
3. Assessment of grammar in writing should be **sensitive** to the way in which children's writing grows and to the purpose and audience of the writing. When dealing with new structures, they should be encouraged to experiment even if at first they make mistakes; so they need helpful feedback about these mistakes rather than criticism. But with familiar structures, they need different feedback about errors that are due to carelessness and poor proof-reading.
4. **Non-standard** forms used in writing should be treated especially sensitively.
5. Of course, what is assessed and how this is done takes us back to paragraph A above. National Curriculum assessment seems to value certain language use e.g. use of subordinate clauses. Therefore teaching children to use these may result in improved national assessment results but not necessarily in improved written expression.

Agenda item 7:

Reports from organisations

ALL: (TL)

Language World conference and exhibition 2003 at the University of Bath attracted over 500 delegates, an increase on the 2002 conference of over 100 delegates. Baroness Ashton spoke to a packed hall on the National Languages Strategy. We're already making plans for LW2004 at the University of Oxford; suggestions for speakers to be received by 22 June.

Upcoming events are Spanish Day (26 June, Yorkshire), German Day (28 June, London), Italian Weekend (4-5 July, Oxford) and Austrian Day (18 October, London)

LAGB: (SB)

LAGB Spring meeting, April 2003, University of Sheffield:

The Education Committee organised a Linguistics at School session on **Community Languages**. The guest speakers were: Mahendra Verma (University of York), Mike Reynolds (University of Sheffield and Sheffield Multilingual City Forum), Arvind Bhatt (Crown Hill Community College, Leicester)

LAGB Autumn meeting, University of Oxford:

The Linguistics at School session will be on 5th September, 2003, on the topic **A-Level English Language**.

The speakers will be:

Tim Shortis (University of Bristol Graduate School of Education, Chief Examiner for AQA A Level English Language)

Andrew Moore (School Improvement Service, Yorkshire Council (East Riding))

The Linguistics at School sessions are open to all (with no registration fee if this is the only part of the conference you attend).

For further details on past and future sessions, see:
<http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/dick/ec/ecsessions.htm>

BAAL (CL)

- BAAL 2003 - the BAAL 36th Annual Meeting
 - Theme: '**Applied Linguistics at the Interface**'
 - will take place on 4-6 September 2003 at the University of Leeds
 - Local organisers: Mike Baynham, Martin Bygate, Alice Deignan, Goodith White
- For further details please see <http://www.baal.org.uk>

BAAL/CUP Seminar

Multimodality and Applied Linguistics

18 - 19 July 2003

University of Reading

This seminar will explore the following questions:

How may applied linguistics be informed by current research on multimodality?

How can applied linguistics contribute to the development of knowledge about multimodality?

Invited speakers:

Professor Guy Cook, University of Reading

Professor Gunther Kress, University of London

Professor Sue Walker, University of Reading

For further details on proposals and registration, please contact the organisers:

James Simpson, University of Reading, j.e.b.simpson@reading.ac.uk

Denise Santos, University of Reading, d.m.d.santos@reading.ac.uk