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Analysing spoken English: Resources and techniques for teachers

We are pleased to announce a **workshop for English Language teachers** in the afternoon of **Wednesday, 18 April 2012**. The workshop is hosted by the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences at the University of Salford and is co-organized by Heike Pichler (University of Salford) and Sue Fox (Queen Mary, University of London), with contributions by the creators of the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (DECTE) (Newcastle University).

The workshop aims at disseminating to English Language teachers the insights obtained from scholarly research into language variation and change, and to provide teachers with an overview of databanks and resources available on-line for use in the classroom. The focus of the workshop is on the use of so-called discourse-pragmatic features, i.e., features such as *innit* (e.g. *It's only an hour from Edinburgh and Newcastle, innit? – Oh, I've answered this one before, innit?*), *be like* (e.g. *And they were like, "we divn't want you here." And we were like, "why?"*) or *dead* (e.g. *It was dead funny.*). These features are often wrongly dismissed as mere fillers which contribute nothing to the content or communicative force of an utterance. Even worse, their use is often perceived to be a sign of inarticulateness, laziness or lack of intelligence.

In the first part of the workshop, we aim to break down persisting prejudices against the use and users of these features. We will demonstrate how these features develop, what communicative function they perform in interaction (e.g. to signal tentativeness or assertiveness, to facilitate speaker change, etc.), and how they change over time. We thereby hope to raise participants' awareness of these features and to demonstrate that they play a vital role in interaction.

In the second part of the workshop, we provide teachers with an overview of currently available resources for working with spoken data in the classroom, focusing in particular on a demonstration of two projects specifically aimed at providing teachers with relevant resources. The *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (DECTE) is a corpus of spoken language from North Eastern England spanning five decades. The linked *Talk of the Toon* website developed by the same project team is a multi-media publicly available resource containing audio recordings and transcriptions as well as still and moving images relating to themes relevant to subject areas in the National Curriculum. *From Sociolinguistic Research to English Language Teaching* focuses on London English and aims to develop accessible classroom materials arising from sociolinguistic research on spoken language.

Workshop participants are provided with a resource pack which contains exercise materials for use in their own teaching, some background reading materials on topics related to the workshop theme as well as an annotated list of on-line resources. While primarily targeted

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at English Language teachers, the workshop is open to all members of the public who are interested in language variation and change, social interaction, interactional strategies and linguistic stereotyping.

Following the workshop, participants are invited to attend a plenary lecture delivered by Professor Jenny Cheshire (Queen Mary, University of London) and a wine reception.

To help us plan the event, we would ask prospective participants to register their interest in the event by e-mailing Dr Heike Pichler (h.pichler@salford.ac.uk). To confirm your registration, please send a cheque of £25 payable to the "University of Salford" to the following address:

Dr Heike Pichler
School of Humanities, Languages & Social Sciences
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Maxwell Building (Room 815)
The Crescent
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The deadline for registration and receipt of payment is **Wednesday, 29 February 2012**. Registration fees are non-refundable after this date. Please include your full name and postal address with your cheque so we can acknowledge receipt of the payment.

Details about the exact venue, travel etc. will be circulated in due course. A programme outline with details for each session is provided below.

We look forward to seeing you in April.

Best wishes,
Sue Fox & Heike Pichler

Analysing spoken English: Resources and techniques for teachers
Workshop for English Language teachers held at the University of Salford, Greater Manchester, on Wednesday, 18 April 2012.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME OUTLINE
12:00 – 14:00: Arrival and registration

Part 1: Discourse-pragmatic features: What are they? How do they develop? Why do we need them?
14:00 – 14:15: Introduction: What are discourse-pragmatic features? (SF, HP)
14:15 – 14:45: The usage, function and spread of *innit?* (HP)
14:45 – 15:15: Reporting speech: The use of quotatives in spoken language (SF)
15:15 – 15:30: Feedback and discussion session (SF, HP)

15:30 – 16:00: coffee/tea break

Part 2: English Language teaching: On-line databanks and resources
16:00 – 16:30: Teaching the google generation (DECTE-team)
16:30 – 17:00: Linguistics Research Digest (SF)
17:00 – 17:30: Q-A-session (SF, HP, DECTE-team)

Part 3: Plenary talk and socialising
17:45 – 18:00: Conference opening
18:00 – 19:00: Plenary lecture delivered by Professor Jenny Cheshire (Queen Mary, University of London)
19:00 – 20:30: Wine reception

DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

1) Heike Pichler (University of Salford): The usage and spread of *innit?*

The discourse-pragmatic feature *innit?* has traditionally been associated with ethnic minority and young speakers in inner-city London who use it to signal uncertainty and seek agreement from listeners. However, recent research suggests that *innit?* is rapidly spreading across UK varieties of English and across different ethnic groups. Also, it has been argued that *innit?* is gradually developing new discourse functions such as foregrounding new information or drawing attention. In this session, we will examine authentic speech data from London, Salford and Berwick-upon-Tweed to establish the range of functions performed by *innit?* in everyday conversation and to explore the social and linguistic processes which lead to its spread across social groups and geographical communities. This will provide participants with a better understanding of interactional practices as well as the nature of language change.

2) Sue Fox (Queen Mary, University of London): Reporting speech: The use of quotatives in spoken language

Speakers use a variety of ways to introduce reported dialogue into their speech, particularly when retelling an event to another person. We do not only use *SAY* as in (1) but a variety of introducers such as *SHOUT* (2), *GO* (3) and *THINK* (4).

(1) she *said* 'come in for a swim' and I *said* 'no, I can't swim'
(2) he *shouted* 'I'm gonna phone the police'
(3) I *goes* 'wait there..wait one second'
(4) I *thought* 'what's going on?'
(5) *they're like* 'you alright mate, you alright?'

Linguists call this the *quotative verb system* and in recent years there has been great interest in this system because of the emergence and rapid spread of a new quotative, *BE LIKE* (5). This new quotative was first reported in the US in the 1980s but subsequent research has shown that it is now used in Canada, Australia and in many British varieties. In this session we will consider the role of different quotative verbs in interaction and how they are used by different age groups. Especially, we will focus on how and why new forms emerge and whether they fulfil a particular function in the discourse.

3) Isabelle Buchstaller (University of Leipzig), Karen Corrigan, Adam Mearns & Hermann Moisl (Newcastle University): Teaching the Google generation: the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* and *The Talk of the Toon* as pedagogical tools in the armoury of the UK's national curriculum

We report o*n The Talk of the Toon,* a multi-media website containing audio recordings and transcriptions from dialect speakers of different ages, socio-economic backgrounds and localities in the North East of England. These recordings have been combined with still and moving images relating to themes relevant to subject areas in the National Curriculum including English but also History, ICT and Personal, Social, Health and Economic

Education. The tool has already been used with considerable success to address teaching and learning on the following themes:

• Awareness of how Standard English varies from local North Eastern English;

• The difference between written and spoken language.

In this session we will focus on the manner in which the resources can be used to investigate the linguistic and social reality of intensifiers (e.g. *He's <u>proper</u> class, my girl-friend is <u>dead</u> jealous*) and innovative forms of quotation (e.g. *She'<u>s like</u> "I don't want to see you anymore."*). Corpus-based investigations provide objective evidence of how younger (and older) speakers use intensifiers and quotatives and can thus reveal the important interpersonal and textual work these features accomplish in talk-in-interaction. Investigations that are based on naturalistic data-sets such as the *The Talk of the Toon* corpus widen our view of what discourse features actually *do* in spontaneous conversations. They therefore contribute to the avoidance of stereotyping and negative attitudes towards these features and their users – an important tenet of the National Curriculum.

4) Sue Fox (Queen Mary, University of London): From sociolinguistic research to English language teaching

In this session we report on a Knowledge Transfer project, which aims to maximise the social impact of previous sociolinguistic research on spoken language. The first objective of the project has been to develop relevant, easily accessible materials on spoken English that can be used in the classroom by teachers of GCSE and GCE A-Level English Language and we will discuss and work through some of these resources. The second objective has been to produce an online research digest that exchanges information on relevant academic research with teachers of English Language. This second objective has been met by setting up a Linguistics <u>Research Digest</u> (http://linguistics-research-digest.blogspot.com) which provides engaging, authoritative reports on the latest academic research papers and also provides information on how the reports are relevant to aspects of the A-Level syllabus. This will be an interactive session giving teachers the opportunity to provide feedback on these resources and to discuss further ways in which academics and educationalists can work together.