

Workshop Speaker Abstracts and Profiles

THURSDAY 2 OCTOBER: 1.00 PM

Spoken and written grammars: why we need both

Mike McCarthy

Location: Room 1

Thanks to the availability of spoken and written corpora, many new insights have been gained about contemporary English grammar as it is used by a wide range of people of different ages and social and geographical backgrounds. Corpus analysis reveals that the core of the language includes items with important interpersonal grammatical functions, as well as the traditional categories of tense, number, etc. Most significantly, corpora enable us to observe differences between written and spoken grammar, including grammatical items and patterns not previously noticed or recorded, things often considered 'wrong' or 'bad English' but common in the speech of educated users, and items and patterns only occurring in particular contexts or genres. We look at examples from spoken and written American and British corpora and argue that spoken grammar displays key characteristics which require a different approach to description. We conclude that, in an era when variety and diversity are being stressed in language education, grammar should be no exception.

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Being better teachers

Jeremy Harmer

Location: Room 2

What makes a good teacher and how can a good teacher become even better? These are the questions that constantly exercise the minds of methodologists and teacher practitioners in our quest to make the learning environment a better place.

Many people rely on memories of past learning to guide them to a view of what expertise in teaching should look like. Others draw up checklists of what to look for. However, I have been lucky enough, recently, to become involved in filming lessons and viewing, with many teachers, the results. It has been extremely informative to see how opinions coalesce around the view of what good teaching is all about.

So that's what we'll be doing in this workshop: watching teachers to decide how good they are and then, leading away from that introduction, coming to some conclusions about what good teaching is and crucially how to make it better. In particular we look at what can be done when a teacher 'B' is not having much success. How can we help them to be more like teacher 'A' (the good teacher we have been describing)? Do they have it in themselves to make this transformation, and if so how can we as colleagues help them to do it?

In recent outings for this workshop participants have been entranced to learn from each other and tease out what it is that makes good teaching so special. Even more importantly, perhaps, there is an acknowledgement that we are all teacher B sometimes, and we only survive if we can find our way back to the heights of 'A'. Which is where I hope this workshop will end up.

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THURSDAY 2 OCTOBER: 3.00 PM

How to study language teacher cognition

Simon Borg

Location: Room 1

Research into teacher cognition – what teachers think, know, and believe, and the relationships of these to what teachers do – continues to be one of the fastest growing areas of inquiry in TESOL. The purpose of this workshop is to examine the key research methods which have been used in this field and to raise participants' awareness of the strengths and limitations of each. The session will thus be of particular relevance to practitioners and researchers interested in the study of language teacher cognition at both pre-service and in-service levels.

Four research methods will be discussed in turn: self-report instruments (e.g. questionnaires), verbal reports (e.g. interviews), observation, and reflective writing (e.g. journals). For each method we will (a) review a concrete example of published research which has employed it; (b) discuss its strengths for studying teacher cognition; and (c) highlight the limitations associated with it.

By the end of the session participants will have a critical understanding of the key methods used in the study of teacher cognition and be better positioned to engage in inquiry of this kind for both research and professional development purposes.

Sponsored by University of Auckland, Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics



Critical practices in the assessment of writing

Bonny Norton

Location: Room 2

The assessment of writing has always presented great challenges to language teachers. What constitutes a valid test of writing? How do teachers ensure that marking is reliable? Drawing on her experience of assessing writing in the context of the TOEFL in the USA, the CLBA in Canada, and the Matric examinations in South Africa, the presenter will conduct a workshop on both the practice and theory of writing assessment. Participants will be given samples of writing to assess, and then, with reference to three different scoring guides, examine the relationship between the form of assessment and assumptions about "good writing". Participants will have the opportunity to discuss their own challenges in the assessment of writing, and relate ideas from the workshop to their daily practice.

Sponsored by AUT University



Developing principled strategies for addressing interpersonal and intercultural tensions in multiracial classrooms

Rosemary Senior

Location: Room 3

In this workshop participants will be introduced to selected class management principles and given the opportunity to develop strategies for dealing with interpersonal issues in multicultural, multiracial classrooms. After asking participants to share some of the problems that they commonly face, the presenter will outline a general framework for understanding the relationship between the classroom behaviour of individuals (functioning alone or in groups) and the overall social and learning wellbeing of the class as a whole. Having introduced some additional notions that help promote reflection, including selected facets of the class group development process, the witting and unwitting roles that class members can play, and the notion of damage limitation, the presenter will formulate a number of principles. Participants will then break into groups, at which point they will have the opportunity to discuss and develop solutions either to their own problem scenarios or to problem scenarios suggested by the presenter. A selection of these scenarios and solutions will then be shared and discussed by the group as a whole. The emphasis of this workshop will be on helping participants to internalise general principles for addressing intercultural, interracial issues in language classrooms, so that in the future they can implement with confidence appropriate solutions to emerging problems.