

## IF YOU ONLY READ FIVE PAPERS. ...

(BAAL News summer 2010)

Here, for the benefit of BAAL members, are informal summaries of some recent papers which they may have overlooked, and which should not be missed.

Narmean, E. and F. X. Wosnaim. (2009) 'Is English On The Way Down?' *Chichester Studies in Speculative Phonology* 18.6: 81–89.

The recent surprising discovery that many varieties of English are making increasing use of lexical tone has led to an upsurge of interest in the interaction between tone and intonation. As is well known, languages which combine lexical tone with intonation deploy a necessarily more reduced set of intonational options than non-tone languages, so as to obviate the ambiguity which would otherwise be generated by cross-talk between the two systems. In broad terms, it is possible to divide languages which use lexical tone into three major groups:

1. Those which make no significant use of intonational contours (*pure tone languages*)
2. Those which restrict intonation mainly to rising patterns (*anatomic languages*)
3. Those which restrict intonation mainly to falling patterns (*catatonic languages*).

The authors' research suggests that standard British English, despite some recent fluctuations, is moving towards membership of the third group, and that it is currently best classified as a crypto-catatonic language.

Knoblauch, W. (2010) 'Acquiring The Discourse Of Car Boot Sales: A Developmental Study.' *University College of Watford Gap Occasional Papers* 6: 344–402.

'Edgar', an Eastern European entrepreneur recently settled in the UK, was recorded over a period of six weeks during his attendances at the car boot sales (CBS) which were his principal source of income at the time. The main research focus was on the development of Edgar's command of the formulaic opening and closing routines which typify transactions in this community of practice. During the course of the study, Edgar became demonstrably more skilled in the dynamic co-construction of participant frameworks, showing increasing awareness of the importance of engaging and maintaining rapport with customers, and displaying a growing mastery of appropriate openings and closures. From an early phase (CBS1) characterised by mainly monosyllabic utterances ('Vot?', 'Yeah?' 'Nyet', 'Bugger off'), Edgar progressed to a relatively sophisticated command of a wide range of more elaborate genre-specific formulae, including for instance (CBS12) 'Morning, squire', 'This your lucky day, lady', 'Over 'ere, mate', 'Give us kiss, darlink', 'Cheers' and 'Why you no bugger off?'

Remora, O. and P. (2009) 'The Barnstaple Project: Preliminary Findings.' *Home Office Annual Register of Current Research 2009*: 1–6.

In this ongoing study, begun in 2004 and jointly funded by Defence Contracts International and the Home Office, the researchers investigate adult second language acquisition in a group of Karelian immigrants in North Devon. While detailed findings are classified, it can be revealed that adult second language (L2) learners typically do not become native-like in their production of the L2.

Hendriksen-Higgins, W. (2010) 'Lexical Acquisition In MA Students.' *International Journal of Experimental Pragmatics* 14/1: 1–18.

British MA students were exposed over a 36-hour period to articles from the journal *Applied Linguistics*, and were then tested for their processing of, retention of and ability to paraphrase previously experienced or non-experienced lexical items.

Three groups of items were presented:

1. words which occurred in the articles to which they had been exposed (e.g. *interdiscursivity*)
2. words of similar structure and frequency which did not occur in these particular articles (e.g. *interstitiality*)
3. non-words of similar structure to those in the other two groups (e.g. *interbestiality*).

There was no significant difference in the test results for the three groups of words.

Vederci, H. (2010) *Where Are They Now?* Didcot: Didcot Academic Press.

This study follows up the subsequent careers of a number of scholars whose academic posts were abolished during a recent round of budgetary cuts. Vederci's findings are interesting, positive and in some cases heart-warming. One prominent discourse analyst, for instance, is now prompter to the Royal Ballet; in his new-found spare time he has published monographs with titles as diverse as *Ritual Boomerangs of Arnhem Land* and *Les Déchettes du Val D'Aoste*. Another well-known scholar, whose work in computational pragmatics had gained her a considerable reputation before the axe fell, was recently appointed High Elector of Nüremberg, the first woman to accede to the post since Joan the Mad in 1208. A distinguished Professor whose department was merged from under him, and who had attracted international recognition by his investigation of the parallels between the growth patterns of mollusc shells and the development of second-language grammatical knowledge, has adapted perfectly happily to his new role as a shelf-stacker in a supermarket. 'For the first time in my life,' he says, 'I know what I'm doing.'

