

# NEWS

## The Survey of English Usage: Annual Report, 1996

### 1. General

It is with sadness that we announce the death in May 1996 of Professor Sidney Greenbaum. He died in Moscow while on a lecture tour. Sid had been director of the Survey since 1983 when he came to UCL from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee to become Quain Professor of English Language and Literature. He retired from the Quain in 1990 to devote all his energies to the Survey. Greenbaum initiated the compilation of the International Corpus of English (ICE), the British component of which we hope to complete by the autumn of 1997. For further details, see the ICE section below.

Bas Aarts was appointed Director of the Survey at the beginning of 1997.

Our completely redesigned and updated Home Page has been relaunched at the address shown on p. 49.

The Survey's Annual Report will appear around February of each year from now on, covering the preceding calendar year.

### 2. Research

#### New project:

##### **The Internet Grammar of English (IGE)** (Project No JTAP-49)

This project, funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), is a World Wide Web based grammar intended for people who want to learn about English grammar (or improve their existing knowledge) through self-study. It is also useful for teachers and researchers. *IGE* consists of two modules: The Grammar Module and The Exercises Module. The first of these consists of descriptions of the English language. The Exercise Module offers exercises which are linked to sections in the Grammar module. There will also be a Foundation Course, designed especially for absolute beginners. The descriptive outlook of *IGE* is predominantly traditional, but it will incorporate some insights from theoretical grammar. The Web address for *IGE* is the same as the Survey's: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage>. Simply follow the *IGE* link. This project started in August 1996, and we anticipate completing it in

July 1998. In due course *IGE* will also be available on CD-ROM for institutions of higher education and schools. Gerald Nelson is the senior researcher working on the project. Justin Buckley works on the computational side, his chief task being the design of the Web site. Judith Broadbent assists on a part-time basis.

#### *Continuing projects:*

##### **The International Corpus of English**

The parsing of the British ICE corpus (ICE-GB) has been completed, and work has begun on aligning the tagged and parsed versions. This will yield a single, unified version of the corpus. The ICETree program has been modified to handle the alignment process.

We have begun the speech digitization project, computerizing the recordings of spoken texts in ICE-GB and aligning them to the orthographic transcriptions. The digitized sound files are being archived on CD-ROM. As of October 1997 ICE-GB will be on CD-ROM.

ICECUP III, the ICE Corpus Utility Program, has been developed for searching, browsing and analysing corpora. It is the corpus equivalent of a database browsing program. ICECUP III is a new version of the program which is based around the parsed version of the ICE-GB corpus, but with compatibility for lexical and tagged corpora. The current version of ICECUP III contains a retrieval system for simple searches and a browser for sentences. Another module is used to construct hash tables and indices in advance. The main parts of the work outstanding are integrating the visualisation of trees and specification of complex queries into the tool.

Sidney Greenbaum edited a book on the ICE project: *Comparing English Worldwide: The International Corpus of English*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. The book was published in June 1996.

Sidney Greenbaum and Gerry Nelson co-edited a special issue of *World Englishes* devoted to the ICE project. The volume (1,15) was published in March and contains eight research papers based on component corpora of ICE.

### **The Survey Parser Project (EPSRC Grant No GR/K75033)**

The Survey Parser Project is for the development of an automatic syntactic parser of English and a lexical database that provides useful information for parsing. Alex Chengyu Fang was employed for the parsing component and commenced work in September 1995. Sean Wallis was employed for the lexical component and joined us in October 1995. The Survey Parser is now functioning. It is fully automatic, fast, and produces only one analysis for the input string. The current design of the parser comprises two modules: wordclass tagging and syntactic parsing. Raw texts can be fed into the parser without having to be pre-edited. The output is an indented tree structure with appropriate labels. The parser is able to process 30 words per second, a speed that is unaffected by the length of the input string. The single analysis produced can be complete or partial. A complete analysis is one where all the constituents have been successfully labelled. A partial parse has one or more missing syntactic functions.

The parser has been used to parse the residue of the British component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-GB), that could not be dealt with by the TOSCA parser (Nijmegen, the

Netherlands). This residue represents about 320,000 words or 28,000 sentences. The Survey Parser successfully produced either a global or a partial analysis for all the input strings. The next major development will be the interface between the parser and the lexical database. It is expected that information from the lexical database will contribute to better parsing outputs. The lexical database (LDB) currently consists of 162,989 entries. Each entry consists of a unique headword and a series of sub-entries, distinguished by the part of speech, and containing cross-references to other appropriate word forms, including inflected, derived, compounded and alternative forms. Each entry may additionally include atomic semantic information, and a list of possible collocational frames. This information has been aggregated from a number of sources: the *Collins English Dictionary*, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*.

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## **Sharp 1998: July 16–20 in Vancouver, BC, Canada**

The sixth annual conference of the Society of the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing will take place July 16–20, 1998 at Simon Fraser University's Harbour Centre Campus in the heart of Vancouver, under the auspices of the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing. In the SHARP tradition, we will entertain proposals with no limitations on topics. We welcome suggestions for organized sessions. Session submissions should include the session title, paper titles and abstracts for consideration by the program committee.

Conference themes will include, but are not limited to:

- Traditions of the written word in Asia and the Americas
- Interactions and boundaries between print and oral culture
- Book arts: text and image
- Books in Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance periods

Presenters must be or become members of SHARP. For information about joining SHARP,

contact Linda Connors, Drew University Library, Madison NJ 07940, USA, e-mail lconnors@drew.edu.

Major research collections in Vancouver include the University of British Columbia Library and Museum of Anthropology, Simon Fraser University Library, the Vancouver Public Library; and in Victoria, on Vancouver Island, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the Royal British Columbia Museum and the University of Victoria.

#### *Deadline for Submission*

Please submit your abstract for consideration by October 31, 1997, by mail or e-mail, to the attention of:

Deborah Kirby, Conference Director,  
SHARP 98 Conference, c/o Canadian Centre  
for Studies in Publishing, Simon Fraser  
University at Harbour Centre, 515 West  
Hastings Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 5K3  
Canada. Telephone (604) 291-5093,  
Fax (604) 291-5098, E-mail dkirby@sfu.ca

# Whatever is happening to ELT publishing?

TOM McARTHUR made the following observations at a meeting of the Educational Writers Group at the Society of Authors in London in March 1997

The change in ELT publishing has been considerable since I first became involved in it in the early 1970s, when my initial efforts involved ESP just before it became fashionable, the teaching of vocabulary and word-formation when it was utterly unfashionable, and phrasal verbs when nobody was quite sure what they were. My involvement in EFL dictionaries and coursebooks came later, the former being mainly with my *Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English* and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the latter with an EAP composition course called *The Written Word* (Oxford), intermediate and advanced. I also produced a book in the 1980s relating to teacher training. My ELT publishers have been Oxford, Collins, Longman, Nelson and Cambridge. Since moving into more general work on the English language at large I have kept in touch with both EFL and ESL, and it seems to me that at least a dozen linked factors have affected the prospects of ELT materials writers in recent years. These are:

- 1 More and more publishers have been getting on the bandwagon, as a result of which there is inevitably a smaller cake to share, despite the steady increase in people learning English. This is true for all aspects of ELT: general course books, ESP and EAP materials, works of reference, and special media products (audio, CALL, etc.).
- 2 The increase in publishers includes more from other English-speaking countries, most particularly the United States and to a lesser extent Australia. Publishers from such countries have been able to expand better in some markets than others.
- 3 There have been amalgamations, which affect planning with companies which were once rivals and now find themselves together under a new umbrella. Such amalgamations may result in 'down-sizing' at the same time as companies expect quick returns on their investment.
- 4 To keep or gain a share in markets orientated towards American English, UK publishers have been developing courses in American English which inevitably need more American than British writers.
- 5 There has been in recent years more local ELT publishing in countries like Greece and Italy, undertaken either locally or in co-operation between an international giant and a local publisher, making use of writers with local experience.
- 6 Ambitious publishers have tended to want the same range of products, such as Cambridge First Certificate materials and courses for young adults. Many of these are clone-like and mean that the market has become saturated with materials between which distinctions are not easily made. The same is true of dictionaries.
- 7 While the amount of the materials published has increased (and the range of materials within a course has expanded) the amount of money available to buy these often expensive materials has decreased even in the better-off countries, so that the market cannot absorb what the various salesforces offer them.
- 8 Some publishers become unable to keep up or lose interest in doing so, and sell their ELT lists to others, with curious results. I have personally experienced a book, my *Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*, the first of its kind, passing from Collins to Nelson (when Collins sold its non-COBUILD list), then to Addison-Wesley-Longman when Nelson dropped out.
- 9 When I first got involved in ELT writing, there were relatively few big names, such as L. G. Alexander, Stannard Allen, Eckersley, and Hornby, and Americans were hardly known. Since then, inevitably, the success of the enterprise has meant a great increase in qualified and ambitious ELT practitioners interested in publishing course materials. So there are simply more of us than there were before, dealing with more publishers.
- 10 Eclecticism among teachers, especially in smaller schools, has led them both to use their own unpublished materials and build up ensembles of photocopied pages and copied cassettes, which may or may not be done legitimately and in any case cuts into publisher's receipts. One result of this kind of development is ELT publishers being pushed into making more and more photocopiable material available.

- 11** Book and tape piracy continues in various parts of the world, with an effect on sales that is difficult to assess.
- 12** Technology marches on, allowing for many new possibilities but leaving publishers unable to calculate what their markets can absorb and what new media they should develop. In addition, the availability of fairly cheap DTP software and audio/video/CD-ROM recording facilities

makes many things possible now which were not conceivable even ten years ago.

The result, it seems to me, is a confused, over-excited, over-extended, and saturated market, in terms of both what ELT writers and publishers have traditionally been doing and how the free-market activity called 'globalization' is currently developing. □

### *Announcing the 1998 AAAL Conference!*

## **AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS 1998 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS**

Saturday, March 14 - Tuesday, March 17, 1998  
Seattle, Washington  
The Madison Hotel

### *Plenary Speakers*

JODI CRANDALL (University of Maryland Baltimore County)  
SHIRLEY BRICE HEATH (Stanford University)  
LUIS MOLL (University of Arizona)  
DENNIS PRESTON (Michigan State University)  
PETER SKEHAN (Thames Valley University, England)

### *Plenary Panel of Past AAAL Presidents*

LYLE BACHMAN (UCLA)  
COURTNEY CAZDEN (Harvard University)  
CLAIREE KRAMSCH (UC, Berkeley)  
ELAINE TARONE (University of Minnesota)  
CHAIR - MARY McGROARTY (Northern Arizona University)

### *Invited Colloquia Organizers*

CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE L2 LEARNER  
MICHAEL BREEN (Edith Cowan University, Australia)  
RESEARCH ON L2 WRITING  
ALISTER CUMMING (Ontario Institute for Studies  
in Education/University of Toronto)  
ISSUES IN RESEARCH ON IMMERSION EDUCATION  
PATSY DUFF (University of British Columbia)  
MEETING THE LITERACY DEMANDS OF YOUNG DEAF ADULTS  
PETER FREEBODY (Griffith University, Australia)  
COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION: IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE POLICY  
BONNY NORTON PEIRCE (University of British Columbia)

### *For further information:*

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E-mail: [aaaloffice@aaal.org](mailto:aaaloffice@aaal.org) Home Page: <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/AAAAL98>