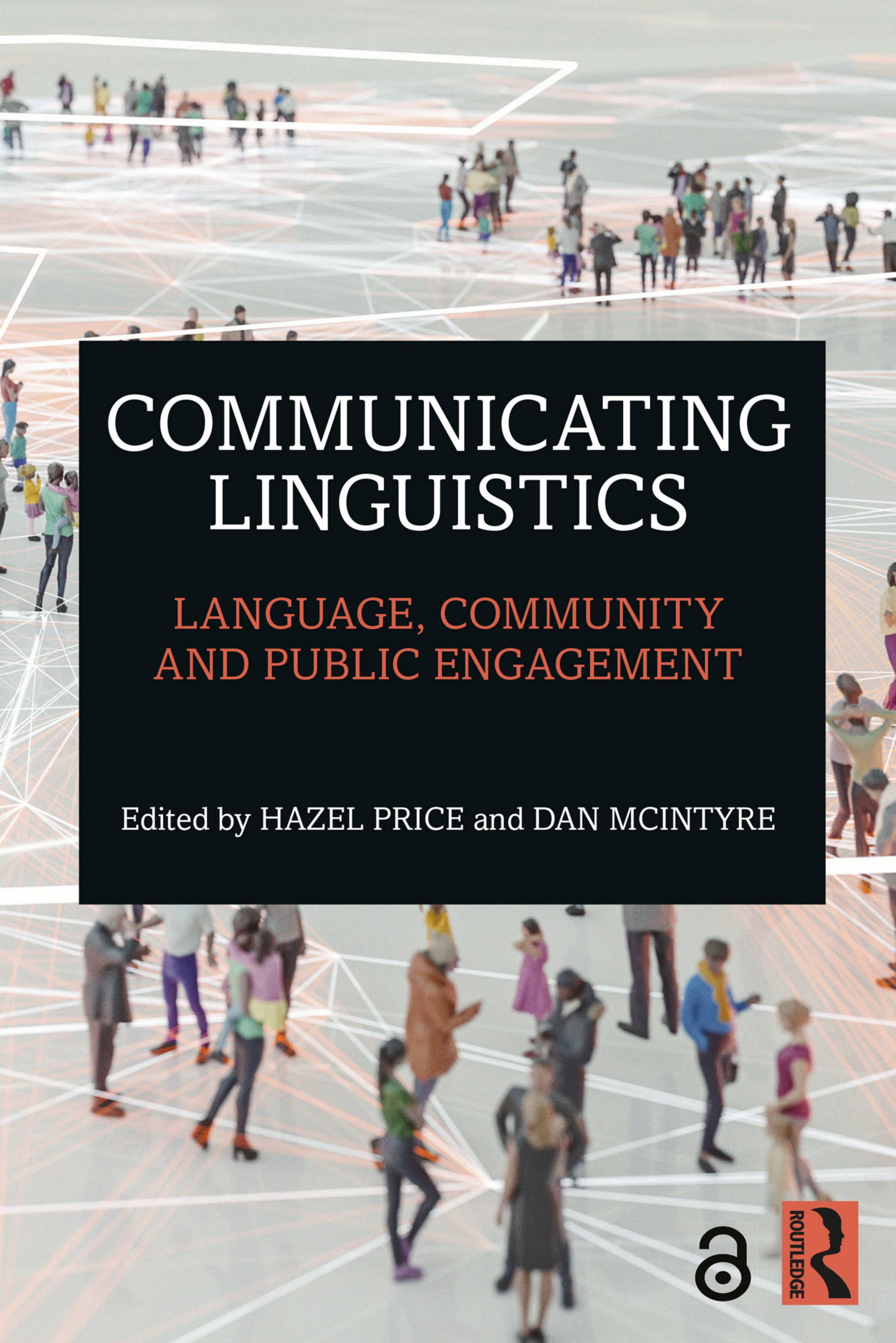

COMMUNICATING LINGUISTICS

LANGUAGE, COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Edited by HAZEL PRICE and DAN MCINTYRE

COMMUNICATING LINGUISTICS

Increasingly, academics are called upon to demonstrate the value of linguistics and explain their research to the wider public. In support of this agenda, *Communicating Linguistics: Language, Community and Public Engagement* provides an overview of the wide range of public engagement activities currently being undertaken in linguistics, as well as practically focused advice aimed at helping linguists to do public engagement well. From podcasts to popular writing, from competitions to consultancy, from language creation to community projects, there are many ways in which linguists can share their research with the public. Bringing together insights from leading linguists working in academia as well as non-university professions, this unique collection:

- Provides a forum for the discussion of challenges and opportunities of public engagement in linguistics in order to shape best practice.
- Documents best practice through a summary of some of the many excellent public engagement projects currently taking place internationally.
- Celebrates the long tradition of public engagement in linguistics, a discipline which is often misunderstood despite its direct and fundamental importance to everyday life.

Breaking down long-standing divisions between universities and the wider community, this book will be of significant value to academics in linguistics but also teachers, policy makers and anyone interested in better understanding the nature and use of language in society.

Hazel Price is a Lecturer in English Language at the University of Salford, UK.

Dan McIntyre is Professor of English Language at Uppsala University, Sweden.

COMMUNICATING LINGUISTICS

Language, Community and Public Engagement

Edited by
Hazel Price and Dan McIntyre

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Introduction

1

PUBLIC LINGUISTICS

Hazel Price and Dan McIntyre

Introduction

In his 1980 book *Language: The Loaded Weapon*, Dwight Bolinger decries the number of 'shamans,' as he calls them, who comment without authority (and usually without recourse to evidence) on the use of language. The problem, he says, is that 'they are almost the only people who make the news when language begins to cause trouble, and someone must answer the cry for help' (Bolinger 1980: 1). Stephen Pinker makes a similar point in *The Language Instinct* (1994), grumbling about 'the language mavens,' self-appointed experts on usage whose views are uninformed by the insights of linguistic theory and description.

Bolinger and Pinker are essentially complaining about prescriptivists – and it is true that there are lots of them about. Almost everyone has the ability to speak, write or sign, and so it is no surprise that almost everyone has an opinion about language and language use, regardless of whether this is supported by evidence. Every academic linguist will have had the dispiriting experience of arguing about language with a prescriptivist, and there is a temptation to suppose that linguistics as a discipline is particularly hard done to in this regard. Oliver Kamm, a journalist who writes informatively on language, has said 'I know of no discipline where the gap between popular commentary and science is so vast' (Kamm 2015), although there are enough climate change deniers and anti-vaxxers out there to suggest that linguistics is not the only subject on which nonexperts feel qualified to comment. Nonetheless, the fact that almost everyone has a language capability at least begins to explain why so many people without a formal background in linguistics feel confident in discussing issues of language.

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Addressing why it is that non-linguists remain so unaware of the insights of linguistics, Pinker says:

> In all fairness, much of the blame falls on members of my own profession for being so reluctant to apply our knowledge to the practical problems of style and usage and to everyone's natural curiosity about why people talk the way they do.
>
> *(Pinker 1994: 398–9)*

The quotation comes from a chapter in Pinker's book *The Language Instinct* in which he explains why prescriptivist ideas about language are ill-informed and how such ideas can be countered with evidence from linguistics. However, his claim that linguists have been reluctant to apply their expertise in addressing these issues is hardly accurate. Although it is certainly the case that, until recently, engaging with the public was not seen as a necessary component of academic work, even at the time of *The Language Instinct*'s original publication, there were plenty of popular books on language, written by professional linguists, that grappled with trying to explain issues of style and usage – and more besides – to nonexpert readers (see, for example, Aitchison 1976; Crystal 1984; Tannen 1987). Nowadays, of course, public engagement is increasingly seen as intrinsic to the work of academics. But if public engagement is to be worthwhile, it is vital that we develop a clear sense of why it is important and how best to do it. This book is an attempt to do just that.

One significant problem that linguistics has as a discipline concerns public perceptions of it. Again, it is not alone in this regard. No doubt geographers become just as exasperated by people asking them the names of capital cities as linguists do responding to enquiries about how many languages they speak. Managing public perceptions is important. And here is where engaging with prescriptivists can cause a number of problems.

First, it is very difficult to convince a prescriptivist that their views are mistaken. Prescriptivists are of the opinion that there is a right and a wrong way to use language and are usually in favour of measures to preserve the language in aspic. When a linguist comes along and argues the opposite (or, at least, that appropriateness is a better measure of usage), most prescriptivists see this as confirming their worst fears: that for linguists (of all people!), anything goes. Since accepting a linguist's argument entails giving up on their desire to see language used 'properly' (as a prescriptivist would view it), it is no surprise that most arguments with prescriptivists end up at an impasse.

The second problem with arguing with prescriptivists – especially in public fora – is that is bolsters the assumption among non-linguists that this is what linguistics is primarily concerned with; that is, the discipline of linguistics is about pronouncing on matters of usage. By engaging with prescriptivists, then, we can inadvertently contribute to negative perceptions of our discipline. A similar argument may be made about linguists engaging with overly simplistic profile-raising activities, such as the 'Word of the year' assessments favoured by the *Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache* (Association for German Language), the American Dialect Society and innumerable dictionary publishers.

Thirdly, arguing with prescriptivists is a reactive move rather than a proactive one. It lets prescriptivists set the agenda, and we thereby lose the opportunity to talk about the many fascinating aspects of language and language use that might well engage people to a greater extent and allow us to move beyond a discussion of language that is focused on issues of right and wrong.

This is why public engagement is so important for linguistics. Until we can address public understanding of our discipline, we stand little chance of being able to change people's minds about the value of linguistics and what it can offer to them. Rather than being reactive, then, we need to take a proactive approach to publicising the work that we do. This book focuses on how to do this by showcasing some of the wide range of public engagement work currently being undertaken by linguists. The sheer amount and variety of this work suggests that what we are currently experiencing is something of a golden age of public linguistics. In the UK, some of this activity has clearly been in response to the national Research Excellence Framework, which requires academics to demonstrate the socio-cultural and/or economic impact of their research; and in many cases public engagement offers a direct route to impact (see, for example, Murphy 2018a). But prospective impact is not the only reason to do public engagement, nor is it the only driver of such work (see, for example, McIntyre and Jeffries, and Semino, this volume).

While the range of public engagement work currently being undertaken in linguistics is impressive, other disciplines are considerably more advanced in terms of theorising and operationalising public-facing work. The journal *Public Understanding of Science*, for instance, was founded in 1992 with the aim of providing a forum for reflection on science communication. *Science and Public Policy* dates back even further to 1974 and covers best practice in engaging policymakers with scientific research. Similarly, the journal *The Public Historian* focuses on the theory and practice of public engagement with the discipline of history as does the more recently founded *Public History Review.* It is notable that, at present, no equivalent journals exist for linguistics. The aim of this book, then, is to offer for linguists what the abovementioned journals offer for the practitioners of those disciplines; that is, we aim to provide an overview of the value of public engagement work in linguistics and to offer advice on how best to develop public-facing projects.

A typology of public engagement in linguistics

To some extent, linguistics has always been a discipline that engages with the public. When your object of study is produced by people, this could hardly be otherwise. What has changed over the years is the nature of the relationship between linguists and the public they engage with.

The UK-based National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) defines public engagement as follows:

> Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.
>
> *(National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement n.d.)*

It will be apparent that this definition aims to be as broad and inclusive as possible. The NCCPE acknowledges that exact definitions vary across disciplines and sectors. But what is key to this definition is the reciprocal nature of public engagement; that is to say, both parties – linguists and the public – should benefit from whatever public engagement activities are undertaken. We agree with this position with the caveat that the extent of reciprocity may vary according to the project in question. Nonetheless, notwithstanding the fact that public engagement as a practice has only recently undergone any kind of formalisation, it has not always been the case that reciprocity has been central to language-based work that relies on the contributions of non-linguists. The work of Franz Boas (1858–42) is a case in point. Boas's anthropological work, incorporating language documentation, involved protracted periods spent with the Inuit of Baffin Island and the Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island. Boas's work brought to prevalence the concept of cultural relativism, the notion that humans interpret cultures based on the norms of their own. That is, no culture is objectively better or worse than another. With regard to the significance of this for linguistics particularly, Boas (1911) argues against what were then prevailing views about the nature of Indigenous languages, noting that:

> Examples of American languages [i.e. the languages of the Indigenous peoples of America] have been brought forward to show that the accuracy of their pronunciation is much less than that found in the languages of the civilized world.
>
> It would seem that this view is based largely on the fact that certain sounds that occur in American languages are interpreted by observers as one European sound, sometimes as another.
>
> *(Boas 1911: 16)*

Boas's anthropological observations provided important evidence in support of cultural relativism. But as Simpson (2018) explains, the problem with how Boas expressed his stance is that it positions Indigenous peoples as ready for acceptance into so-called civilised society, thereby resulting in 'a new form of nonrecognition and imminent disappearance' (Simpson 2018: 174). Note the existential presupposition in Boas's phrase 'the civilized world' and its positioning of Indigenous societies as outside this place. The trouble with Boas's approach, as

Simpson (2018: 175) summarises it, is that 'despite his critique of popular and scholarly science on differences between the races, Boas accords little space to Indigenous people.' In essence, Boas's approach to engaging with the subjects of his research is an acquisitional one. From this perspective, people are seen as being there to provide data (in Boas's case, information about language and cultural practices) for the researcher to interpret. Not only is this ethically problematic, it also increases the likelihood of the researcher misconstruing what that data actually reveals. Needless to say, language documentation practices in modern linguistics are much more considerate of these kinds of issues (see Chelliah 2018, and Watson and al-Mahri, this volume).

A slightly different case of relying on informants to provide data can be seen in the initial project to compile the *Oxford English Dictionary*, originally known as the *New English Dictionary* (see Mugglestone 2005 for an account of this). The scale of the endeavour was such that it was not possible for the small team of lexicographers working on the project to complete it without assistance. Thus began a series of appeals to the public for help. The first, in 1859, was issued by the Philological Society and was addressed 'to the English and American public to assist in collecting the raw materials for the work, these materials consisting of quotations illustrating the use of English words by all writers of all ages and in all senses' (quoted in Murray 1879). Such was the positive response that 20 years later, James Murray, the third editor, issued a further appeal for volunteers. This time the appeal asked for 'help from hundreds of readers in Great Britain, America, and the British Colonies, to finish the volunteer work so enthusiastically commenced 20 years ago, by reading and extracting the books which still remain unexamined' (Murray 1879). There then followed a list of books for which readers were wanted. In addition, volunteers were sought to assist in the arrangement and classification of some of the letters of the dictionary which remained in a poor state of completeness, for later revision by the editor. The work was to be purely voluntary, though it is interesting to note that the appeal points out that anyone volunteering 'will render important service by doing so' (Murray 1879). Here we see recognition that asking the public for help necessitates offering something in return, even if – as in this case – it is only the sense of having made a valuable contribution to a significant endeavour. In this respect, the model of public engagement is less acquisitional and more contributory. Indeed, much resource creation work follows a contributory public engagement model, in the sense that it is focused on offering something to the wider community (take, for example, the ELT publishing industry). This is notwithstanding the fact that the public are often involved in providing data for those resources (as in the case, say, of the creation of the new spoken British National Corpus; see Love et al. 2017) and that there is often a financial or other form of benefit to the resource producers. In effect, this kind of contributory public engagement is directly linked to the concept of citizen science (that is, scientific research carried out by interested amateurs; see Kullenberg and Kasperowski 2016; and Little, this volume, for a detailed consideration of what the term *citizen science* describes).

Contributory public engagement also describes the trade publishing industry, to which linguistics has made significant contributions. While popular writing was historically treated rather dismissively in academia, the same cannot be said of today. The publication of popular books has increased significantly over recent years and is no longer the preserve of independent scholars and interested amateurs (see, for example, Murphy 2018b; Adger 2019; Setter 2019; Carrol 2022; McIntyre et al. 2022). The same model of public engagement can also be seen in other outlets for popularising linguistics, such as podcasts (e.g. Gillon and Figueroa, this volume) and magazines (McIntyre and Jeffries, this volume).

Public engagement is not all about utilising the expertise of non-linguists, of course. And it is not always contributory in the sense described immediately above. In some cases, public engagement follows a transactional model whereby some sector of society (e.g. industry) purchases the expertise of the linguist for their own particular ends. The potential practical applications of linguistics are such that there are plentiful examples of this type of engagement. Consider, for instance, the consultancy work of forensic linguists (e.g. Morton and Grant 2021, Grant and Thomas et al. 2021) and the work of forensic speech scientists as expert witnesses (e.g. French 2010; Kirchübel 2018). There are even applications to be found in areas that would not, to the outsider, seem to have direct benefits to society. One particularly interesting case is the early work in syntax of Noam Chomsky which, as Chomsky (1957: 1) himself acknowledges, was supported in part by the US Army Signal Corps, the US Air Force and the US Navy. As Colonel Edward P. Gaines explained in 1971, 'We sponsored linguistic research in order to learn how to build command and control systems that could understand English queries directly' (quoted in Knight 2004: 583). There are, of course, possible tensions caused by transactional public engagement. In Chomsky's case, there was a clear conflict between his political activism and his decision to accept military funding for his linguistic research. Knight (2004) puts forward the intriguing argument that Chomsky's courageous public acts of civil disobedience (in protesting against the Vietnam War, for example) were partly driven by a need to counter accusations of political corruption in taking the military dollar.

The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement is clear that the kind of work described above constitutes a type of public engagement, breaking down the concept of the public into four types: (i) the general public, (ii) civil society (e.g. charities and nongovernmental organisations), (iii) business, and (iv) the public sector (e.g. schools, colleges, regional and national government, etc.). We would contend, however, that there are improvements that could be made to this classification. As it stands, it does not acknowledge the superordinate position of 'the general public' of which we are all members, whether we work in the business or public sectors or civil society. Neither does it account for the fact that most people occupy multiple roles across multiple sectors. And, as we have seen, transactional public engagement brings with it the risk of conflicts of interest arising and the attendant ethical problems that these can cause.

Finally, we come to the model of public engagement that is advocated most strongly by the NCCPE. This is reciprocal public engagement. In this model, public engagement is an intrinsic part of the research process, with insights from the public being fed into the design of research at the outset and with defined benefits both for the academics involved and the public themselves. An example of this can be seen in Drummond and Carrie's (2017) 'Manchester Voices' project. This project has used community workshops and a mobile interview booth and recording studio to elicit sociolinguistic data, with a view to exploring the accents, dialects and identities of the people of Greater Manchester. Participants from the community have provided the linguistic and perceptual data that underpin the work of the project team. That is, without the public there would be no project. In return, the project aims to celebrate regional diversity and increase the community's confidence in its own linguistic identity. Tangible outcomes from the project designed to achieve these objectives include a permanent installation and video archive based in Manchester Central Library. Drummond and Carrie's project is just one example (albeit a particularly well-funded one) of research deriving from a mutually beneficial relationship with the community that forms the object of study (see also Preston 1993 for an earlier consideration of the use of folk linguistics in dialectology). Unsurprisingly, there is a long history of this kind of work in linguistics, including William Labov's famous study of sound change in Martha's Vineyard (Labov 1963) and Peter Trudgill's equally well-known study of social differentiation in the English of Norwich, UK (Trudgill 1974). What the rise of public engagement as an academic pursuit has caused is an ever-greater consideration of the benefits to all parties of engaged research (e.g. van Herk 2008).

Structure and themes

This book is divided into two broad sections: 'Popularising linguistics' and 'Communicating linguistics.' The first of these sections contains chapters which describe the various ways in which linguists have raised the profile of the discipline outside of academia, e.g. through podcasts, blogs and magazines. The second part of the book contains chapters on a range of public engagement or consultancy projects conducted in linguistics. In addition to an overview of the various projects and initiatives described, we asked authors to provide a series of tips for linguists interested in developing public engagement activities or incorporating public engagement into their projects. Some authors chose to present these in a separate section at the end of their chapters. Others incorporated them throughout. All offer excellent advice.

In Chapter 2, Hannah Little outlines the principles of good research communication, describing how science communication should take account of three core concepts: *purpose* (that the work is objective-led), *audience* (that the work is tailored to different audiences) and being *mutually beneficial* (that the work is beneficial to all parties). Little also discusses how public engagement activities have become an increasingly important part of academic research. In Chapter 3, Carrie Gillon and Megan Figueroa (also known as *The Vocal Fries*) describe how they have popularised linguistics through podcasting. They discuss the practicalities of podcasting and the challenges and opportunities of communicating linguistics to a non-specialist audience. For example, one challenge of the podcast medium is that uploading a podcast regularly requires a great investment of time, but an opportunity is that non-linguists can bring other ways of thinking about language that linguists may have been trained out of. They also describe ways of monetising podcasts, e.g. by starting a Patreon. In Chapter 4, M. Lynne Murphy describes her experiences of blogging and tweeting for a popular audience. Murphy discusses how her blog has provided many opportunities for professional development, despite the fact that it was never started with this purpose in mind. Like Gillon and Figueroa, Murphy also outlines some of the challenges and opportunities of her chosen method of public engagement: being open online allows the researcher to establish their legitimacy in the field (e.g. by listing their academic credentials), but often that openness requires the researcher to establish their own boundaries when interacting with people. In Chapter 5, Dan McIntyre and Lesley Jeffries describe their work on *Babel: The Language Magazine*, explaining how they established *Babel* as a brand using existing networks internal and external to their university. They also explain how they navigated the difficulties of starting an enterprise within a university infrastructure and consider the wider ramifications of public engagement work for university senior managers. In Chapter 6, Laura Wright details how she has popularised linguistics in her work as a radio broadcaster. Wright outlines the challenges and opportunities of talking about linguistic issues on pre-recorded and live radio shows, discussing in particular how nuanced conversation on linguistic topics can be stifled when a discussion is cut due to time constraints. In Chapter 7, Jane Setter describes her experience of writing the popular linguistics book *Your Voice Speaks Volumes: It's Not What You Say, But How You Say It*. Setter considers the extent to which some areas of linguistics are considered more 'popular' than others and also outlines some general strategies for writing popular science. Her chapter also reflects on the fact that being a public linguist often necessitates a willingness to have a public profile that does not match your own research interests. Here, Setter emphasises the importance of core knowledge of discipline for successful public engagement. In Chapter 8, Richard Hudson interrogates the concept of public engagement and what this means for schools. In particular, he considers the extent to which public perceptions of linguistics are conditioned by the education system we experience. In tackling this, and as part of his work on strengthening the links between schools and higher education, Hudson introduced the UK Linguistics Olympiad scheme, the advantages of which he demonstrates in his chapter. And in the final chapter of the first part of the book, Billy Clark describes his work with students and teachers to explore ideas about language and linguistics generally. Clark discusses three separate contexts: school visits to offer sessions on studying language at university, school visits to focus on particular topics, and students and teachers visiting a university campus for one or more sessions on language.

The second part of the book starts with Danica Salazar's report on her work communicating lexicography in her role as the World Englishes Editor for the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). Salazar explains that working on the OED provides a built-in public profile, as a result of frequent invitations to talk about her research on television and radio. Her chapter offers plentiful advice on how to manage the demands of this kind of public engagement. In Chapter 11, Samantha Ford and Jeanette Littlemore describe their consultancy work for a Midlands-based advertising agency. They argue that there has been limited proactive engagement with professionals from the advertising industry itself and describe how their research has started to bridge the gap between metaphor researchers and advertising professionals. To illustrate this, they describe their collaborative work on advertising campaigns, using a sexual health campaign as a case study. In Chapter 12, Natalie Braber outlines the challenges and opportunities she has experienced communicating her research in community projects (with specific reference to sociolinguistics). Braber describes her experience of working on two public engagement projects in particular, the first on the topic of public histories of the First World War, and the second on 'Pit Talk', which explores and documents regional variation in the language of mining communities in the East Midlands. In Chapter 13, Elena Semino describes her work as a linguist engaged in public-facing research on the topic of metaphor and illness. Semino draws on her experiences from three projects: on metaphor and cancer (Semino et al. 2018), chronic pain (Padfield et al. 2018) and Covid-19 (Semino et al. 2020). Semino explains how chance played a significant role in how she came to communicate her research to non-linguists and offers excellent advice on how to make the most of public engagement opportunities when they arise (including knowing when to say 'no!'). In Chapter 14, Hazel Price describes the work she has done as a language consultant as well as her experiences engaging with the media and stakeholders in mental health research. Her chapter offers, in particular, an illustration of how to ensure that public engagement is evidence-based and firmly rooted in academic research. In Chapter 15, Janet Watson and Abdullah al-Mahri describe their work on a community project in Oman. Discussing the various elements of the public linguistic work they carried out, e.g. production of children's e-books and upskilling community members, they outline the ways that their research helps to preserve threatened legacies, language and culture. They also emphasise the importance of considering yourself a student and of being willing to learn from participants. In Chapter 16, Zoe Moores describes her research on the topic of live subtitling, specifically respeaking. Moores explains how necessary public engagement was to her research and how she consequently built this into her project design, detailing how in subtitling research, the links between academia and industry have long been important. In Chapter 17, Brendan Gunn describes his work as a dialect coach for the film and TV industry, explaining how he came to be involved in this world.

Drawing on his experience in universities prior to moving into dialect coaching, Gunn describes how he balances linguistic accuracy with the broader requirements of drama. In Chapter 18, Christine Schreyer describes her role as a language creator for two Hollywood films, *Man of Steel* (2013) and *Alpha* (2018), making the point that conlangs (constructed languages) offer an excellent means of demonstrating why linguistics is both interesting and exciting to a public who may sometimes struggle to see this. Interestingly, Schreyer explains that her role as a language creator came about as a result of her teaching, demonstrating that this aspect of academic life is just as important as research when it comes to public engagement. And in the final chapter of the book, David Crystal provides a personal reflection on how he has engaged with the concept of public linguistics throughout his career. Crystal draws on his many experiences engaging with non-linguists and the media and offers both insight and advice concerning how researchers can communicate complex ideas to non-specialists.

Conclusion

We noted above that one of the reasons non-linguists often feel qualified to comment so extensively on language and language use is that most people have the ability to speak, write or sign. For linguists, it is easy to fall into the trap of feeling frustrated by this propensity of the public to expound on language from an uninformed perspective. The challenges associated with this are a major theme in the chapters overall. Consider, for example, Wright's frustration at not being given the time to challenge a prescriptivist view during a radio interview (Chapter 6) or Gillon and Figueroa's cautioning of the risk of reinforcing language myths by discussing them (Chapter 3). Nonetheless, the fact that non-linguists have such an interest in language is best seen as a positive starting point for public engagement. In effect, what we are being presented with as linguists is a public already enthusiastic about language. Our task, then, is to harness this enthusiasm as we seek to convey the value of linguistic insights to the general public. The constituent chapters of this book confirm that this enthusiasm is equally common among linguists and non-linguists; the value of this is significant when we consider the extent to which collaborative endeavour is necessary for the success of so much research in linguistics. For example, many of the chapters describe public engagement activities that require considerable and continued investment in terms of time and often money. Having willing collaborators is in many cases crucial to ensuring the sustainability of public-facing research projects. Moreover, many of the projects described in the book were not initiated in response to particular research or university agendas. Rather, they were created because the linguists who instigated them believed in the inherent value of communicating linguistic research. Or, as M. Lynne Murphy writes in Chapter 4, 'when linguistics benefits the public, linguists benefit.' Another theme to emerge from the chapters, and one which is related to the benefit that public engagement can have on linguistic research, is that applying your research findings to new settings allows you to see your research in new ways. For example, Watson and al-Mahri's collaboration with native speaker colleagues in Oman (Chapter 15) revealed aspects of the languages and cultures they may otherwise not have learned about, thereby demonstrating that the division between analysts and participants is often not as clear-cut as we might imagine. Similarly, Ford and Littlemore's research (Chapter 11) gave them an opportunity to contextualise and empirically test their hypotheses about figurative language and creativity.

The range of topics covered in this volume demonstrates the wide variety of ways in which linguists are communicating their research and making positive contributions at a local, national and international level. For linguists aspiring to share their research with the public, the chapters offer a wealth of advice on how to go about doing this successfully. This is particularly important when we consider that practical support for public engagement activities varies considerably among institutions. For instance, prestigious universities may be able to offer connections and a support infrastructure that is not enjoyed by academics at less prominent institutions. By the same token, newer institutions may be more agile and experienced when it comes to conveying research findings beyond the university context. Doing public linguistics well involves managing the various pressures and disadvantages of whatever context in which we are working, and maximising the opportunities. We hope that this book provides some support for doing this.

So much of our research in linguistics relies on the general public. They are so often our participants – theirs are the voices contained in the corpora we use, they are the ones who tell us about their linguistic histories and what words mean to them, who share their cultures with us and who engage with us at often vulnerable times in their lives. Language is created, sustained, changed and, above-all, used by the public. It is so very important that if we take, we give back.

PART 1

Popularising linguistics

2

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD RESEARCH COMMUNICATION

Hannah Little

Introduction

Science communication and public engagement are becoming increasingly important in the research landscape. A surge in dedicated courses and research groups in science communication has fostered a community specifically dedicated to investigating design and methods for research communication. As a field of research, science communication uses case studies, evaluation and knowledge from multiple fields including (but certainly not limited to) sociology, science and technology studies, journalism, marketing, museum studies and media studies, to build recommendations for effective, inclusive and strategic research communication. In this chapter, I will outline three key principles (purpose, audience and mutually beneficial communication), which researchers should consider when designing research communication initiatives. These principles are by no means a comprehensive set of guidance and advice. For a more comprehensive summary of the principles of research communication, I would recommend larger dedicated texts (Cormick 2019; Wilkinson and Weitkamp 2016). However, I will set out some of the core concepts illustrated with examples from existing engagement efforts within linguistics.

Principle 1: Purpose

The first thing to consider when embarking on communicating your research to a popular audience is your motivations for engaging and objectives for your engagement. The objective of your engagement should be at the heart of every decision you make; your engagement should be objective-led, not method-led. What do I mean by that? Often, researchers come up with an idea for an engagement activity (e.g. a podcast, a video series, a public lecture) before they decide

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what they're trying to achieve with that idea and why they're trying to achieve it. Your objectives should be specific enough to be manageable but broad enough to allow yourself creative freedom. If you start with an objective that has an obvious, specific solution, think about how to change your objective to give yourself space for creativity in your solutions. In this section, I will discuss how to build a creative and effective communication objective and think critically about what it is we're trying to achieve with public engagement as a first step.

As a first point, we should make sure our objectives are audience-centred, thinking not only about what we want to achieve as researchers, but also about what we want our audience to get out of it. When framing our objectives, it is crucial to identify specific audiences, their needs and their insights. This can be gained through communicating with our audience, empathising with who they are, what they need and what they want. I'll talk about this a bit more in the section about audience below, but I want to mention it briefly here too.

Researchers often initially consider objectives that involve a transfer of knowledge, belief or behaviour from the academic party to a non-academic audience. These objectives can range from influencing public opinion about a certain topic, influencing behaviour in some way, or transferring some piece of information or knowledge to a certain population. However, these objectives rely on a model of communication called the 'deficit model' (Wynne 1991; Ziman 1991) which models the audience or public as being people who have a deficit in knowledge or understanding which needs rectifying. This model has caused some critical attention among the research communication community because it assumes a power dynamic where the public are an ignorant or sceptical party due to a lack of knowledge. Consequently, the deficit model has fallen out of favour among science communication professionals, who often prefer communication via dialogue and participation. However, the deficit model can prove to be a useful approach if you are engaging an audience who are enthusiastically participating on their own terms by seeking out your communication through a self-motivated interest.

The deficit model is often difficult to avoid when using certain modes of communication, such as videos, journalism, podcasts and broadcast media, which are asynchronous in nature, and where the delivery and reception don't happen in the same time and place. These conditions create something that isn't an interaction; rather, it is a message without a right to reply, ask questions or offer insights. For linguistic communication, there are many examples of such methods being used to great effect (some of them discussed in this book!). However, it's good to think critically about whether the deficit model is well placed to deliver your objectives in the best way given the lack of engagement from audiences who are not enthusiastically opting-in to your communication.

If communication objectives do not assume a one-way deficit in knowledge, we can consider the audience as having something important to contribute to the interaction as participants or even consultants. In linguistic research communication, I think the most obvious thing your audience can offer you is their own linguistic experiences, whether that comes in the form of a conversation about how their linguistic experience relates to your research, or them directly giving you data you can use in your research. I'll cover how research can be mutually beneficial a little bit later in the chapter, but for the moment I will focus on other aspects of engagement-orientated objectives, using the 'participation model' of communication (Trench 2008).

The participation model works on the principle that all participants in a public engagement initiative are able to contribute and have a stake in the outcome. Objectives linked to the participation model might be, for example, to embed linguistic ideas in culture or to excite people about linguistic careers. Objectives may be to change attitudes towards signed or minority languages, or recruit people on to a linguistics or language learning course. All of these objectives require you to gain the trust and engagement of your audience, which might require you not only to win them over to you as a person but to the academic endeavour as a whole.

An audience's comfort and trust with academics and academic content is difficult to attain in a day. However, there are ways to help you both assess and enhance people's comfort with your engagement. An important concept in science communication literature is 'science capital' (Archer et al. 2015). Science capital is the accumulation of everything that would make someone, especially children, more likely to participate in science-related activities, including choosing science as a career. The things which might accumulate through someone's development include their experiences with science (e.g. museum visits), relationships (e.g. having parents working in STEM) and resources (e.g. books or a chemistry set), and our job as science communicators is to try and anchor the science we're talking about to the existing experiences and interests of participants. This anchoring might manifest as linking the interests of our audience to the topic in question, or it may be simply making sure we talk about our lives outside of research alongside our research lives, as well as being open and curious about the lives and values of our audience. These practices make the research feel more human, real and accessible. If we were to consider "linguistic capital" as a special subset of science capital, it's likely that we would find capital being influenced positively by linguistic experiences, relationships with people working in language-related fields and linguistic resources (e.g. books or language learning resources). However, there always seems to be an advantage for research communication when talking about linguistic topics in comparison to other fields, simply because most people have at least some capacity for language and so participants immediately start relating what they are told about language to their own experiences. Having a topic that's so omnipresent and human is certainly an advantage here, but don't let that make you complacent in making an effort to anchor your communication in examples your audience can relate to.

Finally, it's important to think carefully about how you will assess whether you've met your objectives. What difference are you trying to make with your communication? How will you know if you have succeeded in reaching your objectives? Evaluating your communication shouldn't be something that you only think about once you have finished your project but should be part of your plan from the beginning. As with the communication itself, it's easy to have a method for evaluation in mind before thinking about what it is you are trying to achieve. Instead of deciding to build an evaluation plan based on information that is immediately available after the fact (even if this can be useful), take each objective you have identified and work out a plan for how you will measure it. Measuring the objectives of your communication from the start of the process may also be helpful for researchers who need to provide evidence of their research reach and impact, e.g. researchers working within the parameters of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in UK Higher Education.

There is no catch-all advice I can give for planning evaluation, given how varied objectives can be. However, if your objectives are centred on engagement, entertainment or increasing interest/science capital then a researcher's usual intuition is to simply ask participants either via a verbal or written survey. However, it's important to think about whether people will engage. By asking for feedback, you are asking for a favour – your audience won't gain anything from filling in your survey unless they plan to return for more and would like future experiences to be better. If the event is a one-off and in a world where every service we use requests feedback, you're likely to get a low return. People will be more likely to respond if they can see the survey is very brief. Further, there are now many techniques developed to turn feedback into a fun activity for audiences, from using stickers on publicly displayed Likert scales, to using feedback cards attached to strings that can be hung on a tree, to public chalkboards giving an unfinished sentence for the audience to complete.

In addition to encouraging participation, it's important to consider how likely you are to get an honest response. I don't know about you, but when asked if I have had an engaging, entertaining or insightful time by someone I know has spent a lot of time designing, building and carrying out some public engagement event, I usually smile and say yes, even if my opinion is a lot more nuanced. Humans, for the most part, like to be polite, and sometimes that means telling white lies. So how do we get an honest response? Make sure the questions you're asking are not leading in any way. For example, asking 'Did you find the experience engaging?' puts words in the mouths of respondents and makes it clear what answer you want (a yes!). A question asking the same thing without leading the audience might be 'How did you find the experience today?' with an open text box. Allowing for open-ended responses increases the likelihood you'll get richer, more useful information about what people think. Further, if you can find a way to let people be anonymous in their feedback, that will improve honesty.

Once you've gathered your evaluation data, take some time to reflect on it and build the feedback into your future practice. For instance, feedback might indicate your audience got bored towards the end of an activity, so you might make the activity shorter. Or feedback might indicate a participant found something specific confusing so you can implement measures to clarify that content.

Principle 2: Audience

In linguistics, we know that people alter the way that they speak to accommodate the person they are talking to (Bell, 1984). In research communication, audience design is exactly the same concept, where the language you use should be tailored to your audience. However, as well as audience design being a consideration of accessible language, in research communication we need to consider the audience's needs and make all aspects of the communication accessible and engaging for our primary audience, including communication medium, venue and tools for communication beyond linguistic tools. For instance, if you're designing some new media project (e.g. a podcast, web series or blog), it's useful to think about where your audience hangs out online, why they typically visit that space online and whether they even have a habit of consuming a particular type of new media. A podcast for children may not work well in 2021, because most children do not listen to podcasts. A TikTok channel won't work if your audience isn't on TikTok or only uses TikTok for learning silly dances, rather than seeking research communication (that's certainly the case for me).

Instinctively, when researchers sit down to think about who their audience is, they think about demographics in broad strokes: the audience's age, gender, educational background and maybe even socio-economic status. Sometimes, demographics may well offer a useful way to identify who you want to communicate to and, in some respects, help you to design your communication. For instance, age and education might give you a good indicator of what level to pitch your content at as well as cultural references relevant to certain generations. However, some demographic features are less useful for thinking about how to communicate with an identified audience – especially when there is a stereotype attached to a particular demographic feature. For instance, many engagement and communication initiatives within STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) fields often aim to reach underrepresented demographic groups within the field in question. For example, an initiative may want to engage girls with engineering topics in order to encourage parity between the number of women choosing engineering as a career and the number of men. The audience here is clearly defined and justified by using the demographic feature of gender. However, when considering how to engage girls, research communicators often begin with the question 'What do girls like?' But asking this question is likely to lead to audience design that reinforces stereotypes of gender, potentially alienating some proportion of your audience who don't fit the assumed stereotype and creating an adverse reaction. This audience design may cause your intervention not only to fail in its aims but perhaps even actively put the stereotyped group off of engaging with engineering altogether. In my professional life as a research communicator, I have seen this happen on a few occasions: with pink lab coats, activities around the science of makeup and organised cult-like chants of 'science is for girls.' Aside from alienating those girls who don't like pink things and makeup, it leaves participants wondering why you are making so much effort to appeal to their gender; reminding them about harmful stereotypes about science not being for girls. Of course, science is for everyone. So how might we go about audience design in a better way?

To overcome the pitfalls of the design-by-demographic approach, there are newly evolving methods for thinking about audiences using personality-based metrics rather than demographics. Psychometric marketing often evokes dark visions of the sort of microtargeting Cambridge Analytica[1] engaged with, but methods used in visitor studies use personality-based approaches without microtargeting.

The museum studies scholar, John Falk, came up with the concept of what he terms 'big identities' and 'little identities' (Falk 2016). Big identities are our sense of the demographic categories we fall in to, e.g. our gender, age or race. Little identities, on the other hand, are identities that are more related to the identities we act out day to day, often in relation to the places we visit and the activities we do, and why we do them. To take a linguistic example, one person might read a magazine article about language acquisition because linguistics is their hobby; someone else might read it because they are a parent worried about the development of their child; and someone else might read it because they have a date with a linguist (lucky them!) and want conversation topics. Each of these motivations is attached to people acting out an identity that is not related to their age, gender, class, etc., but the more nuanced identities and motivations we act out day to day. I don't go to an exhibition at a museum because I'm a woman in my thirties from the north of England, but because I'm being social with friends with a similar interest, or trying to be good at my job by collecting examples for a lecture I'm teaching, or taking my nephew on a day trip to give my sister a break. By trying to understand our audience not through their demographic features – but through their little identities – we can make our audience design much more effective and our activities much more accessible. Falk (2016) has done a lot of work mapping out why different audiences visit a museum in order to design a space that can appeal to different audiences for different reasons (e.g. creating a space that appeals to those who are there to learn, to socialise, to recharge, etc.). You can do this too by (i) thinking about the reasons people read articles, listen to podcasts, watch videos on YouTube, etc. and (ii) trying to create something that's suitable for the little identities people have. Attempting to map little identities can also help you revise assumptions you are making about why people might want to engage with your work. Thinking critically about the little identities of our audiences is often quite challenging, especially if you have decided beforehand who you're trying to engage, because it forces you to consider the possibility that you have chosen the wrong method of communication for your audience. We often think about our objectives in terms of what we, as researchers, want to achieve rather than what our audience wants. If the identities you identify aren't aligned with who you are interested in talking to, it is perhaps time to go back to the drawing board.

Identifying motivations for why people might engage with your work is often seen to be easier for some subjects than others. Of course, if a piece of research has really direct and obvious implications for your audience, it is very easy to work out why people might be tempted to engage with you. This makes research topics such as health, climate and society much easier to create engaging material about than more theoretical concepts. Linguistics offers a wide range of topics highly relevant to people and their everyday lives, from the development of children and understanding language disorders to learning foreign languages and thinking about linguistic diversity. However, some topics within linguistics are a lot tougher to tackle in terms of finding the relevance for the audience. In my own field of linguistic expertise, evolutionary linguistics, finding the relevance for people outside the field is sometimes difficult. Much research presented in evolutionary linguistics has implications for our knowledge of human origins, but the implications for current and future humans often remain unclear, creating a 'relevance gap.' On top of that, most evolutionary research in linguistics is based on models (computational or experimental), that are abstract in nature and don't refer to concrete artefacts (e.g. fossils or living examples), which creates a barrier for explanation even when explaining to experimental participants what they just did and why they did it. However, there has been some work within language evolution that has attempted to tackle this relevance gap. For instance, there have been many examples of explaining the abstractness of artificial languages by evoking aliens (e.g. Cuskley 2018), creating something fun and exciting for kids; some communication initiatives have used art installations as a vehicle for engaging the public (Kirby et al. 2017), creating communication with art-interested audiences who may engage to recharge and reflect; and there are examples of focussing on animal language and abilities, evoking a fascination with our connection to other animals and what does or does not make us unique as a species (e.g. Quillinan and Roberts 2013).

Once you have mapped the little identities for your communication activity, it is a good idea to go back to the primary audience you had in mind for your communication and determine the little identities that define them. A piece of advice often given in journalistic writing is to have a very clear picture of the person you want to communicate with: the clearer the better. Think about their hobbies, interests, values, cultural references and why on earth they should care about what you are telling them. When I'm writing, I always imagine I am chatting to someone I know very well over a text chat application, giving advice or explaining some aspect of my research that is exciting or frustrating me. With a clear picture in your mind, it is much easier to write engagingly for a wider audience, even though intuitively you're trying to write for an audience much narrower than that which you wish to reach. After you've done this, you can go back and make sure you're not assuming too much by way of shared knowledge between you and your audience. However, editing after you've written something targeted at an individual, rather than trying to make a piece of writing optimally accessible from the get go, will result in something a lot more organic and readable. I often think this is why podcasts with two or more hosts or guests work better than one person talking to a microphone; by having a person in front of you (physically or digitally) it is suddenly much easier to communicate.

The last thing to think about in relation to audiences is not primarily about creating a public engagement initiative your audience want to engage with, but one that they know about. Just because you build it, does not mean they will come. It is once again difficult to give exhaustive guidance on this, given the diversity of audiences and communication activities, so I'll simply leave you with the advice that you should think about in your plan. If you publish a magazine, how will your audience find out it exists? If you produce a podcast, how will your audience find it? If you hold an event at a museum, how will your audience know it is happening? It is good practice to come up with a marketing strategy that also pays attention to the little identities of your audience. Where do they hang out? Are you communicating in a space they already visit? If not, how will they find you?

Now that we've thought thoroughly about our audience, it's important to not lose sight of the objectives we have for ourselves as researchers.

Principle 3: Mutually beneficial communication

While it seems obvious that we should think about the benefits of research communication from our own perspective, we can sometimes lose sight of the potential benefits to ourselves if we only think about our audience, or only think about participating in research communication to keep our funders happy. Good research communication should be mutually beneficial. Achieving your objectives might be relatively straightforward if they are purely centred on your audience – for example, if your objectives are getting more people into linguistic careers, recruiting for a degree programme or trying to change people's perceptions of signed languages or linguistic diversity. However, there is also an increasing number of examples of public engagement activities where researchers have benefited by collecting data during the activity.

A lot of empirical work in linguistics has recruited members of the public as participants (e.g. Cluskley 2018; Morin et al., 2018; Raviv and Arnon 2018; Verhoef et al. 2015). Good practice when people offer their time to give us data is to offer a debrief after their participation, explaining what the research is about and why it is important. Often, a debrief comes as a short document summarising the research, given to the participant as they are on their way out the door or a brief chat before or after the data collection to explain the study. Other times, researchers will collect email addresses from interested participants in order to send an email that comes many weeks, months or years after the data has been processed, analysed and published in order to disseminate the findings. While these debrief methods most certainly count as research communication, they often aren't given a lot of thought and feel like obligatory additions in order to tick a box about transparency on an ethics form. So how do we make debriefs more beneficial for our participants – and also for us as researchers wanting to engage people with our work?

In cognitive linguistics, there is a growing number of studies which have collected data not on campus or in the lab but at public events, such as science centres and museums (e.g. Cluskley 2018; Raviv and Arnon 2018) or through games on mobile phones (e.g. The Color Game, Morin et al. 2018). These initiatives have involved not only the interaction one gets from participating in a study but also innovative ways to display and communicate the data within an informal learning environment. At one event I attended in 2015, at a science festival in Leiden, researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics were running experiments in a nightclub, and the results were being visualised live on a projector screen (Verhoef et al. 2015). Not only did this offer some nightclub-appropriate futuristic projections, it also gave the researchers something to refer to when debriefing their participants afterwards or explaining to curious clubbers passing by.

While creatively debriefing research participants may be an improvement on simply giving people a piece of paper to take away, it's still true that without fully understanding the context and setup of a study, participants may lack a sense of understanding or lack the feeling of having a stake in the outcome of the research, even if you're gathering data in the context of a museum or a festival. There are ways to involve our audiences in our research at other stages via the use of techniques from citizen science (Irwin, 1995). Citizen science is a method of research communication which engages members of the public within the research process. I have seen many studies, though not necessarily in linguistics, calling public participation in studies 'citizen science.' However, citizen science comes with its own set of principles which emphasise not only a contribution to the research process but also collaboration in the process. Some linguistic studies have started to use citizen science – not to collect data, but to help in the analysis of existing data. This creates opportunities for audiences to participate in more steps of the research. It also helps the researchers, who receive hours of valuable data analysis that they would otherwise need to recruit specialist staff to do.

The Zooniverse[2] is an online citizen science web portal which can be used to host various projects where members of the public can assist with data processing. The Bergelson Lab at Duke University in the US used the Zooniverse to tag clips of speech as either being child directed or adult directed (Bulgarelli and Bergelson 2020), while other researchers used it to tag baby sounds as being crying, babbling or laughing (Semenzin et al. 2020). Others have used it as a way to get reliable translations or transcriptions of data. It is clear here how these initiatives are benefitting the researcher as long as the analysis undertaken by volunteers online is reliable, but it is also important to keep sight of why these tasks benefit your audience as well. The tasks posted to Zooniverse are usually too large to afford the labour of graduate students and too nuanced and context-dependent to be automated. While it may seem exploitative to ask unpaid volunteers to analyse any data (never mind massive unmanageable data!), they are tasks that might not be done without the assistance of unpaid analysts; and by emphasising their contribution using this framing, there are many people who will happily spend hours categorising, transcribing and labelling data as they find it fun and enjoy feeling that they are helping to further human knowledge. They are sometimes even credited for their time with authorship or acknowledgements in the published papers arising from citizen science efforts.

As well as data, other benefits that researchers can achieve from research communication include the development of their professional skills. While it is clear you can develop your communication skills through practising communication, other benefits may be less obvious. Research has looked at how engaging with popular science writing can help researchers think, contextualise and gain new perspectives on their science, making them better scientists. For example, one study in Sweden showed that students who engaged with a popular science course found that it improved their science literacy as they were better able to understand the aims of their own work, and the implications of their findings (Pelger and Nilsson 2016).

I hope if you do go ahead and participate in some research communication of your own, you take time to reflect on your success as well as the improvements you might make next time and reflect not only on the benefits for your audience, but also for yourself.

Ten top tips

- Communicate with popular audiences. This can help you think, contextualise and gain new perspectives on your research.
- Define your communication objectives and make sure they are at the heart of every decision you make.
- Anchor your communication using the interests of your audience. Making the communication audience-led can help with linking your content to what the audience care about.
- Try to have the audience see you as a human. Make sure you talk about your life outside of research alongside your research life. Be open and curious about the lives and values of your audience too.
- When communicating, try to have someone in front of you. Or, if that isn't possible, imagine you are chatting to someone specific that you know very well.
- Make sure you think about how to market your communication initiative or event, as well as make the communication itself optimally engaging.
- Find your audience where they are. Do the research on where your audience are (online and in the real world) and why they are there.
- Be honest with yourself and listen to your audience about why they are engaging with your research and public engagement activity.
- Think about how you will evaluate your communication as part of your plan from the start.
- Turn your evaluation activities into fun activities for audiences.

Notes

1 Cambridge Analytica was a company that acquired and used personal data of users on Facebook. They gained data by breaking Facebook's terms of service and claiming the data were for academic purposes. However, evidence suggests they used the data to target users with microtargeted political messaging.

2 https://www.zooniverse.org/

3

PODCASTING

The Vocal Fries podcast

Carrie Gillon and Megan Figueroa

Introduction

The Vocal Fries has turned into a reasonably popular linguistics podcast, with over 500,000 downloads,[1] nearly 100 patrons on Patreon (www.patreon.com/vocalfriespod) and over 7500 Twitter followers. In this chapter, we describe who we are, why we started the podcast, the types of topics we cover, the day-to-day creation of each episode and the benefits of interviewing non-linguists not only for our show but also for our understanding of language.

Who are we?

We are the cohosts of *The Vocal Fries*, where we communicate about linguistics, particularly focusing on linguistic discrimination. Our tagline is '*Do not be an asshole*' because we believe that judging the way that other people speak/sign is #NotGreat. We are both passionate about social justice and thought we could make a difference in the linguistic communication (hereafter lingcomm) space by explaining why being mean about other people's language is not cool and can actually be harmful.

Carrie

I am a former professor, with a speciality in formal semantics, syntax, morphology and Indigenous languages of North America (Salish, Inuit and Algonquian). I care deeply about Indigenous language rights and am now working in language planning and revitalisation for the Sk̲wx̲wú7mesh Úxwumixw/Squamish Nation. As a settler, I feel it is my duty to give back to the community I did most of my PhD research in; I also live on the unceded territory of the Sk̲wx̲wú7mesh, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm and səlilwətaɬ nations.

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Megan

I am a research scientist at the University of Arizona (on the unceded and ancestral land of the Tohono O'odham and Yaqui/Hiaki nations) where I study child language development. I began my pursuit of linguistics in an academic setting because I wanted to understand why so many parents in the US were/are discouraged from raising multilingual children. The longer I studied linguistics, the more horrified I was by the ways in which we hurt each other through linguistic discrimination.

Why *The Vocal Fries*?

The Vocal Fries is an attempt to teach non-linguists and linguists alike to be careful with language, to not judge others' speech/sign and to remember all the different ways we can include more people in our discussion of language. We both wanted to create a space where people could grow (with us!) and become better people by expanding their understanding of differences in language. We hope to point out the many ways people judge linguistic differences and encourage them to stop.

In this section, we each describe why we decided to create this podcast and what we hoped to accomplish.

Carrie

I left my academic job in 2016, and by 2017, I missed being in the classroom, where I could influence students about their language ideologies. At the time, there were a lot of toxic ideas about language floating around: vocal fry (a very creaky way of speaking; Keating, Garellek and Kreiman 2015) was the hatred *du jour*, alongside the longer-standing hatred of upspeak (when a statement sounds more like a question; Ritchart and Arvaniti 2014) and the use of *like*. Women were the target of many language-based attacks, and I was tired of it. I also wanted to talk more about language and linguistics than I was at the time, and I thought linguistic discrimination would make for a great podcast topic. My husband was already producing a podcast, so I enlisted his help. I also asked Megan if she wanted to be my cohost because my favourite podcasts were cohosted. Megan said yes, and we began brainstorming ideas – some of which we have still not yet tackled on the podcast.

Megan

In 2017, I was on the final stretch of my PhD and writing my dissertation. I felt disconnected from my larger mission as a linguist, which was the pursuit of equity through linguistic justice (which is racial justice, class justice, etc.). When Carrie came to me with the idea for the podcast, I was both nervous and excited. I was nervous because having a podcast means my voice will be out *there*; I was excited because fighting linguistic discrimination is my jam. If the scary part of putting my voice out there meant that people might be a little kinder to each other and start being less judgemental about language, then it would be worth it. And it is!

What we try to cover

Our podcast's main objective is to convince people who want to be decent human beings that being judgemental about language is not ok. Many people who would hate to be sexist or racist (etc.) still engage in linguistic discrimination. We point out over and over again that language peeving is just a (slightly) covert way to be racist, sexist, etc. We want to make that connection (more) overt. (It's usually overt to the people who have been historically marginalised, though even those targeted by linguistic discrimination sometimes participate in it without realising it.)

Vocal fry was an easy entrée into that idea because, as women, we were attacked for the way that we speak. Megan, in particular, had been told *by a linguistics professor*[2] that she should stop frying if she wanted to be taken seriously as a scholar. And Carrie had been told to stop using *like* so much at an earlier age. However, there are many identities that can be targeted by linguistic discrimination that we do not have. Our first guest was a speaker of Southern American English, Beth Troutman. Because we do not have firsthand experience with that type of linguistic discrimination, we wanted to find someone who could talk to us about what it is like to be judged for having a Southern American accent. It also is more fun to talk with other people than just ourselves every time, as fun as that is.

We have covered forms of sexism (vocal fry, *like*), racism (African American English, rez English [the varieties of English spoken on reserves in Canada and reservations in the US],[3] Indigenous languages), ethnic bigotry (Basque, Chicano English, French in Canada and Louisiana), transphobia (pronouns and non-binary language), ableism, and anti-immigrant sentiments, as well as the way that we talk about so-called ethnic food, diet culture, regionalism (Scottish English, Philly English, Ghanaian English), the pronunciation of names, bilingualism, unconscious bias, Creoles, dictionaries, swearing, interpretation and translation, dialect coaching, language acquisition, the law and policing, technology, the workplace, music, pronunciations and accents, and the Word of the Year. Some future topics we hope to cover are Asian languages and language varieties, the language of addiction and drug use and sign language.

Why and how to podcast

Why should you start a podcast, and what should you know before taking the plunge? We love podcasting, as it allows us to connect with people who want to learn more about language and linguistic discrimination. But podcasts take a lot of work. As with any worthwhile endeavor, there are upsides and downsides to consider.

For us, the most appealing aspects of podcasting as a medium are: (i) its relative low-cost of entry for podcasters and listeners. Podcasts are non-paywalled (in most cases), which allows you to present science to the public for free. And podcast directories (e.g. Apple podcasts, Google podcasts) provide podcast episodes instantly, for free, for as long as the podcast is hosted; (ii) podcasts can be streamed or downloaded and listened to later, making them incredibly convenient; and (iii) as it is audio only, a podcast can be easy to pay attention to while you do other things. (This only applies to hearing fans; deaf/Deaf and hard of hearing fans generally require a visual presentation alongside or as well.) People listen to podcasts while commuting, driving, exercising, cooking, cleaning, etc. (Glebatis and Turner 2018), or while doing monotonous tasks, like manual data entry (Quintana and Heathers 2020). This opens the world of language science to people who might not otherwise consume this genre if it were presented in a different medium.

While podcasting is an excellent way to communicate science, you should be prepared for the technical and financial sides. It is not as simple as talking into a microphone, no matter how much Megan thought that would be true in the beginning. There are multiple technical issues to be aware of, and for a lingcomm podcast, a certain amount of research is required. We usually take the following steps:

1. Come up with an idea of a topic to cover. Most of our topics involve areas we do not feel comfortable covering by ourselves because we aren't in the community that is targeted by that particular form of bigotry or we don't have the research background in that particular topic. The topics may start out broad (like computational linguistics) or may be specific from the start (like ethics in AI).
2. Find a guest (for most episodes), find a mutually acceptable time to record and then train them how to record their own audio for our podcast. We ask them to use headphones and an external microphone (if possible) and to record their own audio, as that results in the best quality audio. Audio recorded over the internet can be unreliable and is usually of lower quality. Many linguists already have high-quality audio recording equipment, and many departments and libraries are willing to lend out such equipment.
3. Research the topic. We do a lot of research if it's just the two of us, less if we are interviewing someone else. Podcasts allow for guests and hosts to discuss papers or findings in more detail than can be done in academic writing. This can lead to the type of nuanced conversations that are sometimes missing in journal articles. We try to read enough to know what kinds of questions to ask – but not so much that we already know all of the answers the guest(s) is/are likely to give. Wherever possible, we try to ask *why* questions – not just *what* questions – because they often lead to more interesting answers and livelier conversation. This is ultimately more engaging for the listeners and for us, and the casual nature of the conversations also allows people to see

behind the curtain of how science is done, both for those doing science and for people outside of the field.

4. Record the main part of the episode. We usually connect with our guests over Zoom.[4] To record our audio, we use QuickTime. It is a free program that comes pre-installed on Apple computers (there is no reason to use Apple over PC; it just happens to be what we both prefer). We also both invested in external mics early on in our podcast tenure, which we paid for ourselves. Megan uses a Blue Snowball iCE USB Mic, and Carrie uses a Blue Yeti mic (also a USB mic). Both microphones are under USD $130. Purchasing an external microphone is a great investment if you are serious about podcasting because it will help with your audio quality. Built-in microphones can be used in a pinch, but they pick up a lot of background noises that are hard to edit out.
5. Edit the episode. In the first year, Chris Ayers produced and edited the podcast. Since mid-2018, Carrie has been editing each episode using Audacity or Descript. Editing software and audio equipment can be expensive, but there are low-cost and free (like Audacity) options for both. During the editing process, Carrie uses noise reduction, lines up multiple tracks and takes out any extraneous noises, like dogs (Megan) and cats (Carrie), and cuts out parts of the conversation that don't make sense or don't fit with the rest of the episode. We aim for 45 minutes of interview, so that our episodes can be approximately one hour long, including the intro and outro. Carrie then exports a rough cut of the interview as an mp3 and sends it to Megan to make sure it sounds ok and that nothing else needs to be cut. For a detailed guide on audio editing, including 'before and after' audio examples, see osf.io/exu5h/.
6. Record an introduction for the interview episodes on a relevant language topic that is in the news and/or making waves in the Twitter linguistics community and include some light chitchat about our lives. This is to keep it more personal than an interview podcast might otherwise be. You don't have to share your personal life with your listeners, but we have found that this personal element at the top of the show means that our listeners are more invested in the podcast because they are more invested in us as human beings. They often reach out via email or tweet to let us know they appreciated something on our show, and this has kept us wanting to create more.
7. Edit the intro, add music and the outro and export the mp3 file. Our music was created by Nick Granum, Megan's partner. Free music can be obtained at many different websites, including Pixabay (https://pixabay.com/music/). Or you can ask your musical friends – especially if you can afford to pay them a licensing fee – for a nice jingle for your podcast. You must get permission to use someone's music for your jingle.
8. Upload the podcast episode to a host. We use Buzzsprout (www.buzzsprout.com), since is relatively inexpensive and easy to use.

9. Post on social media, announcing the new episode, tagging our guests and their affiliation (if any). This can include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Tumblr and our own website (www.vocalfriespod.com).
10. Send the final mp3 to a transcriptionist who is currently in a linguistics PhD program. This was a purposeful choice to ensure accurate transcriptions for our specific type of material; she was suggested to us by the hosts of another lingpod, Lingthusiasm. We pay for this service with our Patreon money, as of late 2019. One of our Patreon goals is to pay for the transcription of any older episodes that are not yet transcribed.[5]

As you can see, there is a lot of work that goes into each episode. Our podcast is a labour of love, that we do on our own time and is not supported by either of our employers. This means that we can tackle whatever topics we want and swear as much as we want, but it also means that we have less financial support than we might if we did it as part of our employment. It also means we create the podcast outside of our working hours. This can sometimes be tricky when guests only want to record during the workweek, but we usually find ways to make it work. This leads us to an important point: outsource some of this labour as soon as possible. Finding a way to pay for your time and for any outsourced labour can help you create a better podcast and will eat up less of your free time.

Finally, if you want to become a lingcommer, there are a few helpful things to know about best practices in science communication. For example, we try to debunk myths about language, such as the myth that there are better and worse varieties of language. Unfortunately, debunking can all too often backfire. According to Lewandowsky et al. (2020), there are three pitfalls to debunking. First, every time you repeat a myth, you can strengthen it. What people remember is the myth (women use vocal fry, and men don't) rather than the debunking (men use it too; not quite as much, but a lot). This is called the *familiarity backfire effect*. It's tricky to navigate this, and we probably don't do as good a job avoiding it as we could. The second pitfall is that you can easily go into overkill. If you give too many reasons why a myth is wrong, people likely won't remember them. This is called the *overkill backfire effect*. In our interviews, we don't worry about this so much because usually our guests only talk about one or two things that matter to the topic at hand. And finally, people can feel threatened when you present them with information that threatens their worldview. This is the *worldview backfire effect*. Boy, do we know this one. The solution to this is to focus on converting people who don't hold those views quite so strongly and those who haven't yet made up their mind, by affirming the values they already share with you. We decided right up front to focus on people who already didn't want to be racist, sexist, etc. Our attitude has always been: 'Hey, you! You don't want to be an asshole, right? Neither do we! Let's learn together.'

Challenges and opportunities/benefits of working with non-linguists

Many of our guests are linguists (or linguist-adjacent people, such as lexicographers or dialect coaches), but we do ask non-linguists onto our show. For example, we interviewed poet and English professor Alberto Alvaro Ríos about growing up speaking Spanish and English in the borderlands of Arizona and food writer Jaya Sexena about the ways we talk about food. We only ask guests to be on our show that we think will fit with our brand, and we have very rarely had an issue as a result. We did have two guests that did not ultimately fit. One was a non-linguist actor, who had very different ideas about racism and sexism than we do, and we did not air that episode. The second one was a linguist who fit thematically, but who wanted to control our episode in ways that made us uncomfortable. We ended up pulling that episode.

To prevent those mistakes, we recommend getting to know your guests as much as is feasible before asking them on. Use their online presence to get a sense of their politics. We also recommend telling guests that they will not have final say over the episode. They can reasonably ask you not to air certain parts of the interview if they made a mistake or if they are uncomfortable with something they said – or if they want to retract the whole interview. However, they are not your producers or bosses, so they cannot ask you to re-edit the episode or add new material. A contract can help here, though we have not yet resorted to creating one.

There are a few challenges of working with non-linguists. Everyone has something to say about language, and sometimes they promote stigmatising views of language. We do not want to reinforce the familiarity backfire effect (Lewandowski et al. 2020), so we do not view having them on the pod as an opportunity to correct them. Non-linguists also sometimes have misconceptions of how linguists think about language, for example, assuming that we will judge how they speak. We sometimes have to reframe the things that our guests say so that we aren't accidentally reinforcing myths about how language works or supporting a form of linguistic discrimination. For example, in one of our earliest episodes, we had to push back on the way our guest spoke about Southern American English.

On the other hand, the opportunities and benefits are many. Non-linguists can bring other ways of thinking about language that linguists may have been trained out of. Sometimes, we're so busy dissecting a cool feature of language that we forget about the human being. Working with non-linguists is also a good way to show that non-linguists have something to say about language. Everyone comes to language with different ideas about language, and our frame (#DoNotBeAnAsshole) leaves room for them to provide information about how to be less judgemental about their particular variety of language or how to be kinder to one another about language.

We have also learned how to talk about language in a slightly less technical way since jargon can be very off-putting to laypeople and we have to explain every piece of jargon, which slows down the conversation. We focus more on the cultural, sociological or socio-emotional side of language as much as possible, only bringing up certain features of language when it is necessary to the discussion. For example, it is impossible to talk about why *like* is so useful without talking about how it gets used by different speakers. It is certainly a delicate balance because we don't want to alienate non-linguists by getting too technical, but it is also important that we don't dilute linguistic theory so much that it impacts the integrity of the ideas.

Public engagement

One of the best parts of having a podcast is the engagement with our fans.

Our public profile came with putting out consistent content and *interacting* with others to the most comfortable extent possible. We do not just post our episodes every two weeks (or so); we also try to use our account for fun posts and to boost other indie and linguistics podcasts and linguists and other science communicators where relevant, or to discuss the topic of the day. This interaction is usually repaid in others retweeting our content. It also helps us when the interviewee of an episode shares the podcast on their social media. We recommend finding a space that works for you – there are lively communities on all forms of social media. Our engagement mainly occurs on Twitter because we noticed that a lot of linguists and podcasters were already on there, and both of us were also already there too. Find your people. Your topic will likely lead you to the right social media outlet.

Another way to interact with the public (and to make money for your creative content) is to set up a Patreon account. We waited about six months before we set ours up, but some podcasters suggest that you start a Patreon account right away. Even if you are only making a few bucks at the beginning, it shows that you have fans and support. We have four levels: USD $2/month, with no reward attached; USD $3/month, with a shout-out on the show and a sticker; USD $5+/month, with a shout-out on the show, a sticker and access to monthly bonus episodes and USD $15+/month, with all of the above, plus a Vocal Fries branded mug. These bonus episodes are just the two of us; they are shorter and tend to be saltier than our regular episodes.

Top tips

- *Find your niche.* Think about your background, interests and experiences. What topics are you best able to tackle? What do you think is the most important for non-linguists to learn about language? Use your experiences here to guide you: never doubt you have something to contribute to lingcomm.
- *Bring in help.* If you can't tackle all relevant topics in your niche, find others to interview or help you in some other way. You don't need to pretend like you know everything. If you can afford an editor or a transcriptionist or a social media expert, we highly recommend paying for these services. If you

are getting any financial support (like via Patreon), make your first investment into transcriptions. Anything to make your life easier and to help you put out content more consistently.

- *Find your way of engaging.* Audio? Video? Long-form? Short-form? Animation? We chose podcasting because we love listening to podcasts, and we mainly use Twitter to engage with our audience because there is a lively linguist community *and* a lively podcasting community there. But if your topic is about something more visual, you may find that YouTube is better suited to your topic and/or that your audience is mostly on Pinterest. If you want to reach a younger audience, you might use TikTok.
- *Be consistent*. Life can make this difficult, but wherever possible, you should try to put out content on a consistent schedule. We aim to put an episode out every second Monday, but for a few months, we could only handle one a month. If you have seasons instead, that can make it easier to be consistent (as you aren't expected to put out content all year round).
- *Interact with other podcasters/YouTubers/TikTokers/etc.* Find people who have similar content and collaborate, retweet, engage with them, etc. For example, we collaborated with the Unconscious Bias Project, by providing audio clips for them to use in an audio project and by having them on our show (they also posted a version of our episode on their own podcast). Stay connected to other content creators so you can hype each other up. Boost their content whenever it fits in with your larger mission. Encourage anyone you collaborate with to share, share, share! This helps the community at large, which usually helps you as well. As Moira Rose of *Schitt's Creek* says, 'When one of us shines, all of us shine.'
- *Interact with your fans.* Recently, we held our first ever live event on Zoom as part of #LingFest21.[6] This allowed us to engage with our most fervent fans. They had a lot of fun questions, and we were able to gauge what they are most interested in. We hope to use this information to continually improve our podcast. There currently isn't a great way to pay attention to your listenership, other than the download numbers that the podcast host tracks since podcasting is decentralised (Weiner 2020). We do not recommend paying too close attention to your download numbers, but knowing which types of episodes are most popular will help you decide what kinds of topics to cover in the future.
- *Be as accessible and inclusive as you can*. If you start a podcast or YouTube channel, aim to have transcriptions/captions as soon as possible. YouTube has automatic captioning, which is decent for some audio, but not so decent for more complicated jargon or for most languages. As soon as you can afford to pay for transcriptions or proper captioning, you should do it. If you hold a live event, enable automatic captioning. If you are charging for the event, make sure to pay for captioning and/or sign language interpretation (for the relevant sign language; this will vary from location to location). It is impossible to be completely accessible – you cannot have interpreters for every

single language spoken/signed on the planet – but you can be more accessible than not by making sure that at least the Deaf/deaf and hard of hearing people in your local community can access your content. Use any of your privileges to hold space for people who have been systematically excluded from the linguistics conversation.

- *Hang in there.* Our first listeners were our friends, and that's ok. Don't let the start-up process discourage you. Unless you happen to go viral for something (which no one can possibly predict), accumulating an audience is a slow process that requires patience. We didn't worry that much about making it big, we just wanted to get our message out there to as many people as we could. We were very lucky, in that we had larger downloads than the average podcast in our very first month. The average podcast has 141 downloads in the first 30 days; we had 382 in our first two weeks. (We now get ~2000 downloads for each episode within 30 days.) We didn't know that our numbers were above average. Instead, we knew that people were starting to appreciate our show when we had non-linguists reach out to us to be guests on their shows. Remember: numbers aren't the be-all end-all. What matters is finding your people, even if the niche is small.
- *Have fun!* If your lingcomm content is not making you happy, then don't do it. Make sure that you are interested in the content you are producing and that it fulfills you. It's too much work to not be enjoying yourself.

Notes

1 Podcast hosts tell you how many total downloads your podcast has as well as downloads for each episode.

2 Linguistics professors should know better, but we are all guilty of some form of linguistic discrimination. Our job is to make it harder to be ok with all forms of linguistic discrimination. We certainly learn from our guests some of the ways we've been unaware or hurtful in the past.

3 Good examples of this are found in the 1998 movie *Smoke Signals*.

4 Zoom is a videoconferencing application (zoom.us) that allows multiple participants to communicate via audio, video and text over the internet.

5 Other funding sources include grants, ads (we sometimes have ads via Buzzsprout) and other fan-based ways to be compensated (e.g. Ko-fi).

6 Lingfest21 was organised by Gretchen McCulloch and Lauren Gawne, hosts of Lingthusiasm. It was a program of online linguistics events aimed at a general audience, somewhat akin to a fringe festival (https://lingcomm.org/lingfest/).

4

BLOGGING AND MICROBLOGGING LINGUISTICS FOR THE LAY READER

M. Lynne Murphy

Introduction

Who should blog or tweet about linguistics? Linguists who love to write. Linguists with thick skins. Linguists who like to be told they're wrong and who sometimes don't mind admitting to it. Linguists who keep on top of their academic workloads. Put that way, it looks like no one should do it. Maybe the retired could manage it, but certainly not me.

And yet, here I am: 15 years an academic blogger, averaging 40 posts per year. In the list of 'things that have affected my professional development,' the decision to start the blog comes close after 'deciding to do a PhD' and 'emigrating for a job.' I could not have known that the blog would end up defining the second act of my career.

That blog, *Separated by a Common Language*, started innocently enough with this statement of purpose:

> Dictionaries of British/American English mostly cover well-known variants like *truck/lorry* and *elevator/lift*. But these are just the tip of the iceberg. What I intend to cover here are words/phrases/pronunciations/grammatical constructions that get me into trouble on a daily basis.

My blog posting was never 'on a daily basis,' but the linguistic discrepancies that got me into trouble still were (even after, at that point, ten years living away from the US). As the backlog of topics-to-be-blogged grew, and my free time shrunk (I was at that point Head of Department and a new parent), I turned to Twitter, then promoted as a 'microblogging' platform. There, under my *nom-de-blog* Lynneguist, I started posting a British/American 'Difference of the Day' (initially every day but later every weekday).

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My motivations for starting the blog (and then the Twitter feed) were simple. First, I enjoy the feeling of *having written* so much more than the experience of *writing*. Writing quick blog posts off the top of my head gave me a hit of that good having-written feeling before I had to turn my attention to the hard, abstract writing needed for the lexical semantics textbook I was contracted to write. Second, I am afflicted by the lexicographer's passion. 'In such people the taxonomic urge verges on the obsessive' (McArthur 1986: 93). I write journals and make lists, often at the same time. Blogging suited me perfectly.

This is all to say: I didn't set out to do any of the career-changing things that I've done because of the blog. Shifting my research area. Getting a literary agent. Writing for newspapers. This experience has taught me that, should I desire a third act to my career, 'start a new blog' should be the first item on my to-do list. I recommend it to others who want to explore ideas and connect with all sorts of people.

This chapter collects things I've learnt about blogging and tweeting as a 'public linguist' in the hope that it might offer a leg up to those who need a productive outlet for their obsessions. This includes reflections on the benefits of blogging, some practical tips and some thoughts on the emotional side of blogging: protecting yourself while giving yourself. For brevity's sake, I'll use *blogging* as shorthand that can include the microblogging of Twitter or similar platforms.

Blogging? That's so 2012!

'The golden age of academic blogging is mostly over,' wrote Mike Aubrey on the *Koine-Greek* blog in 2017. He's not the only one to say so. Like most golden ages, there's a fair amount of fictive nostalgia about it. No one quite agrees how long it lasted (maybe it ended in 2014), nor what made it golden. But they repeat the perception that blogging has been replaced by other media like video and podcasting and shorter-form social platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. 'The end of Twitter,' in turn, was declared by *The New Yorker* magazine in 2016 (Topolsky 2016). But blogging and microblogging haven't ended, for good reason.

Blogs serve purposes that are unmet by other media, and they serve linguists particularly well. While podcasting and YouTube are great for teaching about linguistics or interviewing linguists, blogs are where *public linguistics* amounts to *doing linguistics publicly*.

Blogs allow us to write about things that are too vague, too small or too ephemeral for academic publication. They provide a place to record passing thoughts or examples, to rave about a paper you've just read or to take your linguistic toolkit to a politician's gaffe, an advertising slogan or a sentence that sounds odd when you think about it for too long. It turns out that there are people out there (besides your most devoted students) who love thinking about the uses, abuses and puzzles of language and who enjoy seeing how professionals approach them. What's more, they often have helpful insights on them. In fact, when I last checked whether my blog was being cited in academic papers, a good number of those citations were citing the commenters' perspectives or examples rather than the linguist. The blog space becomes a place of collaboration between a linguist and the 'languaging' public.

Blogging suits academic life. The overheads, time and skill sets needed are tiny in comparison to recorded media or formal publishing. Thinking and writing, after all, are what we've been practising throughout our education and work lives. It's lovely to have a more playful outlet for those activities.

The benefits of public-linguist blogging

Reasons to blog specifically for the public include:

- To proselytise some of the field's core values and thereby work against common prejudices and harmful linguistic ideologies.
- To reach non-academic professionals whose work could benefit from linguistic research.
- To supplement the materials available to those in education.
- To entertain and increase public knowledge about how languages work (because who wouldn't be entertained by that?).

The more the public has learnt about linguistics, the more we have spread our disciplinary values and beliefs: that every language is complex, that prescriptivism entails and enables other -isms, that varied accents and dialects can be enjoyed and valued. We're even seeing the terminology of linguistics in mainstream discussions – I'm thinking about *code-switching* in discussions about systemic racism and how newspapers now write about *Multicultural London English* rather than *Jafaican*.

And when linguistics benefits the public, linguists benefit. The more people know what linguistics is, the greater the chance that the field can attract students and funding. What's more, it lessens the chance that people at parties will try to get away from you once you've told them what you do for a living.

A sense of duty to the discipline or the public is not enough to sustain oneself as a blogger, however. It takes work to create online content and maintain an online presence. Most universities won't reward that effort until (or unless) they can see that (a) it benefits the institution in some measurable way, *and* (b) you're meeting (or exceeding) all the other demands of your job (or study). Given all that, being an active public linguist should be a personal choice that fits with your personality and personal circumstances and that benefits you – whether by promoting your interests, developing your skills, giving you career options, or making a hobby out of your linguistic interests. Or, as it's turned out for me, all of the above.

Blogging and tweeting have made me a better writer, a better teacher and a better colleague than I had been. That experience seems to be typical for academic bloggers. Heap and Minocha (2012: 183) found that when academic bloggers discussed the benefits of blogging, 'the boundaries demarcating personal and professional development appeared blurred.' In terms of skills development, blogging and tweeting have pushed me into:

- Regular practice in writing and editing with concision and clarity, often (and importantly) with direct feedback.
- Improved interpersonal skills and personal boundaries.
- Developing minor technological skills.
- Better time management (eventually).

Even more exciting are the opportunities that blogging brings. For me, these have included:

- Seed research that has led to funding and publication.
- Networking with other linguists and the opportunities and support that's brought (for example, the invitation to write this very chapter).
- Connections with non-linguists who bring different questions and insights to my work (plus a broadening of my social circle).
- Opportunities to write and speak for audiences beyond my own – for instance, (a) writing for newspapers, magazines and school textbooks, and (b) speaking at schools and at professional conferences for editors, translators, educators and technologists. These in turn offer opportunities to see how other professions work.
- Interest from literary agents and book publishers.

Some of these opportunities bring personal and intellectual joy, some bring the possibility of pay, some bring both.

My blogging for non-linguists has broadened my professional academic network as well as my non-academic network; more linguists know me for my blog and tweets than for my highly specialised lexicological research. Blogging can also bring concrete career opportunities outside the academy. For Christopher Caterine, a PhD in Philosophy and author of *Leaving Academia: A Practical Guide*, blogging about contingent faculty issues provided the segue he needed into fulfilling work as a communications specialist in the corporate world. Writing publicly in a non-academic way about potentially arcane topics advertises your skills as a thinker and communicator. For those who want to improve their writing habits and style, a blog is a great practice field.

Microblogging brings its own practice in accuracy, concision and drawing readers' interest, but its career-development benefits are mostly to be found in making you a *findable* public linguist. There are plenty of linguists on social media (and plenty of linguistic/academic/career reasons to be there), but the ones who successfully engage the public generally use microblogging platforms to supplement and promote their more substantive public engagement activities, such as research projects, general-audience publishing, podcasts or blogs.

Defining your turf

My favourite advice about writing comes from the economist Steven J. Levitt: 'Don't write a book if your reason for writing a book is that you want people to read it.' It works just as well for blogs as for books. You have no guarantee of finding an audience, so writing a blog should be something that you enjoy in itself. If no one's paying you to blog, you should be writing first and foremost for yourself: creating content that you'd read if someone else had created it. But if you enjoy it, you're probably making something enjoyable – and that's the first step to finding an audience.

Some linguistic blogs are very general in their remit – *Language Log* being the most famous example. A big part of *Language Log*'s success lies in the fact that it started in 2003 and was for some time nearly the only game in town. Having a number of regular (and well-known) contributors has also helped it along, and over the years it had time to develop its characteristic themes, style and outlook(s). Some other generalist linguistics blogs arose on the Tumblr platform, which encouraged very short posts, often mostly linking to other resources. These include Gretchen McCulloch's *All Things Linguistic* (since 2013) and Lauren Gawne's *Superlinguo* (since 2011). These include some more specialised features, like *Superlinguo*'s 'Linguistics Jobs' series of interviews with linguists in non-academic jobs. Notably, both McCulloch (a freelance linguist) and Gawne have many other public-linguist outlets, including a podcast they co-host. The shorter-and-more-frequent blog model works well as a complement to their other endeavours.

Those starting a blog today have a lot of competition for the general reader's attention, and therefore might consider a more deliberate framing of their topic and/or a clear intention regarding the audience they wish to reach. The topic could be a language, a linguistic phenomenon, a way of approaching linguistic questions, or some intersection of linguistics and another field. Your blog's USP includes the topic remit, the ways in which the topic is approached, the style of writing and the persona you present to your readers.

There's a sweet spot between too general and too specific. No one much cared about the (now-defunct) blog my colleagues and I wrote to raise linguistic questions that were the right size for undergraduate dissertations. Its contents seemed a bit too random. No one but me cares about my blog about antonyms, *Who Shall Remain Antonymous*. It gets about ten visits per day, probably mostly from spam bots. (And that's ok, because I write it to amuse myself.) *Separated by a Common Language*, however, has continued to attract readers (now about 3,000 per day) for 15 years – at least in part because its theme is recognisable and broad enough to allow variety in its posts (on pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, pragmatics, language attitudes, etc.).

My favourite blogs have found that sweet spot. They know their turf, and they react well when personal experiences or the news of the day treads onto it. Some write enviably proper essays and interpretations, for instance, Deborah

Cameron's *Language: A Feminist Guide* and Dariusz Galasiński's blog, which explores medicine, mental health and patient experience through a discourse-analytic lens. Others give (or gave) bite-sized chunks of information, such as (the now-defunct) *John Wells' Phonetics Blog* and various dictionary-based blogs that cover words in the news. Teams of authors can bring different perspectives to a theme and cover greater ground. Here I'm thinking of *Strong Language*, a collaborative blog about swearing by a team of academic linguists, editors and other language professionals, as well as the really useful (but sadly infrequent) *Linguistics Research Digest* at Queen Mary University of London.

Sometimes the 'turf' is defined by a project and the blog is perhaps offered to a funding agency as evidence for the pursuit of 'research impact.' Blogs do not in themselves have research impact; they merely disseminate, and a project-related blog might not disseminate very far. A project blog can be a good place to put information related to a project, but due to the nature of funded projects, their active lives tend to be short, and so they may not build up loyal readerships. They'll be read by those clicking through on a social media link or exploring your website. One question to answer before starting a project blog is whether the same information could be disseminated through other longer-lived channels with existing readerships and whether that would better serve the project.

Once you know your turf, a snappy title can help make your blog memorable and findable. Check whether that title is already in use, to ensure that people looking for your blog find *your* blog.

Writing blog posts

There are no rules for writing blog posts, but it's good to have a sense of your own voice, which will develop as you find your audience. One mistake that's easy to make in approaching a public audience is to use your 'textbook voice.' If your intent is to engage an interested public, it's better not to sound like you're lecturing them.

As teachers (and sometimes textbook-writers), our first impulse can be to introduce and define terminology. But terminology is not what makes linguistics interesting. Lead instead with the phenomena, the puzzles, the questions. When the terminology turns out to be relevant or useful, it often works to define it first, then offer the term, as in this example from David Adger's *Syntax and Other Stuff*:

> Take how languages ask questions about things. In English, if you bought something, and your partner sees the shopping bag, they can ask *What did you buy?* There's something funny going on with the syntax here. The part of the sentence that you are asking a question about appears, not where it would go if you weren't asking a question, but right at the front. *I bought a book* but *Which book did you buy?* Linguists call this kind of syntax *question-movement* (or, more commonly, *wh-movement*, though that's not such a good term).
>
> *('Syntax is not a custom,' 5 Sept 2016)*

In this excerpt, Adger explains a sentence structure by putting it into a real-life context, explicitly addresses what a linguist notices is 'funny' about the structure, and only then introduces the linguist's familiar term for it. The term for us linguists is a shortcut, but to take a shortcut you need to know where you want to end up. Adger shows the reader where they'll end up before introducing the shortcut. And it works.

Another item in the blogger's toolkit is the hyperlink. In Adger's excerpt, the reader can click on *wh-movement* and be taken to the Wikipedia entry for the term. Links can be used for definitions, further explanations, original research or previous blogposts. I especially recommend them for linking to posts by other language bloggers, to make your blog a part of a larger language-blogging community. Illustrations liven up a page and make it seem more interesting to click on when linked-to on social media. Do take care to credit sources.

How much or little to write is guided by the subject but also by the audience. I started out writing very short observations, but as I gained readers, the comments section for each post quickly filled with requests for more details. The more I got to know what readers cared about, the more I could hear their voices in my head as I wrote. ('But I say it *this way*. What about that?') I unwittingly followed a general trend in blogging. According to one survey, between 2014 and 2020, average blog length increased by about 50% (to 1,269 words per post; Crestodina 2020). Longer posts means longer per-post time commitment, but they do tend to be the more successful posts in terms of links and shares. (Most of mine, at around 1,000 words, take about three hours to write.) Successful short-post blogs tend to post much more frequently.

At the start of a blog, frequent postings can help build readership. For holding onto the readership, regularity helps – though goodness knows it's not easy to stay regular during the teaching term. Setting a particular time to blog can help. Mine is Sunday afternoon while the rest of the family has other activities on. I don't always manage to blog then (and if I do, I don't always manage to finish a post), but it's comforting to know that the blog lives in that corner of my week, so I don't have to feel guilty about not posting at other times.

The practicalities

Decisions regarding the platform and home for your blog will depend a great deal on your needs and technological savvy (do you want it to be a page of a personal or project website, or can it live on a blogging platform like WordPress or Blogger?). It can also depend on your budget – many platforms are free, but hosting your own website is not. Newer social journalism sites like Medium and Substack provide another kind of outlet for blog-type writing.

Since needs differ, and this landscape changes frequently, I won't make any platform recommendations here. If you're likely to want to post media like sound files or animations, make sure to investigate which formats can easily be uploaded to a platform before committing to it. The one thing I would caution against is putting your blog on your institution's website. One of the joys of blogging is the independence it brings. You represent no one but yourself. Working on a university platform means tying your blog's identity to an organisation with its own PR wants and needs, leaving yourself to the whims of their (often very whimsical) website revamps. On top of that, you risk losing your material if you move on.

Besides weighing up blog platforms, you should look for a few tools, such as an RSS feed reader (aka a feed aggregator or news aggregator). An RSS feed reader ensures that you don't miss the blog posts of one's blogging peers. It will also allow you to check that your blog is being received by those who have subscribed to it.

You will need to decide which other social media platforms you'll use to promote blog posts. Facebook and Twitter have been the obvious choices, with Facebook's newsfeed algorithms mean that any post only reaches a small number of your followers. Some platforms, like Mastodon, are designed to prevent viral sharing, and so may not be the best way to reach a general public. These text-based social media are more likely to find people looking to read things than the more image-based platforms like Instagram. (That said, including an image with the social media links to your blog posts will get you more clicks.)

Finally, a social media dashboard application (e.g. Hootsuite, Tweetdeck) can allow you to schedule posts ahead of time. (Some also work with Facebook and other social media.) For a new blog post, I'd recommend posting about it on social media immediately, and scheduling two or three more messages about it at different times in the following few days, to ensure that people in target time zones are likely to see the blogpost. Keep in mind that people tend to read social media first thing in the morning and late in the evening (but academics seem to be on social media all day long).

The emotional side of blogging

Being a public linguist makes you vulnerable in several ways. That sounds like it's a bad thing, but that vulnerability brings opportunities for personal growth that are easily missed when stuck inside the ivory tower. Caution and clear boundaries are needed in approaching this vulnerability, but kindness, openness and generosity are the overriding principles.

Openness

It should go without saying that you should not try to mislead people online. One thing you might be tempted to withhold or mislead about is your identity. I toyed with anonymity at first – it seemed too scary and presumptuous to put myself out there fully. But if you want people to trust you (and if you want to benefit professionally from the blog), there's no substitute for using your real name and letting people know where in the world you are.

Being open can also mean leaving yourself open to communication from the public: making the comment facility available on the blog, keeping Twitter replies open, giving your email address. This can be very enriching. It can also be a pain. It's important to have some boundaries here, like keeping a separate email account for blog business, making a comments policy for your blog and thinking twice before allowing Direct Messages from people you don't follow on social media (especially if you're female – you just don't want some of those messages). No one will read your comments policy before commenting, but if you have one that specifies what is not allowed, then you can use it to justify the deletion of non-compliant comments.

Boundaries

Being open is not the same as being transparent. You should think about how much you want to give away about your life (and the lives around you).

In drawing those boundaries, I create my public-linguist persona, which protects my private life from my followers and protects my followers from my private life. It wouldn't take a genius to figure out some of my personal qualities and political views from what I reveal online, but I try to keep in mind that my followers are strangers and that they are following me for linguistic content. (In this way, it's not too different from my relationship with my students.) On social media, it is all too tempting to re-share everything interesting that comes my way, but I ask myself two questions before hitting the 'retweet' button when I see a tweet I agree with or one that enrages me:

1. Is it likely that my followers will already be reading about this from other sources? If yes, then I don't share it; I don't want to add noise.
2. Does this relate in some way to 'my' topics (transatlantic language and culture, immigrant life, writing non-fiction and higher education)? If no, think twice before sharing, then think again.

I also take care in not revealing too much about people in my life. If I'm writing about spending time in a hospital, my readers don't need to know which relative is ill and how serious it is. My friends and family have pseudonyms in my public-linguist social media. This includes calling my daughter *Grover* whenever I mention her online. She doesn't need some future employer googling her and finding that ridiculous thing (with interesting syntax) that she said when she was five. This name choice, the result of a family in-joke, has earned me several pieces of 'rage mail' expressing indignation that I would give a girl such a horrible name. Which leads us to…

Interactions: self-preservation and humility

If you're the kind of person who wants the public's attention (why else are you blogging?), it can be tempting to feel like you have to respond to every email or tweet or blog comment that comes your way, especially if you see someone being WRONG on the internet. But if they are not trying to be helpful to you, you don't need to be helpful to them. Keep in mind that social media is the stalking ground of many people who just want to hear themselves talk and/or pick fights. Let them hear themselves talk, you don't need to respond. They have no right to your attention. Most will be too busy picking fights with others to notice that you haven't responded. I have a policy that I mostly follow: do not reply to ill-conceived opinions or misunderstandings from people on Twitter who don't follow me. (Because tweets get retweeted by others, this happens a lot. But I remind myself: those replying to a re-tweet are in a conversation with the re-tweeter, not me.) The mute button on Twitter is your friend.

Early in my blogging, I responded to nearly every comment. That might have helped in building my relationship with readers. As the number of comments grew, I limited myself to replying to questions, not opinions or experiences. And a while after that, I discovered that if I left a commenter's question unanswered for a bit, another commenter would usually answer it. My *not* replying allowed a community to form in my comments section.

It's good to have some distraction strategies for when you are trolled or misunderstood online. Have some other places to take your mind to, rather than lying awake at night thinking of the perfect response to some internet rudeness. If you've already made the decision not to engage with rude people, you're halfway there.

That all said, keep in mind that you are interacting with strangers, using the written word, often with strict limits on length and format. What seems rude on first glance might not be. Read it again (and again) in the kindest tone possible. If there is a kind reading, react to that. Could their 'fed up' comment be sarcastic? Then read it that way. If you need to laugh at someone or lecture someone, let it be yourself. Haranguing and mockery are not useful communication models.

Generosity

Blogging is by nature a generous act. You are giving something free of charge to a public. Keep that in mind on the many occasions when you feel like you should be giving more. You have been very generous with your time already. You are not made of time.

But there are other ways to be generous that are free and helpful. Support other linguists and bloggers (academic, professional or amateur). Cite them. Cross-reference to them. If you have to be critical, do it constructively. Don't be a snob about disciplines or credentials – some excellent language blogs are by non-linguists and non-academics.

When I started out, I was a bit precious about my turf, wanting people to cite me but not necessarily wanting to draw attention to what other people were saying about the same topic. Then I grew up a bit. Now I tend to (or, on less positive days, try to) see other people's posts on 'my' topics as complementary to mine. Language is multifaceted – you can probably find other things to observe on the same topic. And if you can't, you can say 'I guess they saved me the trouble of blogging about that' and link to their blog.

The generosity doesn't have to be altruistic: if you help, cite and follow others, they are more likely to help, cite and follow you. Being generous is the first step to finding yourself in a blogging community.

Conclusions

The internet is awash with dead blogs and abandoned social media accounts. There's nothing wrong with starting something and deciding it's not for you, but I have to wonder how many would-be bloggers started with grand hopes, then left their blogs to atrophy when the rewards were slow in coming. The rewards generally follow a serious investment of time and require continued investment. And when the rewards come, they will not necessarily be the rewards you expected. So who should blog and microblog as a public linguist? Compulsive writers and dedicated educators who are open to new experiences and eager to develop new skills. To those brave and desperate souls: I look forward to reading you.

Blogs mentioned (all URLs current at the time of writing)

All Things Linguistic. Gretchen McCulloch. https://allthingslinguistic.com/
Dariusz Galasiński (blog). http://dariuszgalasinski.com/blog/
John Well's Phonetic Blog. https://phonetic-blog.blogspot.com/
Koine-Greek: Studies in Greek Language and Linguistics. https://koine-greek.com/
Language: A Feminist Guide. Deborah Cameron. https://debuk.wordpress.com/
Language Log. Mark Liberman, et al. https://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/
Linguistics Research Digest. Department of Linguistics, Queen Mary University of London. https://linguistics-research-digest.blogspot.com/
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5

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC AND ENRICHING LANGUAGE EDUCATION THROUGH *BABEL: THE LANGUAGE MAGAZINE*

Dan McIntyre and Lesley Jeffries

Introduction

Being a public linguist does not have to mean appearing regularly on TV or radio. There are many other ways in which academics can engage the public with their research. We did it by starting a magazine. In this chapter, we explain how we went about the process, how we built a brand and found an audience for our work and what benefits we have seen from the work we have done. Of course, not everyone will want to start a magazine, but we believe there are some general points about public engagement to be learned from our experiences. We discuss these as they arise and offer a summary at the end of the chapter.

The roots of *Babel: The Language Magazine* lie in our longstanding interest in the pedagogy of our discipline and in making linguistics accessible to beginners (see, for example, Jeffries 2003; Short et al. 2011; McIntyre 2011). The specific idea for the magazine came to us in 2011 when we were travelling back from a conference in France. To while away the journey, we began talking about projects that we would really like to do if time and resources were no object.[1] Exactly which one of us came up with the idea for a magazine is one of those things now lost to memory, but what we both noticed was that there were no popular magazines about language on the market. This struck us as odd for a couple of reasons. First, if you happen to be interested in, say, history or art or science, there are lots of magazines aimed at non-specialists which allow you to explore these subjects. Second, we knew that plenty of people are interested in language, even if that interest was in some cases fairly superficial. There are, for example, TV gameshows with language components (e.g. *Countdown*, Channel 4), radio programmes (e.g. *Word of Mouth*, Radio 4) and popular games (e.g. *Scrabble*, *Boggle* and the like). Even from a negative perspective, the wealth of newspaper opinion columns – and subsequent letters to the editor – that fixate

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on supposedly incorrect language use is evidence of a public appetite for talking about language. Since most people can speak, write or sign, it's no surprise that most people have an opinion about language.

To linguists, of course, it is frustrating that such opinions are rarely evidence-based. This is why we felt a magazine might be useful. The kind of people interested in playing *Scrabble* or watching *Countdown* or complaining about grammar teaching might not necessarily be the kind of people who would want to read an introductory textbook about linguistics. But they might be interested in reading short magazine articles on the topic. And if we could persuade people to do this, we might also be able to persuade them of the value of taking an evidence-based approach to making claims about language use. We envisaged a magazine containing articles short enough to be read in a single sitting but long enough to thoroughly argue a point – something that is often not possible in, for example, short TV or radio spots. We were fairly sure, then, that we had spotted a gap in the market. Neither of us knew anything about the magazine industry, and we had few resources to work with; but by the time we got home from our conference, we had decided that starting a linguistics magazine was what we were going to do.

Foundations

Our next step was to check that there wasn't already a magazine of the kind we wanted to produce. What we had in mind was a linguistics equivalent of something like *BBC History Magazine*. Although we were fairly sure we would have heard about it if there was one, we spent some time researching this just to be sure. What we found were plenty of blogs but no popular magazines. The closest we found was *Language Magazine* but its focus was different from ours, being closer to a trade publication. As the magazine's website states, it focuses on 'providing resources for teachers, students, and administrators' and 'on dual language and bilingual education programs and the state of literacy in the U.S. and abroad' (languagemagazine.com/about). By contrast, we wanted our magazine to be broader in coverage and to be aimed primarily at people who didn't already work in linguistics and language teaching.

Our discovery of *Language Magazine*, however, did put paid to the idea of simply calling our magazine *Language*. In order to differentiate ourselves, we came up with *Babel*, inspired by the biblical story in which the human race attempts to build a tower to the heavens (the tower of Babel). As punishment for the people's hubris, God breaks up their single world language and scatters the resulting languages across the earth (Genesis 11: 1–9). We also added a subtitle, 'The Language Magazine.' This was done with an eye to likely internet and library searches. Our university solicitor then checked to make sure that no other publication existed with our chosen title, and we were good to go.

At this stage, we began to involve other people in the project. We sought advice from Professor David Crystal, perhaps the most well-known linguist outside academia, on the basis of his extensive experience of popularising linguistics through his work as a writer, broadcaster and lecturer (see David's chapter in this volume). Interestingly, in 1983 David had suggested the idea of a popular journal of linguistics to Cambridge University Press (Crystal 2009: 213). This eventually became *English Today*, which has shifted over time to become much closer to a conventional academic journal than a magazine, meaning that we did not see it as competition for *Babel*. David cautioned that starting a magazine was the easy bit; continuing to produce it over months and years was a much harder task. We were undeterred, and David kindly agreed to lend his name to our project, taking on the amorphous role of 'Linguistic Consultant.' We also involved our Huddersfield colleague, Jane Lugea.[2] At the time, Jane was a Research Assistant working on a British Academy-funded research project on subtitling (see McIntyre and Lugea 2015) that was reflective of our overall interest in applications for linguistics. Because of this, we asked Jane to take on the role of editorial assistant. Jane's prior experience of project management and marketing were invaluable, and she played a significant role in the early promotion of *Babel*. We also approached a number of colleagues in other institutions, both in the UK and elsewhere, to form an advisory panel for the magazine.

With our title approved and collegial support in place, our next step was to plan a half-length issue of the magazine to give away free. Our thinking here was that we were more likely to be able to persuade people to subscribe to the magazine if we could show them a sample of what it would look like. We envisaged a number of regular features (e.g. an A–Z of linguistic terminology, a column focusing on the lives of famous linguists, pull-out posters, a language games section) as well as standalone articles. We had also decided that we would only publish articles written by linguists (both theoretical and applied), and primarily by linguists writing about their own research. That is, unlike some popular science magazines, we wanted our authors to be academics first rather than journalists. This was not because there are not some very good journalists out there writing about language. Oliver Kamm, for example, writes regular columns on language for *The Times*, while Lane Greene writes the 'Johnson' column for *The Economist*. But compared to disciplines such as physics, history and economics, there are relatively few such writers. And because the public profile of linguistics is significantly lower than those of other disciplines, and misunderstanding of it so comparatively high, we felt we would be running the risk of receiving articles that treated language and linguistic topics too superficially or without regard for their true complexity. A second reason for asking academics to write for us was that this kind of activity is an accepted part of an academic job, with associated benefits for academics in contributing to such projects.[3] While we had initial funding to pay for a pilot issue, this would not cover the costs of paying freelance journalists. Nor did we want to present academic research at one remove.

With this in mind, we asked for help from colleagues in our own department and in other institutions[4] and put a draft issue together. Fifty percent of this issue was written by us and our departmental colleagues.[5] We then met with a local graphic designer, Richard Honey,[6] and talked through what we wanted the magazine to look like. We were clear from the outset that we wanted to produce a print magazine for several reasons. First, we wanted the magazine to stand out against the kind of in-house publications related to language that are produced online by professional organisations (such as *Teaching English*, published by NATE, the UK's National Association for the Teaching of English). Second, we felt there was an anticipatory pleasure in waiting for a hard copy of a magazine to drop through your letterbox and that this would increase sales (this is borne out by the fact that hard copies continue to make up 67% of our subscriptions). Our conversation with Richard Honey involved discussions about typefaces and fonts, layout (single or multiple columns), colour, illustration style and the development of a distinctive logo. While we had no expertise in graphic design ourselves, what did prove useful at this stage was our understanding of the effects of stylistic foregrounding, having both published extensively in this area (e.g. McIntyre 2003; Jeffries and McIntyre 2010).

Following our discussions, Richard produced mock-ups of a few articles from our draft copy for us to approve. This was the point at which we needed to make a financial commitment to the project, which we were able to do by using a relatively small amount of money from our departmental research budget to pay for 1,000 copies of this first issue and 1000 flyers advertising it. Richard also helped us secure an ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) for the magazine, which is useful for institutions when it comes to ordering and cataloguing. He also added a QR code to the cover. Both of these things were done to ensure it was as easy as possible for people to find *Babel* in library databases and online.

Building a brand

As of February 2021, *Babel* has subscribers in 38 countries across six continents, with the USA being the largest market outside the UK. Our practice of offering institutional subscriptions means that the total number of subscribers translates into a much higher readership. In this section, we describe how we achieved this reach through building the *Babel* brand.

We decided to make *Babel* a quarterly magazine. Any less than this and we thought it wouldn't be considered a proper magazine. Any more and we would struggle to produce it, due to the constant demands of regular publication. But producing even four issues a year was contingent on our persuading people to subscribe, since we had no funding to sustain the magazine beyond our free sample issue. Our immediate task, then, was to get the word out about *Babel*.

We bought domain names, set up a website (babelzine.co.uk) and made the free sample issue a downloadable pdf. The website linked to our university's online shop, enabling visitors to the site to subscribe via credit card payment (getting this set up was a task in itself; should you want to pursue anything similar, it is worth cultivating good relations with your institution's finance office, particularly if there is no precedent for the kind of thing you want to do). We then set up a Twitter account (@Babelzine) and followed as many linguists and language teachers as we could. While our ultimate intention was to reach non-linguists, this stage was simply about broadening the network of people who knew about *Babel*. We hoped that through a process of diffusion we would eventually reach people beyond our immediate network.

Beyond Twitter, we used MailChimp, a free email marketing service, to send emails about *Babel* to a mailing list of teachers that we had built up over a period of years. We sent them flyers and copies of the free issue for their libraries/sixth-form centres, and we sent copies to university linguistics departments worldwide.[7] We contacted the organisers of a number of conferences who agreed to put copies of *Babel* in their conference packs. We also had a pull-up banner printed and took *Babel* to conferences ourselves, sometimes giving talks about it (e.g. Price et al. 2015) and in some cases paying for a publisher's stand (e.g. at the British Association for Applied Linguistics conference, Cambridge, 2016) We put an announcement on LinguistList (https://linguistlist.org) and followed up any interest there with free copies and flyers. Stan Carey, a prominent blogger on language topics, wrote a post about *Babel* which further spread the word. The interest we got from these initial marketing forays led to a subscriber base large enough to sustain the production costs of the magazine under an academic model of publishing.

Around the time of these initial activities, we also sent out hard copies of the magazine to any celebrities we could think of who had a connection to language and linguistics. These included the TV presenter and lexicographer Susie Dent (Channel 4's *Countdown* and *Eight Out of Ten Cats Does Countdown*) and the actor, writer and presenter Stephen Fry (Radio 4's *Fry's English Delight* and BBC2's *Planet Word*). This was a prescient move that has had long-term benefits for us. Stephen Fry subscribed to *Babel* and in 2014 (about 18 months after our first issue) tweeted about the magazine. Since Stephen has in excess of 12m followers on Twitter, his endorsement of *Babel* saw our own follower numbers surge, giving us a significant profile boost and contributing to an increase in our subscribers. It also gave us a broader network of followers, putting us in contact with people beyond our immediate sphere of higher education.

Since our initial promotional work, we have continued to take every opportunity to promote *Babel* and grow our readership. For example, in 2015 we paid for a stand at The Language Show, a tradeshow in London aimed at language learners, teachers and language enthusiasts. While the costs of this outweighed the initial financial reward, it was a worthwhile venture for the connections it gave us to the world of linguistics outside of academia. For instance, a serendipitous meeting with the presenter of The Fluent Show, a podcast about language learning, led to her interviewing one of us,[8] which gave us the chance to increase *Babel*'s reach. Although financial prudence is advisable, loss-leading strategies should not be dismissed out of hand.

Also in 2015, in an extension of our brand and to further increase the magazine's profile, we established the annual Babel Lecture. This is given by a speaker with a high public profile and connection to linguistics. Lectures are free and have seen upwards of 300 people per lecture attending in person to learn about linguistics. Our Babel lecturers to date have been Brendan Gunn (dialect coach, 2015), David Crystal (writer and public linguist, 2016), Peter French (forensic linguist and founder of the UK's first forensic speech and acoustics company, 2017), Susie Dent (writer, lexicographer and TV presenter, 2018), Jessica Coon (consultant linguist on the 2016 film *Arrival*, 2019), Jean Berko Gleason (inventor of the Wug test, 2021) and Stephen Fry (actor, writer and broadcaster, 2022).[9]

Our most recent promotional venture highlights the importance of momentum in the development of any public engagement project. In 2018 we approached Cambridge University Press about developing one of the long-running features in *Babel*, 'The linguistic lexicon,' into a popular book, *The Babel Lexicon of Language* (McIntyre et al. 2022). At this point, the profile of *Babel* was high enough to persuade CUP that there was a market for an accessible and relatively inexpensive A–Z of linguistic terminology aimed at complete beginners. The fact that CUP were willing to incorporate the brand name *Babel* into the title of our book confirmed to us that the work we had put into establishing the brand had paid off.

As *Babel* has continued to develop, we have invested the small surplus income from the magazine in improvements to the product that we offer. For example, we invested in software (3D Issue) to produce an interactive digital edition of the magazine for subscribers who preferred a digital issue. We also updated our website by paying a web developer to set up an online payment system utilising PayPal to give us more flexibility than our university's online shop allowed. This meant that we were able to respond to what readers wanted by offering a wider range of subscription types and streamlining the subscription process. Our web developer also ensures that we are compliant with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). In effect, *Babel* is now a hybrid of a public engagement project and a business.

Benefits

We set up *Babel* primarily because it was something that we wanted to do. That is, we didn't start the project in response to any particular agenda, either internal or external to our university. Because of this, it has always been something that we have done in addition to our normal workloads. No-one ever stopped us from working on it, but there have certainly been times when we felt that *Babel* was not taken as seriously by our university as we thought it should be. The irony is that *Babel* turned out to have significant benefits for our department and our institution.

Perhaps the most significant benefit to us was the profile that *Babel* gave to Linguistics and Modern Languages at Huddersfield. The University of Huddersfield is a post-92 university. 'Post-92' denotes a university that was formerly a polytechnic and that was given university status through the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. Because post-92 universities do not have the long history of research that older universities have, or in many cases the wealth and prestige, it is generally harder for them to ascend league tables, particularly when their civic concerns (such as serving the local community) are not taken account of in such rankings. Neither is Huddersfield a big city like neighbouring Leeds and Manchester or a tourist attraction like nearby York. What *Babel* gave us, then, was a unique way to transcend these contextual factors and carve out a niche in a fairly crowded higher education market. It is common when we visit local schools, for instance, to see *Babel* posters on classroom walls, and the association of *Babel* with Huddersfield has therefore been beneficial to the university's student recruitment activities.[10]

Babel has also been valuable to us when it comes to meeting external requirements imposed on universities in the UK. For example, because *Babel* is based on our underpinning research into the pedagogy of linguistics (see, for example, Jeffries 2003; McIntyre 2003, 2012), we were able to use *Babel* as an impact case study (i.e. an exemplar of the societal value of our research) in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework, a national assessment of research quality that determines research funding for UK universities. *Babel* also enabled us to meet internal university requirements. For example, at Huddersfield, all undergraduate students are required to undertake a workplace-focused module during their second year. We were able to offer *Babel* internships in support of this module, giving our students experience of the publishing industry, from producing content to marketing and promotion. More recently, we have been able to open this opportunity up to students from other universities too, as well as from local schools and colleges.

This latter point raises a key issue for public engagement generally: good public engagement projects should not be one-sided (see Price and McIntyre, this volume). That is, such projects should be beneficial to everyone involved, not just the academics responsible for them. We set up *Babel* because of our desire to communicate the value and joy of linguistics to lay readers. The project would have been a failure if it had not had some positive impact on such people. Fortunately, it has. For example, we have evidence from teachers worldwide that *Babel* is regularly used in classroom teaching, and that it has improved the work of language teachers in 12 countries. Teachers in such diverse countries as Australia, the Czech Republic, Ireland and Switzerland have told us that *Babel* has led to improvements in the range and quality of students' research projects.[11] And A-level teachers in the UK have reported that discussing *Babel* articles in class has enabled students to better conceptualise linguistics and thereby access higher marks. A-level teachers have also pointed towards an increase in teacher confidence and student motivation as a result of *Babel*. Readers have also told us that *Babel* has empowered them to discuss language from an evidence-based perspective. And at least 14 readers have been motivated to take up formal study of linguistics as a result of reading the magazine.

From the outset of the project, in addition to providing interesting material for readers, we also hoped that *Babel* would come to be seen as a resource for our discipline generally, useful to both students and researchers alike. For example, we have worked with the organisers of the UK Linguistics Olympiad (UKLO) to encourage more young people to become involved in this competition. As part of this work, we have published articles by the UKLO organisers, and we sponsored the 2016 second round of the event. The organisers noted a sharp increase in the number of teachers registered with UKLO following our coverage of the competition in *Babel*.

Babel also constitutes a good outlet for any linguist seeking to generate impact from their research. It acts as a conduit between academia and – for want of a better phrase – the 'real' world. As the presenter of *The Fluent Show* podcast put it, 'This magazine connects the dots between academia and everyday life. It's a fabulous resource for language learners' (Cable 2020).

Conclusions

Babel is a very specific kind of public engagement project, and it is unlikely that many people would want to set up the kind of magazine that we have, not least because, unlike some other forms of public engagement, there is no doubt a limit to the number of such ventures that linguistics as a discipline can sustain. Nonetheless, we think there are some general points about public engagement to emerge from our experience of setting up, writing and editing *Babel: The Language Magazine*. Some of these are particularly relevant to academics working on or aiming to develop public engagement projects themselves. Others are particularly relevant to university senior managers developing strategy around public engagement.

First of all, it is worth reiterating that *Babel* was a project we began simply because we wanted to; that is, it was not a response to any kind of external agenda. It is worth restating this for two reasons – one positive and the other less so. First, it is easier to sustain a public engagement project when you have an intrinsic motivation for it. Second, the fact that the project was motivated simply by our own interest meant that we were given no formal workload allowance for it. This is an important consideration, since to do public engagement well necessitates a significant investment of time. We have been fortunate to have received lots of help from colleagues and we could not continue to produce the magazine without the ongoing support of our assistant editor (Matt Evans) and editorial assistants (Hazel Price, Erica Gold and Louise Nuttall). And in addition to the many academics who have written for *Babel*, we also have a number of regular contributors, who currently include Tristan Miller (Austrian Research Institute for Artificial Intelligence), Simon Horobin (University of Oxford), Jane Setter (University of Reading), Dominic Watt (University of York) and Alice Haines (University of Derby). All of these people make the magazine possible. Certainly we would advocate enlisting collaborators to support you in whatever your public engagement project might be. Nonetheless, despite the workload, to our minds the personal benefits we have seen from *Babel* compensate for the time we have devoted to it. That said, there are a number of issues that need to be navigated when developing a public engagement project of *Babel*'s scale. For instance, *Babel* was an unusual project for our university. There was no precedent for it, which meant that, initially, neither our Research Office nor our Finance Office knew how to deal with it. For this reason, it was set up as an ongoing research project with a budget that rolled over each year, as opposed to a business operating within the university. This is a technical distinction that may seem unimportant, but it had consequences for how we were able to monitor *Babel*'s accounts, for example. Issues of this kind need considered discussion with the relevant people in your institution. As a result of these and other issues, we recently set up Babel as an independent company limited by guarantee.[12]

Because *Babel* was a very different kind of project to what our university was used to, we also encountered difficulties in selling it via the university's online shop. When we began the project, the university did not use PayPal, which limited our selling capability, particularly in relation to overseas sales (in fact, it was as a consequence of *Babel* that the university eventually adopted PayPal as a payment mechanism). Additionally, the complexities of our product (different types of subscription, sale of single issues, etc.) made it difficult to incorporate into the structure of our university's online shop. Such were the difficulties, that eventually we paid our web developer to set up a payment portal on our own website. Again, if your project involves the sale of any kind of product, we advise early conversations with the relevant people in your institution.

Beyond the day-to-day practicalities of running a business within a university structure, it is necessary to be aware of the legal implications of doing so. We spoke to our university solicitor when we initially set up the project and we pay a freelance web developer to ensure that our website, its payment portal and our records of subscribers are secure and compliant with GDPR.

In addition to the points above, we would suggest that there are some wider insights to be gained from our experience with *Babel* for senior university managers, such as deans of faculties and pro vice-chancellors for research and internationalisation. The first is to understand the close relationship between public engagement and impact, something that research assessment exercises such as the REF are increasingly aware of. Funding public engagement leads to impact. And depending on the context in which a university is working, this can lead ultimately to increased funding for research. Public engagement, then, is worth it. The second insight is to encourage innovation. This may seem an obvious point to make but, at a time when universities are being subjected to ever-more restrictive agendas (consider, for instance, the UK government's concern for universities to demonstrate impact from their research), it is tempting to target limited funds at projects that seem to immediately address such requirements. However, it is often the case that projects that fall outside such agendas will have unforeseen payoffs. *Babel* was not set up with any view to demonstrating research impact, for example, though it has ended up being very valuable to our institution in relation to this issue. There must, then, be space for blue-skies projects, and it is important that they are supported both morally and financially. Relatedly, it is important to trust the judgement of academics to decide when a project is worth the investment of time. Academia's increasing focus on short-term results puts at risk those projects that need nurturing over an extended period but that will lead to long-term sustainable success.

To a dean or a pro vice-chancellor, these may seem like risky strategies. But in fact they reduce the need for specific funding channels to address particular governmental agendas. We know, for instance, of UK universities that, in the run-up to the REF, targeted funding at the development of research impact. But impact arises from research and cannot be bought off-the-peg. Fund the underpinning research and the impact will arise naturally. And if you want impact, public engagement of some kind is, more often than not, a necessary component.

Notes

1 A light-hearted animated summary of the development of *Babel* is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccCZ9n25H6U
2 Jane is now Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts, English and Languages at Queen's University Belfast and a member of the *Babel* advisory panel.
3 The issue of not paying academic authors who do not have a permanent academic post is a more difficult one, of course, though this is standard practice for commercial academic publishers. Our ultimate aim is to develop *Babel* to the level where we are able to offer some remuneration to our contributors.
4 We are very grateful to Marcus Bridle (Waseda University), Siobhan Chapman (University of Liverpool), Peter French (JP French Associates), Ella Jeffries (University of Essex), Louisa Stevens (JP French Associates) and Peter Stockwell (University of Nottingham) for writing articles and reviews for the first issue of *Babel* and to Richard (Dick) Hudson (University College London) for giving us permission to reproduce a puzzle from the 2012 UK Linguistics Olympiad.
5 Typically, the *Babel* editorial team is now responsible for around 20% of each issue (the core team currently comprises Lesley Jeffries, Dan McIntyre, Matt Evans, Hazel Price, Erica Gold and Louise Nuttall). We were keen that the majority of each issue should be written by non-Huddersfield staff to prevent the magazine from being perceived as an in-house publication. We also wanted *Babel* to be seen as a resource for the linguistics community generally, rather than as something belonging to our own institution (though clear benefits for our then university arose as a result of *Babel*'s increasing popularity).
6 Richard's company, dg3 (dg3.co.uk), had done work for us on previous projects.
7 One of our current editorial assistants remembers, as an undergraduate, the first issue of *Babel* arriving in her department. If you want to feel old, become an academic.
8 The interview is available at https://www.fluentlanguage.co.uk/podcast-blog/episode-26-language-events-language-careers-language-inspiration, beginning at 39 minutes into the episode.
9 Unsurprisingly, the 2020 lecture was postponed due to COVID-19.
10 It is no small irony, then, that not long after the manuscript for this book was submitted, senior managers at the University of Huddersfield took the decision to close the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages and make its academic staff redundant.

11 The evidence referred to in this and subsequent paragraphs can be found in our impact case study submission to the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF), under Unit of Assessment 26 (Modern Languages and Linguistics), University of Hudderfield. This submission is publicly available on the REF website: https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact/submissions/0759d906-24f1-42d8-98d3-3ae07f235773/impact.

12 Part of the rationale for doing this was to address the problems referred to concerning access to *Babel* accounts. It has also enabled us to secure the future of the magazine, given changes to our personal circumstances (Dan has since moved to Uppsala University in Sweden while Lesley, as part of her phased retirement plan, is now a visiting researcher at Lancaster University).

6

ON ENGAGING THE RADIO LISTENER

Laura Wright

Introduction

For fifteen years I broadcasted fortnightly live 20-minute talks on the history of London language on local radio (BBC Radio London, although the station went through various name changes over that period), and for five years I participated in a multi-person edited programme-series on present-day English, interviewing linguists and non-linguists on British national radio (Radio 4). Over a 30-year academic career, I estimate I have given more broadcasts than lectures, because radio stations don't keep academic terms. Certain topics stand out as engaging the listener more than others, and in this chapter, I reflect on why this might be. Before that, I explain how I began broadcasting, and I finish with some reflections on my experience.

How I began

I began radio broadcasting in 1999 when there were no linguists that I was aware of on my local BBC station. However, I thought there was a match between my specialism, the history of London English, and the station's remit, so I phoned the station – then named GLR – and was eventually invited to contribute. Luck was involved, as I had managed to get through to the right person. After the first interview in August I phoned back, and in October was invited to give a series of six talks. After the first couple, the series idea was dropped and I was asked to keep coming fortnightly.

At first, I was very nervous – although I have always found all lecturing, seminar-leading and tutoring nerve-wracking, so for me, broadcasting was simply business as usual. However live broadcasting is in my experience far easier than edited broadcasting, and this is because once prepared, I know more or less what

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I'm going to say, and if I get it wrong, I can more or less live with my own errors. What is far harder to reconcile is when my words are cut immediately before the recording of an edited programme on a run-through (which can feel brutal) or when I don't manage to respond when another participant says something with which I disagree. For example, if a non-linguist expresses the opinion that regional accents are lazy or declares that they can't stand Received Pronunciation (RP), I would want to explain that every native speaker has an accent encoded for social class – and usually place too – although I would try not to express this quite so baldly (and 'native speaker' is a technical phrase to be avoided on radio). But during the recording, it can be hard to say what you want when other participants are intent on holding the floor, especially as it's in the nature and training of professional presenters and non-academic guests to have confident projecting personalities – it's why they're there. The producer whispering in my headphones may be urgently exhorting me to say something, yet I can't manage to get a word in. There again, both academic and non-academic guests can also be reticent due to nerves, and that can make for its own set of difficulties when they don't come out with what they were invited on to the programme for. As an academic, I'm used to having control over my own words, and this is something that gets relinquished in edited broadcasting. I never listen to edited broadcasts and this is partly in order not to be upset by that lack of control.

I regard what I do as light entertainment. It's not teaching, it's storytelling; but the story is factual and about language. I prefer to present my own research rather than report other people's because I find that telling the audience about other people's research amounts to teaching without the necessary apparatus: you can't give credit or references, you can't use technical terminology, and you can't explain why the topic is relevant or how it relates to other areas. Radio broadcasting isn't university education, so you can't really say something as basic as 'in 1974, a linguist called Peter Trudgill went round the city of Norwich noting whether people said *-in* or *-ing* at the end of their words,' because both the date and personal name would be candidates for cutting in an edited recording. It's understandable: talks are recorded for considerably longer than the transmission slot allows, and the editor has to decide what to omit – and that sentence was just as comprehensible without the date and personal name. The audience doesn't need to hear it; they're not going to be examined. I think of linguistic terms like 'morphology' or 'complementary distribution' as the sort of professional jargon to be avoided, but one editor forbade me to use the phrase 'first attestation' as, apparently, it sounds too off-putting. On the local BBC station, I was given carte-blanche with regard to topics, and the only imposition was keeping to time (although even there I was once told to back off on the Anglo-Norman for a bit). But on the national station, I had no say other than pitching ideas and, occasionally, one was taken up.

Local radio stations are informal, noisy, messy places. I had to learn to deal with the turned-up volume of the broadcasting going on before my slot – presenter, guests, pre-recorded trails, music, news, other sports/travel/weather bulletins, all of which the Producer needs to hear so they can't be muted, and much through-traffic of station personnel and previous and following guests coming and going with discarded paper cups and other detritus – and try to concentrate on preparing for what I was about to say. Interruption is the norm in that environment, and the time-slot makes a difference to the surroundings. For some years I was on towards the end of the programme, meaning that one production team was closing down as another was setting up so that the room was fraught with people with conflicting agendas. However, the Producer's area has grown noticeably quieter as financial cuts over the last couple of decades have reduced runners and other personnel, although guests' agents can still be distracting as they regard their client's interests as paramount (I've heard many a Producer be super-tactful to artists' handling agents), and well-known guests who don't travel alone bring a whole entourage into a very small area. I've worked in local radio studios in Marylebone, Bush House and, what was originally unofficially referred to by BBC employees as Egon Ronay House (although it's since undergone another official name change), at Portland Place. All were small, noisy and crowded – Bush House in particular, despite the grandeur of its architecture, was broadcast out of a broom cupboard. By contrast, the Radio 4 environment is very quiet, and the studio and production areas are spacious. The grand Old Broadcasting House building at Portland Place has separate studio managers to drive the recording desk, and Producers to script and decide what you say. They, in turn, have committees above them making executive decisions about topics and speakers. Compared to academic life, it is hierarchical, and people change jobs in a way unknown in universities. Programmes come up for tender, and BBC employees go through anxious periods defending their programme against competing companies' pitches, with the implication that if the outside bid is successful they lose their jobs. As a contributing presenter at Radio 4, I'm the lowest in the chain; my job is to turn up on time and say what has been agreed and scripted, although mostly not by me.

Academic guests can be overwhelmed by the imposing BBC buildings, the studio environment, well-known faces and daunting audience numbers. I have no trick for overcoming this, other than not thinking about it. Also, academics are not really used to receiving orders, whereas Producers really will direct 'say this' or 'do not say this.' Academics often bring lots of paper with them (notes to self), and it's not helpful when they then hunch down, staring at the desktop rather than concentrating on what the interviewer is saying. Radio works at a much faster pace than academia, and once the talk is over it's over – you're hustled straight out the building and spat onto the street within a minute of finishing recording.

On local radio, my schedule was usually fortnightly and I worked out my talks in detail beforehand. I would always arrive early, prowl about, make myself a cup of tea, wander over to the administrative area and say hello as a way of psychologically settling in, so that I was in the right frame of mind for broadcasting live. By contrast on national radio, the producer might not get me the script until the night before, and there have been some tricky situations when the linguistics required emergency correction. On not a few occasions, I have had to stand my ground and insist that something in the script was inaccurate and not fit for transmission, making myself unpopular with the production team. And I've also made myself unpopular with academic guests, who sometimes prioritise academic work over their radio commitment – especially at exam time when we are trained to regard marking as sacrosanct – whereas a broadcast tomorrow needs urgent and full attention today.

Unlike local radio, there's no making yourself at home at Radio 4. Pre-booked 'woffices' (as they are called), for script run-throughs, are usually in use by someone else who has to be ejected after a civil little argument ('Oh I thought it was free,' 'No I'm afraid we booked it,' 'That's odd, I'm sure I checked, and it was free,' 'Well I'll just check with Tony,' 'Oh no, I'll leave'); coffee is only available if you brought it in with you; and something that used to be easy has now become difficult. Everyone's pass opens some doors and not others. My Radio 4 co-presenter and I have often waited behind a glass door looking at further doors marked 'ladies' and 'gents,' waiting for someone with the requisite pass to let us through.

Some topics that have engaged listeners over the years

In 2001 I spoke on the etymology of the main London truce-term variant *fainites* on local BBC London radio. (A 'truce-term' is a word expressed, often with fingers crossed, when a young child needs to obtain momentary respite from a chasing game, thereby conferring temporary immunity. They vary around the country and may be dying out.) Listeners rang or emailed the station to say either that they recalled this word from their childhood or to give me their own truce-terms.[1] Radio broadcasts do not constitute controlled linguistic questionnaires, of course, and the information gleaned doesn't constitute data in the academic sense – few listeners reported the date, place of usage or their age when they used the term. Nor did they give relevant social facts – such as whether their school was state, private or public, which in twentieth-century Britain correlated broadly with social class.[2] However several listeners reported variants with word-initial *v*-, which I had never come across before; so the following broadcast, I invited the *v*-reporting listeners to tell me when and where they recalled using their *v*- onset variant. I received 53 emails that contained such information (there were further responses that omitted the when or the where, and responses by phone too, but they were not recorded).

The industry standard for audience ratings is known as RAJAR figures (Radio Joint Audience Research, https://www.rajar.co.uk/), where invited individuals select from a list of radio programmes the ones they might listen to in a given period, and the information is then scaled up. Listenerships vary considerably according to what season, day of the week and time they are broadcast, so that the edited programme I participate in, for example, which often has a repeat

TABLE 6.1 *Fainites* lexeme, *v*-variants, reported by email by listeners in the London region, 2001.

veinites 14	vaneyknights 1	veanines 1
vainites 10	vane-its 1	vainies 1
vanites 2	vane-ites 1	vaneys 1
veignites 2	veinlights 3	vaynies 1
vainights 1	vain lights 2	vienies 1
vein-ites 1	vainlights 1	vieneyes 1
vey-nites 1	veinlites 1	vainees 1
vain knights 1	vein lights 1	vanes 1
vay, knights 1	vaynards 1	

broadcast each week it is transmitted, has different audience figures for its two transmissions. Therefore, in order to judge how appealing a topic has been, the number of solicited responses received has to be compared with other responses received for the same programme on the same day of the week in the same season at the same time. The norm in this case is around 6–10 responses, which usually come in over the following ten minutes (and nowadays responses come in again when people listen later online, which is often at the weekend, although that facility wasn't operative in 2001). 53+ responses over a period of several days constituted, in context, an exceptional audience reaction.

Written data for this word does not predate 1870, but that does not mean that it originated then. The *Oxford English Dictionary* follows the *English Dialect Dictionary* of 1898–1905 in deriving *fainites* from *fain* v.,[2] which it considers to be the same as *fen* v.,[2] which it says 'is usually taken to be a corruption of' *fend* v., which in turn is a shortened form of *defend* v. The comment 'usually taken to be' refers, I think, to the fact that *OED* is following the *English Dialect Dictionary* here, which was the first to derive *fain* from *fen*, from Middle English *fend* 'to forbid,' from Anglo-Norman *defendre*. I disagree with this etymology. I suggest instead *OED* feign v. 13, 'to shirk, flinch, hang back,' from Anglo-Norman *feindre*, in the sense of *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* feindre 1. 5. 'to turn a blind eye to, not to notice,' issued as an imperative, so that *fainites* or 'fain I' means 'turn a blind eye to me, don't notice me,' with epenthetic /t/ in the final syllable (notice that variants without /t/ were also reported). My disagreement with *OED* here has nothing to do with listeners' responses; rather, the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* didn't exist when Joseph Wright compiled the *English Dialect Dictionary*, and as a *fainites* user in early childhood myself, I can confirm that the Anglo-Norman 'ignore me' sense makes for a far better fit than a meaning of 'forbid.'

The *v*-initial forms in Table 6.1 show the historic sound-change known as 'Southern Voicing.' This is where word-initial and medial /s/ was realised as /z/, /θ/ as /ð/ and /f/ as /v/ in the late Old English and Early Middle English period in the Southern counties of England, reaching up as far as Staffordshire, and then retreating down to the Southern counties in the fifteenth century, although with sporadic words joining the group from time to time so that a *v*-onset need have no dating implication (an example of a word joining the sound-change late is the place-name *Vauxhall*, which Wakelin and Barry (1968: 62) show to be an eighteenth-century change from *Faukeshale*). In this case, both listeners and I learnt from the audience's collective responses.

Another topic to elicit a larger-than-normal audience reaction was the history of house-names. I presented broadcasts on historic house-names on both local and national radio in several programmes transmitted between 2011 and 2018, giving both a historical overview and discussing (on local radio only) specific house-names, their original bestowers and the reasons for their choices. This time, I did not solicit any information from the audience. Nevertheless, listeners emailed to report either their family house-names or ones that they had seen, and they continued to do so for a considerable time after the broadcasts. On publishing a monograph on the topic (Wright 2020), my book received notices in newspapers and magazines. One popular weekly magazine (*The Economist*) was still receiving Letters to the Editor a month after publication, again, mostly reporting readers' own house-names or those of people they knew, mostly to jocular effect.

Linguists work on systemic relationships of all sorts, but the public at large ignores most of it. Words are the most salient part of language for the general public, and both of these broadcasts were essentially about words. However, I have also received strong audience responses from broadcasts on phonology, such as when I played a BBC archive recording of Stepney youths interviewed in 1960. My purpose was to demonstrate variation. Here's a bit of the transcript, although what doesn't come over in print is the interviewer's RP accent versus the East End accent of the teenagers:

> *Interviewer Jack de Manio:*
> When you go to the barber, erm, now you've got a particularly distinctive **h**airstyle because your **h**air is brushed forward, and it's cut fairly close to the **h**ead, well what d'you say to the barber when you want it cut like that?
>
> *Youth A:*
> Well, I go up to **'im** and I say, well I'd like a 'college boy,' not too long at the back, and not too short in the front, and er, not too long in the sideboards, and **'e**, **'e** does it for you don't **'e**.
>
> *Jack de Manio:*
> And what d'you pay to **h**ave it done like that?
>
> *Youth A:*
> Well, it's all depend, all depends, what you want you might **'ave** – want a shampoo, **'airblow**, or whatever you want. Well if you **'ave** an **'aircut**, a shampoo and a blow it will cost you 7/6, all the style and all that; but if you, if you just want an ordinary **'aircut** it cost you 2/6, 3 bob.

> *Jack de Manio:*
> You've got your **h**air cut in a very distinctive way, what made you choose that particular pattern if I might put it that
>
> *Youth B:*
> Well when I was at school, we all, they got us all in the **'all** one day you see, and that was when we **'ad** all the, all the sides swept back this was about three years ago that we **'ad** all the sides swept back and all the front coming forward, Tony Curtis style, so they got us all in the **'all**, the boys with that **h**airstyle, and they measured our **h**air, and said we mustn't **'ave** it that long, so everybody said come on let's all go and have a 'college boy,' so we all went, went and had a 'college boy.' And it caught, it just caught on everywhere it just caught on.

Jack de Manio was categorically *h*-ful, Youth A was categorically *h*-less, and Youth B was variable. But what amused the listening public was the old-fashioned sound of Jack de Manio's RP and his delightful 'if I might put it that …,' along with personal memories of school-day dress regulations. I drew attention to variation between word-medial [k] in *nicked* and a glottal stop in *nicker*:

> *Jack de Manio:*
> And and how much do you pay for shoes? You've got some very smart pointy shoes on now, what would they cost you?
>
> *Youth A:*
> They was nicked.
>
> *Youth B:*
> Two quid.
>
> *Jack de Manio:*
> You told me you paid more for yours.
>
> *Youth C:*
> Seven nicker or so.

Again, the hilarity value was caused by the contrast between the 'official' old-fashioned accent and choice of lexis of the BBC interviewer versus the disrespectful teenagers and their informal 'nicked,' 'quid' and 'nicker.' The pragmatics of the voice of authority being so audaciously undercut by these cheeky youngsters was still resonant for the audience half a century on, outweighing any interest I might have stirred with my observations about word-medial /k/ and glottal replacement.

> *Jack de Manio:*
> You wear very very smart up to date pointed shoes with stiletto heels, what do they cost you?
>
> *Girl:*
> Bout four, four ten.
>
> *Youth A:*
> I don't like long points on girls, make 'em look ugly. I like the short points what they buy in the shop.
>
> *Youth B:*
> They should make the girls, a girl's foot, a girl, there was a time, there was a time when a girl's foot, they were proud to have small feet but now, all the girls, all the girls nowadays, all want big feet! Now you look at some girls' shoes now, you, they, she says we go to ex- the boys go to the extremes sometimes, but you look at a girl's shoes sometimes, look about, they talk about Marty Wilde, well these girls, I never seen anything like it. They they walk about dirty great long points on 'em!

Youth B's crescendo of complaint delighted the listeners and again, it was due to hearing unexpected regional dialect and regional accent (which still sounds relatively current) contrasted with the interviewer's RP accent, Standard English grammar and sentence structure (which now sounds very old-fashioned, and that has its own kind of charm or amusement value) – plus, of course, Youth B's offended certainty about how girls ought to be shod. He structured his indignant objection in a way that would never be scripted but which was entirely coherent, with three pronouns where written English stipulates one ('you, they, she says'), rhetorical devices ('a girl,' 'there was a time,' 'talk about Marty Wilde,' 'I never seen anything like it') and what nowadays might seem a rather surprising cause for such concern ('a girl's foot'). I didn't analyse these things in the way I would in a classroom though – radio is not undergraduate education.

Reflections

Popular media requires no commitment, rather like newspaper horoscopes. Magazine readers or radio listeners are not necessarily interested in the topic, they didn't choose it, and they're not fully concentrating, simultaneously talking over the radio or TV, being in a car or reading their phones in a waiting area, etc. The audience has to be able to pick up the topic instantly, even when not paying full attention. Words for simple concepts fit this bill, but so does anything that can be explained quickly and simply, such as *h*-deletion or variation. With house-names and truce-terms, the audience can play the role of expert, having some purchase with their own life-experience. Usually specialist information is dispatched *de haut en bas* to the audience and runs the risk of patronising. With house-names and truce-terms people felt moved to contribute their own grain of sand (as the Spanish say), thereby creating a collective conversation – not exactly two-way, but not as passive as being a member of an audience usually is. Collective amusement is especially powerful, as it is pleasant to laugh but even more pleasant to laugh along with others. Jocular house-names keep on giving, mid-twentieth century accents provoke smiles. The pleasure of nostalgia, of examining one's own past, has proved to be a strong motivator. It is surprising, in an agreeable way, to hear the voices of yesteryear and to hear how much an accent has changed over one's lifetime. It is fulfilling to hear about something unexamined that's been there all along. One reader of a notice about my book in a magazine (*The New Yorker*) contacted me to explain that belonging to what he perceived as the wrong social class for it, he felt unable to bestow a name upon his house as it seemed to him to be socially aspirational, but having now read about house-naming history he felt freed from this prejudice and could commemorate his region of origin and honour his forebears by naming his house in urban Hertfordshire after his Welsh grandfather's farm. This act of naming was particularly poignant for him, as the area where his grandfather's farm stood has since been built over and its name has been lost. These particular topics tell the audience something about themselves, their ancestors, their culture, how they came to make the linguistic choices they did and what they now feel, looking back, realising they have been on life's journey. At the time of recording, the teddy-boy movement was portrayed in the media as threatening, but by the twenty-first century, these teenagers' voices were interpreted as charming and humorous and were received by the listeners with affection.

Entertainment is key, and that probably does make it harder for linguists who specialise in more abstract modelling to present their material on radio. For reasons I don't really understand, radio producers tend to shy away from greater time-depths, so that they will accept a talk on Victorian words more readily than a talk on Indo-European – though whether audiences really share that preference I don't know. I ended up studying house-names in depth, and it was noticeable that Radio 4 Editors, magazine article writers and newspaper journalists reporting my findings all devoted most of their available space to present-day house-names and practically ignored the facet I found most interesting: that is, in specific parts of Britain, house-names can be traced a long way back in time. This might be related to a prejudice I have repeatedly encountered in radio, which is avoidance of anything deemed too regional – or in a local radio context, anything deemed too suburban, even though regions and suburbs are where most people live. The same local radio Producer who told me to avoid talking about suburbs also told me not to talk about churches, on the grounds that they are boring – and I now realise that what I said earlier about having carte-blanche on local radio isn't true, and that I must have internalised the rules. Not being boring is perhaps the overarching rule of radio, and my sense of what bores versus Editors' and Producers' opinions doesn't always coincide.

Finally, the topic I haven't considered here is the bugbear that all linguists have to deal with, which is the universal ignorance of the laity about our profession. Only linguists know what we do and why we do it, and that goes for radio editors, producers and presenters and print journalists too, so that even with goodwill (and I have worked on programmes where there is much goodwill towards linguistic matters) there can be complete and total incomprehension when I come out with something that to me seems uncontroversial or uncomplicated but evidently isn't. As linguists, we have probably all met with resistance when we blithely opine that 'all accents are equal,' or 'spelling isn't important,' or 'it doesn't matter if infinitives are split,' or 'good speakers don't speak in sentences' (I'd offer Youth B as proof of this, but I would almost certainly have to defend my opinion as to why I think he was an effective speaker). My view is that it is incumbent on linguists to explain their work clearly and quickly, and again, this is probably easier for those of us who deal with words and sounds than for linguists who study more abstract concepts. As a discipline, we do believe we have relevant and timely offerings, but we also have to try to understand that the public at large has never heard of our work and has not been trained to think like us and that some of the things we take for granted are even taboo (social class, for example, can't be tackled in real life with the frank expression of the classroom; non-linguists spent their school careers being trained to write in Standard English and don't always respond well to being told that many of their hard-learnt 'rules' can be dispensed with). It is not easy for linguists to think like non-linguists, but this is probably the clue to successful communication with the media.

Notes

1 Much has been repeated in a chinese-whispers fashion on the etymology of *fainites*, which I present in Wright (2008). The twentieth-century distribution of listeners' childhood *fainites* usage was revealed as the London area and the surrounding counties, including the post-war new towns to which many Londoners were relocated, but this simply reflects the station reach and the actual distribution may have been greater. The snapshot is of listeners who were very young children in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

2 State school: working class and lower-middle class; Private school: middle and upper-middle class; Public school: upper-middle and upper class.

7

WRITING A 'POPULAR SCIENCE' BOOK

Jane Setter

Introduction

In 2016, Michael Gove, then UK Justice Secretary, claimed that 'people in this country have had enough of experts' (Mance 2016). And yet, at that time, the goal was that a high proportion of school leavers should attend higher education courses to develop specialist expertise and transferrable skills.

Gove's statement, however ridiculous, does raise a number of questions. For example: What is the point of academics in the UK, particularly if members of the government believe our comment is not wanted? What is the usefulness of all the expertise we have spent our working (and sometimes social and family) lives developing? How can we contribute usefully to society if the government itself is not seen to value or act on our input?

This chapter is about my experience of the challenges of writing what is known as a 'popular science' book – i.e. *Your Voice Speaks Volumes: It's Not What You Say, but How You Say It* (Setter, 2019). It looks at how my experience of being invited to comment as an expert in various non-academic fora led to the writing of this book and aims to answer the questions I have just posed. In so doing, I will adopt the kind of style preferred by publishers for books of this kind.

Before going any further, I think it is worth defining this use of the term 'popular.' 'Popular' in this sense refers to work that is intended for the general public, not intellectuals or subject specialists. So, a 'popular science' book is not necessarily a science book which is popular with a lot of people (although, of course, the royalties are nice if it turns out to be popular in that sense), but a book on a scientific and/or intellectual subject written for the general public.

And yes, I have been teased for apparently claiming my book is popular!

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My research background

Possibly the most interesting part of my engagement with the media has been that, up to now, nobody – and I cannot think of a single instance – got in touch with me because of my research interests.

So, what are these interests, and why are they … uninteresting?

My research has principally been on suprasegmental features of speech (e.g. intonation and rhythm), looking at global varieties of English – e.g. Hong Kong, Singapore, Malay and Botswanan Englishes – and learner Englishes – e.g. Japanese and Vietnamese learners – and children with Williams and Down syndromes.

As with most things in my life – including being an academic – I got into these areas in a rather roundabout way. By accident, if you like.

After finishing my first degree, I was convinced that my life would be dedicated to English language teaching (ELT). I had had jobs teaching English to a range of students during my summer vacations and had realised I had a talent for it. I decided to go and teach English in Japan for two years to get enough experience to do an MA in ELT with a view to going into ELT curriculum development and management. But while I was doing my MA, my life took an interesting turn.

My MA dissertation (in 1992) was an investigation of whether a comparative analysis of Japanese and English phonology was enough to predict learner pronunciation errors among Japanese learners of English. I had recorded several speakers while in Japan and already done a broad and narrow phonetic transcription of the speech. My supervisor was impressed enough with my work to mention me to Peter Roach, who was looking for an editorial assistant to work on a new edition of what is now the *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary* (Jones, 2011). I was offered the job … and the rest is history.

From this position, I began to work with Peter and colleagues on a research project looking at intonation in emotional speech, and thus began my journey into suprasegmental research. Mindful that I would not be able to get a lectureship in the UK without a PhD, I registered for one working on an offshoot of the project, only to then be offered an Assistant Professor position in Hong Kong. Peter – my supervisor – and I realised the equipment I needed to carry on with that PhD topic was not available where I was going, so he suggested I work on Hong Kong English speech rhythm instead, using the free speech analysis software Speech Filing System (SFS) from University College London.[1] Initially, and being in a department which was also providing in-sessional English language tuition on programmes across the university, I approached it from an ELT angle – i.e. that English in Hong Kong is a learner language. But I soon realised that the situation was more complex than that; in the context of postcolonialism, English in Hong Kong is an emergent new global variety. This got me interested in the phonology of global Englishes.

Arriving back in the UK some years later, PhD in hand, I began to discuss suprasegmentals with colleagues in speech and language therapy at the University of Reading. I teamed up with Vesna Stojanovik, who had been working on grammatical aspects in the language of children with Williams syndrome,[2] and we won some grants to look at the role of suprasegmental features in the development of language in that and other clinical populations. Since then, my work with PhD students and colleagues in Hong Kong and Malaysia has led to a number of research ventures.

As any academic would, I have won research grants, presented at conferences and published journal articles, book chapters and entire books in these areas. I have been cited by colleagues all over the world in their research publications and acted as external examiner for PhDs nationally and internationally, and so consider these areas of study to be valuable and of interest to my academic community.

Nobody in the media is remotely interested in my research topics … but, in order to be in a position to do public engagement – to be that expert – I had to develop my general knowledge and skills in phonetic research and inquiry in an academic context. That is what I am putting to use in my public engagement. If I am called upon by the media to comment, it is not on Hong Kong English speech rhythm or whether word stress supports atypical children's ability to learn and process lexical items. It is on the pronunciation of specific words (e.g. *lido*), accents and accent prejudice (e.g. has the Queen's pronunciation changed over the years? Has Meghan Markle (the Duchess of Sussex) changed her accent since getting together with Prince Harry? Why was one MP so rude to another about his Scottish accent?[3] What accent was Jihadi John using, and what can that tell us about him?), voice quality (e.g. what is 'sexy baby voice'? Is it true that men can't make their voices sound sexy?) and general prescriptivism (e.g. use of apostrophes). These are the things that non-academics find interesting enough about speech for broadcasters to get excited about them. Fortunately, I find them interesting, too, and am more than happy to talk about them; in fact, I discuss some of them later in this chapter.

Why do broadcasters contact me to discuss linguistic matters?

There is always the little voice in the back of my head that says that the media will speak to anyone to make it look like they have an informed opinion on things, whether or not they then completely twist the message to their own ends. But, as well as contacting me directly, journalists and producers do actually call the university and ask for me. I must be doing a reasonable job. Or maybe they just know I'm a performer at heart (I am a rock vocalist, after all).

My ability to engage the general public on academic matters first became evident when I was giving subject talks at university open days. Those talks would be packed. Packed! People from the university admissions and events teams would come and sit at the back of the room for my talks without introducing themselves at the start, only to approach me at the end and confess that they'd been told by one or more other members of staff to go and watch my talk as an example of good practice in engaging people from a range of backgrounds. Well, I have taught English to students from three years old to retirement age and am a strong believer in involving the audience – whether it's students or anyone else – so I guess that's how I developed that skill. I have found that class and/or audience participation creates buy-in and a sense of community so, by inviting people to give me examples from their own experience, it makes it relevant to them and enables the subject to come alive. Students and their accompanying others (usually parents) would become engaged in the discussion in a very lively way and then approach me later in the day on campus to say how good the talk had been and, often, to raise another point. Prospective students who had come to the university to hear about a completely unrelated topic would announce that they had attended my talk by chance and now wanted to study English language and linguistics. I had got them fired up. I had effortlessly (it seemed) communicated how fascinating, valuable and interdisciplinary this area of study is, making it relevant to the maximum number of people possible in the room, while walking a fine line between entertainment and education. I was doing 'edutainment' – an oft-vilified term – and doing it rather well.

It became known to the comms team at my university that I was happy to chat with media people on topics related to speech and the English language. After one or two referrals via the comms team, media folk started to contact me directly. The discussion often centred around prescriptivism of one kind or another, with me called in as an expert to make some kind of judgement call. I try to make my contributions informative but accessible and as balanced as possible; for example, I usually do a bit of research before contributing and try to present more than one viewpoint if I can. The point for me is to educate, and I take every opportunity to do that. After my appearances, a number of people would email me, phone me or engage on social media to take me to task over something or say how much they had enjoyed listening to my point of view. The engagement was, therefore, evident.

Possibly my most prominent media appearances occurred when I was asked to comment on the provenance of the terrorist known as Jihadi John by Associated Press. The television news piece I did, offering a (very broad) profile based on the speaker's voice, was syndicated to news channels all over the world.[4] I also did a spot for the BBC.

More recently, I have appeared in the Channel 5 documentary *The Queen in Her Own Words* (broadcast 18 July 2020), commenting on changes in the late Queen's accent since she began official royal duties. Viacom, the company that made the programme, sent me various clips of the Queen since just prior to the start of her reign up to the Christmas message of 2019; they asked me to evaluate changes that had taken place over time – particularly since the 1980s, as research had not looked at changes past that decade (see Harrington et al. 2000). Filming took place at the University of Reading. I think my performance background and experience being interviewed for television on other topics helped me to enjoy the experience rather than finding it nerve-wracking. Viacom were so happy with my contribution that they asked me to work on another programme with them. Watching myself on TV when the programme came out has reminded me that I need to smile more when speaking passionately about a subject. It's also interesting to see what was used in the programme and what got left out. Viacom recorded a lot of footage and asked me a range of questions, including why I thought there had been changes in the Queen's accent over time and the public's changing opinion of accents, like the Queen's and Received Pronunciation (RP), which is often associated with upper-class speakers of English in Britain. In the end, they mainly used my specific comments on the Queen's pronunciation, which is what they had originally asked me for, and it worked well as a contribution to the programme.

Some linguistics topics are more interesting to the public than others

As with the press, the public does not seem to be remotely interested in my research. The British Library was kind enough to interview me for their exhibition *Evolving English: The Future of English* in 2010/11, on the subject of English as a global language and international lingua franca (I appeared as a talking head, alongside David Crystal and Jenny Jenkins), but even then, I did not talk specifically about phonological features of English in Hong Kong, for example.

The sort of thing that seems to rouse the interest of the general public on which I can comment tends to be aligned with tribalism and identity and, particularly, perceived threats presented by the way a person speaks (although I have been asked to comment on non-speech matters such as punctuation, which fall generally into the remit of English language). These perceived threats often result in speakers being ridiculed for having a particular accent or voice quality or arise from general concerns about language change and 'standards.' We are therefore mostly looking at linguicism – or accentism – and prescriptivism. Interest is particularly peaked if a celebrity or terrorist is involved.

For example, actor and television personality Donna Air was having a really hard time of it in the media a few years ago because various people had perceived changes in the way she spoke. Donna was appearing on the television show *Dancing on Ice*, and it had been noticed that she seemed to be 'going back' to her Tyneside accent. Prior to this, she had been dating the Duchess of Cambridge's brother, James Middleton, and had been the subject of extreme ridicule by the discussants on the daytime television show *Loose Women* for changes in her accent which made her sound posh. I was contacted by a national newspaper and asked to comment, the angle being that this person was a social climber (identity threat) who was now attempting to backtrack since moving out of the royal social circle by using more of her local accent features to endear herself to the public. I explained what the changes had been in her accent over time (yes, it did sound like she was using more of her original accent features) but avoided getting drawn into discussion of the motivations.

More recently, the UK's former Home Secretary Priti Patel has been criticised for features of the way she speaks which include using /n/ instead of /ŋ/ at the ends of words mainly ending *-ing*. This feature is simultaneously associated with very upper-class Received Pronunciation (think: huntin', shootin' and fishin') and working-class accents like Cockney. Patel's use of it has interested, for example, Twitter[5] and Mumsnet,[6] where the comments are generally along the lines of how annoying this feature is. However, nobody seems to be remotely interested in (as I write) Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab's speech, which includes a feature many still regard as a speech impediment, that being the labio-dental /r/ sound (the phonetic symbol is [ʋ]). In fact, his speech is not unlike that of Rik Mayal's politician character Alan B'Stard from late 1980s British sitcom *The New Statesman*. It is not entirely clear what marks Patel out for ridicule about her speech, but it cannot go unnoticed that she is female, Asian, and the daughter of immigrants; women are much more likely to be criticised for the way they speak,[7] what has been referred to as 'structural racism' is also known to play a part,[8] and Britain would probably not have voted to leave the European Union (EU) were anti-immigrant sentiments not so widespread in the UK. Raab's speech features, therefore, could be escaping criticism because he is male, white and posh-sounding.

Earlier, I mentioned Jihadi John. It was of immense interest to the media and to the public that his English accent was British. One of the things I was repeatedly asked about was whether he could be an immigrant – not a surprising question given the strength of anti-immigrant feeling in the UK. I could not state categorically that he was or was not an immigrant – and, in fact, decided instead to focus on whether he was likely to be a first or second language speaker of English – but his accent was a UK accent: Multicultural London English (MLE). This accent itself is a mixture of features from Cockney and global Englishes from places like Jamaica, Greece, India and Pakistan; as a new accent, it has had a lot of interest from researchers who are looking at it objectively from the point of view of language change. The right-wing media, however, sees the development of MLE as the negative effect of immigration on the English language. One article in *The Telegraph*, whose journalist had interviewed a sociophonetician, seemingly in good faith, blatantly blames immigrants for changes in the pronunciation through the persistent use of features it views as negative, substandard and ugly such as *th*-stopping[9] (producing /θ ð/ as [t d] or [t̪ d̪]); in fact, *th*-stopping has been around in home-grown accents, such as Cockney, for many, many years.

Another area that piqued the interest of the public recently was whether English will continue to be used in the EU political arena after Britain had left. In some ways, I find it extraordinary that people were desperate to 'Get Brexit Done' on the one hand but, on the other, see as an affront the suggestion that English might not continue to be used in the European Parliament. I have written for *The Guardian* on this issue[10] and see it as unlikely that English will be abandoned as a language of the EU, at least as a working language, not because it has anything to do with Britain, but more that English is currently the most widely spoken language in the world, largely because of the rise of the US during the last century.

There are some positive stories on which the public seems to be interested in expert comment, but these are much fewer and far between than stories highlighting concerns. Examples of more fun things I have been asked to comment on include the pronunciation of the word *lido* following the opening of the Thames Lido in Reading in 2018 (do you say 'lee-doh' or 'lye-doh'?) and – as mentioned above – what changes there were in the late Queen's pronunciation since she took up royal duties and started to make public, televised addresses to the nation and the Commonwealth. I don't think *lido* had necessarily been anywhere near a celebrity … but the Queen is about as high-profile as it gets. I also published an article in *The Conversation* (a website offering independent news and interest articles contributed by academics and co-authored with journalists) with Adrian Leeman and Sam Kirkham on the Duchess of Sussex's pronunciation, as it had been suggested she was sounding more British.[11] It turned out that vowels were probably not at the heart of this perceived change, but we speculated that intonation might have a role to play. It was nice to be able to write something objective about the Duchess in the light of all the negative publicity she has received at the hands of some of the British press.

Strategies for writing for a popular audience

In 2015, after much thought about the point of being an academic, I decided to write a popular science book. This was partly at the suggestion of David Crystal, who has written over 100 books and has been jolly successful at it. Having had a bit of media exposure, which I'd enjoyed, I had a chat with David about how I could promote myself to do more public engagement, and he suggested that writing a popular science book might help raise my profile. I decided that I wanted to use my knowledge, expertise and communication skills to demonstrate how the study of phonetics can lead to an understanding of issues that permeate British society and have relevance in other global contexts. I wanted to show how looking at the way people speak has links to other disciplines, such as history, geography, education, health and wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, the law and science. And I wanted to produce something which might be read by prospective students of linguistics and their families; I knew precious little about phonetics and speech while I was at school from talking to teachers, it seemed that there might be an opportunity to help fill that gap.

I feel enormously lucky to have had David Crystal put me in touch with a commissioning editor at Oxford University Press (OUP). I was surprised that they might be interested in the project I had in mind as I do not associate OUP with popular science books, but it turns out they publish in that area, too. I produced a proposal and a sample chapter (on forensic speaker comparison) and, after review, the book was commissioned in 2016. I finished the draft of the manuscript in September 2018 and, after revision, copy-editing and proof-reading, the book appeared in October 2019.

I suspect OUP is not alone in sending out instructions for authors from academic backgrounds who are writing popular science books, and the main issue is one of accessibility in terms of writing style. If I publish a research paper, it is only really accessible to other academics. Despite the requirement that all grant-funded research outputs are available in one form or another on open access, the academic style that research papers have to be written in does not make them page-turners unless one is fully fluent in the jargon of a particular subject area, which can be very niche indeed. Even then, many papers are (sorry, colleagues) a rather dry read, even if the research is ground-breaking – and you have to know where to look for them. I want people outside of academia to know how what we are doing with research in this broad, social science area is relevant to everyday life – because it *is* relevant to everyday life and in so many ways. In order to do this, I had to produce something accessible, which people would enjoy reading.

Fortunately, my natural writing style has always had an element of story-telling. You may have spotted this. I remember one parents' evening at my secondary school when the history teacher said I demonstrated good knowledge of the events leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War but that I had a tendency to write about Hitler and Mussolini as if they were my best friends (fortunately, my parents, who had lived through WW2, had a sense of humour).

Before I thought about writing the book, I started a blog called *A World of Englishes*.[12] My early posts on the blog platform look a bit like my university class materials. In order to make a subject more accessible to students, whose academic reading and writing skills we are developing over the time of their first degree and – possibly – into postgraduate study, I developed a pedagogic style of writing and lecturing that leaned gently towards story-telling but incorporated references in the style of academic papers. My classes are multi-media and interactive, with lots of discussion questions, in-class tasks, and use of sound files, images (including cartoons and memes) and YouTube clips. If you look at an early post on the blog, it is very much like that (with the exception of the tasks); references are incorporated in the text and listed at the end, like any piece of academic writing. As the blog developed, and I started to look at more blogs and online journalism written by academics, such as can be found on *The Conversation*, it became more relaxed in style, as if I were having a conversation with the reader, and the references dropped out to be replaced with hyperlinks where necessary.

All this prepared me well for writing a popular science book. In fact, when I received the instructions for writing such a book, the commissioning editor mentioned in her email that they didn't have any concerns about me because I 'wrote well.'

And so we return to the questions posed at the start of this chapter …

The point of academics outside of academia, in my opinion, is to provide a balanced, engaging narrative which helps people understand and discuss the issues in an evidence-based way. Popular science writing is only one way to do that, but it can open up opportunities to help you engage in other ways. In so doing, academics are making a valid contribution to society outside of our ivory towers which might just help to motivate positive change.

Top tips

So, what are my tips for writing a book aimed at the public? Read on.

- Have a very good idea of what you want to write about and why you want to write it. The 'why' is particularly important. I wanted to write my book because I felt I had a useful contribution to make to the public's understanding of (particularly) UK accents, features of speech such as voice quality and pitch, and how intrinsic speech is to each individual person in terms of identity, be it related to gender, the performing arts, region of upbringing or the use of English as an additional language. To do this, I had to write an accessible introduction to phonetics in the first chapter, which also serves as a toe in the water for anyone wanting to study linguistics at university.
- Make sure you give yourself time to write it. I had two years to produce the manuscript, and at times it was a slog. Just like an academic publication or a PhD, I had to do my research, analyse data and create a narrative. It takes time. Fortunately, my Head of Department supported me in the writing of it rather than focusing on research papers – but I was not, for instance, given a year's sabbatical to get it done. I was pretty keen to write it and have it published, though, so that motivated me to get it done.
- Read other popular science and non-fiction books – especially ones outside your area. I did read several books aimed at the public by highly successful linguistics authors David Crystal and Steven Pinker, but I also read books on medicine, history and race relations. Some of these might turn out to be helpful for other things you are working on (there is lots of history and race relations to consider in the area of post-colonial Englishes). I even read a self-help book. If these books are popular with a non-academic audience, you have something to learn from them in terms of style, even if your style is very different.
- Your publisher is your friend. Interact positively with your commissioning editor, your editorial assistant, your marketing strategists and everyone else along the way. Keep them in the loop. It's in their interest too that this book is a success. External professionals, like copy-editors and proof-readers, are also usually really interesting people to chat with.

- Say yes to any opportunity to talk about the book – particularly if one of the motivations of writing it is to get more public exposure. Aside from anything else, the more publicity you do, the more people will see you and – assuming you come over well – the more likely you are to get more work of this kind. Plus it won't harm book sales.
- Don't get disheartened by negative reviews. Actually, if someone tells me a review is negative, I tend to avoid it. I realise this goes against everything we tell students about engaging with their feedback, but when most of my reviews have been positive – with some comments on areas for improvement – I really don't see the point of allowing one person with an axe to grind to bring me down. Having said that, taking a deep breath and engaging with a negative review can help you right some wrongs when it comes to suggesting edits for the next edition.

Notes

1 https://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/resource/sfs/ (accessed 19 February 2022).

2 Williams syndrome (WS) is a rare neurodevelopmental genetic disorder that features mild learning or developmental challenges. People with WS are usually very sociable and appear to have very good verbal communication skills. This can mask other developmental problems.

3 I am appalled by this: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/video/2018/oct/18/tory-mp-fails-to-understand-glaswegian-accent-of-snps-david-linden-video (accessed 19 February 2022).

4 French YouTube channel 6Medias reports it here, for example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-q6P_yXkfow (accessed 19 February 2022).

5 e.g. https://twitter.com/crimegiri/status/1271919192283983873 (accessed 19 February 2022).

6 https://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/pedants_corner/2077339-Priti-Patel-and-her-dropped-Gs (accessed 19 February 2022).

7 See, for example, Deborah Cameron's blog *Language: A Feminist Guide* at https://debuk.wordpress.com/ (accessed 19 February 2022).

8 There is some comment on this in Reni Eddo-Lodge's book, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (Bloomsbury, 2018).

9 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/09/28/th-sound-to-vanish-from-english-language-by-2066-because-of-mult/ (accessed 19 February 2022).

10 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/27/brexit-end-english-official-eu-language-uk-brussels (accessed 19 February 2022).

11 https://theconversation.com/meghan-markle-reports-of-her-british-accent-sound-like-journalistic-licence-say-linguistics-experts-113889 (accessed 19 February 2022).

12 www.aworldofenglishes.blogspot.co.uk (accessed 19 February 2022).

8

LINGUISTICS FOR SCHOOLS

Richard Hudson

Introduction

This chapter looks at the state of play in the UK, but no doubt its conclusions also apply to other countries, and especially to other English-speaking countries.

Public engagement and language teaching

The notion of 'public engagement' is a slippery one, because there are so many different ways in which academics might engage with the public (McIntyre and Price 2018). There is even a National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement whose website at https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk offers this description:

> Public engagement is multi-faceted ... terms that people use when describing public engagement with research ... included outreach, patient-involvement, collaborative research, citizen science, participatory arts, lifelong learning, community engagement, and engagement with partners. In addition universities engage through community based learning, widening participation, corporate social responsibility etc. Whilst the purposes behind these approaches, and the processes, are different, what they all have in common is describing an aspiration to better connect the work of universities and research institutes with society.

What is strikingly absent from this list is school-age education, which surely beats every other kind of 'public engagement' for impact.

To see my point, imagine a typical higher education (HE) department – say, a department of history. The research done in this department impacts most

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obviously on the department's own teaching, since most academics spend at least some of their teaching time talking about their own research speciality. This guarantees that graduates are familiar with work that is either at, or at least near, the coal-face of cutting-edge research; and of course they also hear about research being conducted in other universities.

Now we come to the public engagement: some of these graduates become teachers in secondary schools, where they teach the latest and best in history to the next generation. Thinking quantitatively, a full-time secondary teacher is bound to teach hundreds of children: given a typical 5-lesson day and a 5-day week, the 25 lessons may be delivered to a dozen or more different groups of children each numbering typically 25–30 children; so, a single graduate teacher might teach history to at least 12 × 25 = 300 children every year. Moreover, each of these children would sit at the teacher's feet for three terms of about 12 weeks, giving 36 hours per year; so, within a given year, a single history teacher might dispense about 300 × 36 hours of experience of history – over 10,000 hours. And remember that this figure applies to each graduate teacher, so if a department produces, say, two schoolteachers each year, each of whom remains in post for 40 years, in any given year it might have 2 × 40 = 80 ambassadors, each delivering 10,000 child-hours of impact. Very few outreach activities other than peak-time television can match that amount of impact.

Moreover, the training of future teachers is very much in the interest of the history department because it helps to ensure a steady flow of enthusiastic and well-prepared school leavers who choose history for their undergraduate programme. Teaching was historically recognised as one of the careers for which our universities prepared graduates, alongside Law, Medicine and the Church. For example, Christ College Cambridge was founded in 1437 'for teaching grammar and producing qualified schoolmasters. "After taking their degrees, its members were obliged to accept any grammar-school appointment offered them at a sufficient salary"' (Gillard 2018, chap. 1). Any measure of impact should surely include the impact of graduates through their careers as schoolteachers; but this kind of impact is outside the remit of the REF (Research Excellence Framework, a periodic review of departmental research across UK universities).

But graduates aren't the only link between HE and schools. Two others are continuing professional development (CPD) and textbooks and other teaching materials. CPD is essential for updating teachers' subject knowledge, and school textbooks are an important resource for teaching. Both CPD and published teaching material should at least be deeply informed by HE research, and the best person to guarantee the subject knowledge is a specialist whose day job allows them to keep up to date. But the REF gives no credit for either of these activities, and indeed they are both actually discouraged by the combination of the REF and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) because CPD and textbook writing involve scholarship (rather than research) applied outside the department's own teaching. So, they fall between two stools and bring the department no credit – and, more importantly, no funding. This short-sighted policy discourages universities from engaging with schools and further weakens the already tenuous connections between them.

But suppose universities were given formal credit either for training future teachers or for ongoing support, such as CPD and teaching materials. How would language departments fare (compared with other subjects, such as history)? Let's include all HE departments that treat language: Foreign Languages (FL), Classics, English and Linguistics. In brief, the overall picture is gloomy. FL departments are collectively poor at producing future teachers, with just 5% of the UK's foreign-language graduates training as schoolteachers (Anon 2019) and a national shortfall of new recruits entering the profession. Classics and English both do better, but the demand for Classics is very small, and English graduates have typically been taught very little about language. And Linguistics graduates tend not to choose teaching as a career because they typically have neither a foreign language at the required standard nor enough literature training to teach English. Similar remarks apply, I believe, to the production of support material, but I have no systematic evidence.

My point, therefore, is that both schools and universities stand to gain enormously from closer links in which universities accept responsibility for training the next generation of schoolteachers and for ongoing support to schools, and schools are better able to offer universities well-qualified school leavers as undergraduates. And yet the current funding regime for UK universities positively discourages academics from either promoting school teaching as a career or producing textbooks or other support material for schoolteachers.

Given this context, it is astonishing that universities engage in any outreach at all to schools, and perhaps especially so in the area of language. And yet outreach there is, to the great credit of an encouragingly large group of enthusiasts who give time, thought and financial support to a number of projects which I describe below.

Linguistics in the Linguistics Olympiad

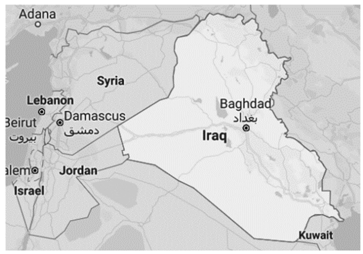
The most significant project is undoubtedly the UK Linguistics Olympiad (UKLO, www.uklo.org). This is a competition for school-age children among to the various Olympiads for mathematics, chemistry, physics, informatics, biology, astronomy, geography, philosophy and linguistics (see 'International Science Olympiads' on Wikipedia). Philosophy and linguistics stand out in this list as not being Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and, of these two, linguistics is the only Olympiad that has a presence in the UK, so it is the only competition for UK schools which is outside the traditional STEM group of subjects. That's one reason for its significance, but there are others which I'll develop below.

First, though, what does a UKLO problem look like? Here's an example from the 2020 competition, based on Babylonian cuneiform. The immediate task for competitors is to decide how the forms numbered 1–8 in the second column pair with the pronunciations and meanings A–H in the first column. It's true that the way in is easy: the cuneiform 8 is much longer than all the others, as is the pronunciation and meaning D, so they obviously correspond. But there's still plenty of hard thinking to be done. For example, is Babylonian written from left to right or right to left? Does it show pronunciations or meanings? If pronunciations, what units does it show: syllables or individual sounds? See Table 8.1.

TABLE 8.1 Babylonian cuneiform. Fonts created by Sylvie Vanséveren, available on the Hethitologie Portal Mainz.

Problem 2. Curious Cuneiform (5 marks)

Cuneiform is the oldest known writing system, dating back to about 3,400 BC. Its letters look like wedges (in Latin: *cuneus*) and were made with sharp sticks in clay tablets; they started out as pictures, but quickly became unrecognisable. It was invented in Babylon (in modern Iraq) and (unlike Egyptian hieroglyphs, which developed slightly later) it was used for writing several different languages - Babylonian, Assyrian and Sumerian. The signs shown below were used in the libraries of the seventh-century BC Assyrian king Assurbanipal for writing Babylonian words, but they have been slightly simplified, in that marks of vowel length have been missed out.



Note: š is pronounced 'sh'. In this table, the columns **do not** match; so (A) *maru* is **not** the pronunciation of Babylonian form 1.

Pronunciation and meaning	*Babylonian*	*(A-H)*
(A) *maru* 'son'	1.	
(B) *ruqu* 'distance'	2.	
(C) *qulu* 'silence'	3.	
(D) *lušepisamma* 'I will get someone to do'	4.	
(E) *ubla* 'she brought'	5.	
(F) *lanu* 'form'	6.	
(G) *nubalu* 'chariot'	7.	
(H) *balu* 'without'	8.	

Q2.1. Your first task is to work out how each Babylonian form was pronounced and to write the correct letter (A-H) in the third column.

Q2.2. Write the following in cuneiform:

9. *šeru* 'morning'	
10. *qula* 'shut up!' (addressed to a man)	

Having cracked the code, competitors then get to apply it themselves. First they work out the pronunciations of further words, and then they get to write a couple of pronunciations in cuneiform, which they find exciting – much better than staring at a sea of impenetrable cuneiform in a museum.

Mysterious scripts are popular, and every test includes one script-based problem, but most problems dive right into the heart of the language's vocabulary and grammar. For instance, take the next problem, also from the 2020 competition, but this time a lot harder. Table 8.2 shows some words from the Papiamentu language, a Creole spoken in the Caribbean and based (as you can see) on a number of different European languages. The underlined syllables are stressed (i.e. louder), and the challenge is to work out the rules for stressing a syllable. Why are some words stressed on the last syllable and others on the first, while some have no stressed syllable at all? The answer lies in the data, but competitors have to work it out for themselves, just like a linguist working on the language. Pretty dry stuff, you may think, but our competitors take it in their stride and give as much thought and attention to problems like this as they do to more sexy script problems.

In between these two extremes are a wide range of other types of problem. Perhaps the most frequent type was exemplified in 2020 by the one on Chintang, a language spoken in Nepal (Table 8.3). Here the list of Chintang sentences (1–16) has to be paired with their translations (a–p), which are given in a different order.

Here the way in is less obvious, but it lies in the two sentences containing proper names, *Chintang* (2 and l) and *Hari* (6 and o). But of course, this is just the start of a long series of guesses, confirmations and pattern-spotting; for example, it's presumably worth exploring the word *yuŋno* which occurs at the end of four of the Chintang sentences, including the one meaning 'My father is in Chintang.' Maybe *yuŋno* means 'father'? In that case there should be four English sentences containing *father*, but that's not the case, so this must be a blind alley. How about 'is'? That's much more promising because there are in fact precisely four English sentences containing *is*. So, let's assume that *yuŋno* means 'is.' And so on.

The competition is held in early February in the registered schools, and, thanks to the generous sponsorship mentioned below, it is completely free both to schools and to competitors. It is available at four levels of increasing difficulty:

TABLE 8.2 Papiamentu stress placement.

apel	apple	karson	trousers
awero	to see	kome	to eat
bèrdè	green	makamba	white man
bòter	bottle	retené	to hold back
buriku	donkey	sinta	to sit
falta	to lack	sombré	hat
hospital	hospital	yongotá	to kneel
kachó	dog		

TABLE 8.3 Chintang.

1	cuwa uthurumbeʔ yuŋno	a	There is a hole in the towel.
2	appa chintaŋbeʔ yuŋno	b	The woman has gone away.
3	sencak sie	c	The rice has been cooked.
4	wapaŋa topi wadaŋse	d	There is a hat on the head.
5	kok thuktaŋse	e	My mother-in-law slept.
6	ram hariniŋ khoŋno	f	You go to the market.
7	kʌp kedadaŋse	g	The water is in his mouth.
8	taŋbeʔ topi yuŋno	h	Joge sent a letter.
9	menwaŋa sencak sede	i	The mouse died.
10	tawelbeʔ uhoŋ yuŋno	j	The woman has bought a chicken.
11	anambaŋa cuwa thuŋno	k	The cup has been broken.
12	mechacha khadaŋse	l	My father is in Chintang.
13	jogeŋa citthi hakte	m	The rooster has put on a hat.
14	anamma imse	n	A cat killed a mouse.
15	hana bajar akhaʔno	o	Ram plays with Hari.
16	mechachaŋa wa khedoŋse	p	My father-in-law drinks water.

Breakthrough, Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced. Teachers can enter any competitor at any level, but the levels correlate roughly with Key Stages: Breakthrough for KS2 (upper primary), Foundation for KS3, Intermediate for KS4 and Advanced for KS5 (the last two years before university). I'd like to draw particular attention to the youth of our youngest competitors: Year 4, i.e. aged 8–9! This is something of which we are especially proud, but it's also important evidence that language analysis is not only for older pupils.

The logistics of the competition depends on a rather sophisticated computer interface which we have been able to have built for us, our 'portal.' The portal allows teachers to register themselves, us to distribute the test materials, and teachers and our own volunteer markers to upload their scores; and the computer can automatically provide printable certificates for competitors, including gold, silver and bronze awards, which pupils value highly. For the Advanced level we insist on strict exam conditions, and we provide volunteer external markers, but for all the lower levels we encourage relaxed conditions (including working in small teams), and teachers mark their own scripts.

Those who do well in the Advanced competition in early February are invited to take part in another round which selects the best eight to represent the UK at the International Linguistics Olympiad (www.ioling.org). The international competition dates from 2003 and typically includes about 30 countries including the US, Russia and China; but although the UK competition only started in 2010, our teams perform very well, with an impressive collection of medals; and in 2017, we fielded not only the top-scoring individual competitor but also the top-scoring team. Although this level of competition is only for the gifted few, it guarantees that our main competition is at an international level of difficulty.

Why, then, is this competition so significant as an example of impact? I've already pointed out its similarity to the STEM Olympiads, which is significant given that language is typically seen as the subject matter of the humanities. UKLO challenges not only the perceived academic superiority of STEM subjects (often described in terms of 'rigour') but the very basis for the distinction between STEM and other subjects. The thinking skills that are called upon in analysing language are very similar to those required for mathematics – a claim which is very easy to prove by looking at the very small cohort of super-performers, the teams that we select for the international competition. Nearly all our team members have chosen Mathematics as a school subject, and many of them are also champions in the Mathematics Olympiad and go on to study mathematics at university. Of course, there are some who are also studying a language at school, but the language specialists form a minority in the UK teams.

The rigorous thinking promoted by UKLO is an important argument in the ongoing debate about foreign languages – but one which is rarely mustered. If foreign languages were taught as complex systems, where the complexity was addressed head-on with clear and rigorous teaching, then they would have as good a claim as mathematics to mind-training. A foreign language is as good a gymnasium for the mind as any other complex system – and a good deal better because of its direct relevance to human thinking. Indeed, language study could be presented as a good preparation for STEM subjects, following the lead of Karl Pearson (a distinguished professor at University College London) who published a book called *The Grammar of Physics* in 1892 which was praised by no less than Albert Einstein himself:

> Personally I have no recollection of at least 90 percent of the facts that were taught to me at school, but the notions of method which I derived from my instructor in Greek Grammar (the contents of which I have long since forgotten) remain in my mind – as the really valuable part of my school equipment for life.
>
> *(Pearson 1892: x)*

What an excellent testimonial for language teaching!

Another point of significance is that linguistics, unlike the STEM subjects, is the only Olympiad in the UK which deals with a subject which is not taught at school. And yet it has proved rather popular with both teachers and pupils: during the pre-pandemic years it was attracting between four and five thousand competitors each year across all the levels of difficulty, though the pandemic has reduced the numbers. Each of these competitors is counterevidence to the view that languages are boring. UKLO has also attracted over 700 teachers who have registered for our mailing list. These teachers can see the educational benefits even though UKLO doesn't apply skills that are already taught and examined in school. Just imagine how popular UKLO would be if language analysis was taught and examined at school.

The encouraging uptake of UKLO raises an obvious question: why is language analysis (i.e. linguistics) not taught at school? We return to this question in the next section.

Another significant fact about UKLO is that it manages to sell language to teenagers (boys as well as girls) by putting the system into full focus. This conflicts sharply with the marginal status of language in our schools. During the usual 13 years of schooling, a typical child spends hardly any time looking at language. It's true that there are exceptional moments – in Years 1 and 2 during initial literacy teaching when an infant learns about grapheme-phoneme correspondences, some grammar spread throughout Years 1–6 and an optional course on English Language during Years 12 and 13 – but these are isolated and typically not built upon in later teaching. Moreover, foreign languages seem to be in terminal decline for lack of uptake by teenagers who find them difficult and boring. One of the aims of UKLO is to improve the image of language study, but, of course, this will only work if ordinary teaching about language becomes more analytical, as explained in the next section.

The final fact about UKLO which I consider significant is the support that it receives from within universities. It is run entirely by unpaid volunteers who give time and effort as committee members, problem-setters or markers; most of these volunteers are university lecturers, though some are university students or schoolteachers. Like the schoolteachers who support UKLO, these lecturers see the educational benefits and pursue them in spite of the absence of support from the funding system. UKLO seems to be an excellent vehicle for having impact on schools, and yet it brings participating lecturers absolutely no credit through the current arrangements for funding universities through REF and TEF.

Those of us who run UKLO consider the project a success. We have succeeded in introducing linguistics to a significant number of children who not only know the word *linguistics* but have actually done some linguistics by looking hard at language data and analysing the patterns in it. But UKLO is a competition, and the competition only runs once a year, so the impact is limited. It's true that some teachers are already running ongoing 'linguistics clubs' in the lunch hour, with enthusiastic teenagers giving up their lunch break in order to sweat through difficult linguistics problems. But these teachers are a small minority, and the fact remains that the vast majority of school children have never heard of linguistics, let alone done it.

Linguistics in teaching

A much more ambitious aim is to introduce linguistics into regular teaching. The aim is realistic; after all, it has already been achieved in a number of other countries. One such country is Denmark, where every *Gymnasium* (offering three years of education prior to university) includes a 15-week course in linguistics called '*Almen sprogforståelse*' ('General Language Understanding'), whose syllabus is indistinguishable from a course in linguistics. For example, here is an official list (translated into English) of the core topics:

- Language use, including speaking and writing, form and meaning and linguistic change.
- Grammatical terminology and the ability to construct analyses.
- Sociolinguistics, including standard and variation, norms and individuality, language and nationality in an era of globalisation.
- Language in a learning context, including language learning strategies and perspectives on language.

(My sources can be found at https://dickhudson.com/denmark, together with more information on Denmark and several other relevant countries.)

The UK actually has a relatively good track record for such initiatives in which academics have worked hard to introduce linguistics into school classrooms. All have borne some fruit, and some have had a very visible and measurable impact. The following chronological list is almost certainly incomplete.

The series starts with a very big bang: Michael Halliday's project called *Linguistics in English Teaching* which ran at University College London from 1964 to 1970 and not only employed an ongoing team of up to four linguists and ten schoolteachers but also funded three groups of 20 seconded schoolteachers for a full-time one-year diploma course (Pearce 1994). It was funded by the recently created Schools Council and the Nuffield Foundation and built on the ideas that Halliday had already developed (Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens 1964). The vast scale of the project reminds us of the size of the problem: culture change on a grand scale, requiring change both in universities and in schools. The output of the project had three parts, each aimed at a different school sector: initial literacy for primary schools (Mackay, Thompson and Schaub 1970), a course on language and communication for the early secondary school (Forsyth and Wood 1977), and a book of teaching materials called *Language in Use* for the upper secondary school (Doughty, Pearce and Thornton 1971; Doughty, Thornton and Pearce 1972).

And the impact? Initially, enthusiastic uptake dwindled for both the primary and early-secondary programmes, and both have now vanished without trace; but the *Language in Use* materials had a more lasting impact on the thinking of teachers, as I shall explain below. Interestingly, the target age for these materials was the same as that of the Danish course on linguistics mentioned above, so it may be that this is the age-group most open to the ideas of linguistics. Another possibility is that the relevant cohort is not the children but the teachers, who are much more likely to be subject specialists when teaching the older age-group, because our secondary pupils specialise in just three subjects during their last two years of schooling before university.

On the other hand, this project reached a very large number of people, both teachers and educationalists – teacher trainers and civil servants in the Department of Education. It presented plausible ideas which resonated with the everyday concerns of teachers, such as the idea that language can be studied descriptively rather than prescriptively, that non-literary language merits study and that school children might study their own vernacular language. It also challenged the popular assumption that children learn all they need to know about language simply by reading and hearing good examples. All these ideas were relatively easy to sell to English teachers in spite of the purely literary training that most of them had had as undergraduates. What the project avoided was any serious promotion of structural linguistics: grammar, phonology or semantics; this was probably a wise decision, given the very strong anti-grammar culture of the times.

A particularly important outcome of the attempts to develop a linguistics for schools was the creation of a committee called Committee for Linguistics in Education (CLiE). This was created in 1980 by the two main professional associations for linguistics, the Linguistics Association of Great Britain and the British Association for Applied Linguistics. It is still functioning, with three meetings each year and a well-stocked website (www.clie.org.uk), testifying both to the desire of linguists to work with schools and also to the ongoing need for such help. CLiE has provided an important foundation for a number of projects, not least UKLO, which is an official offshoot of CLiE.

These general ideas can be thought of as seeds (or 'memes') planted in individual minds, and spreading from mind to mind depending on the individual's influence. We can now consider some of the most influential minds who developed the ideas and promoted them to a larger audience by projects which had significant impact.

The first was Katharine Perera, a linguist at the University of Manchester, who did ground-breaking research on the linguistic development of school-age children (Perera 1984; 1986; 1990). However, her most important outreach work was the support she gave to a grass-roots movement among local English teachers which resulted, in 1983, in the Advanced-level (i.e. for Years 12 and 13) qualification in English Language. This is still running and is a success by any standards, with over 20,000 entries each year (though these numbers have recently decreased somewhat); moreover, it is the direct model for a similar qualification in Victoria state in Australia (Mulder 2007). One of the main constraints on this qualification was that most English teachers are experts in literature rather than language, so it needed to avoid the more technical side of linguistics – just as Halliday's project had done. Nevertheless, the course for English Language is pure linguistics and has even triggered the creation of new BA degrees in English Language to accommodate enthusiastic school leavers.

At about the same time, a number of civil servants at the Department of Education developed Halliday's ideas in a report which introduced the notion of Knowledge About Language (KAL, Anon 1984). The main idea was that knowledge *about* language should be taught explicitly, rather than left implicit in teaching which aimed simply at knowledge *of* language. The term *KAL* is now established in educational circles and was one of the pillars for the first National

Curriculum for England (Anon 1990). The curriculum for English followed the guidance of two major enquiries by committees each of which included two academic linguists, the Kingman Committee and the Cox Committee (Anon 1988; 1989). Once again, we see impact, but the impact was delayed in this case by more than two decades (from the start of Halliday's project in 1964 to the National Curriculum in 1990).

The Tory government that introduced the National Curriculum recognised that KAL was a major innovation in the English curriculum for which most English teachers were not prepared. The government, therefore, commissioned a project to bridge the gap between teachers' existing subject knowledge and what they needed in order to deliver the curriculum: the Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project, run by the linguist Ron Carter at the University of Nottingham. The generous funding for this project (over £20 million) allowed it to produce a large collection of teaching material and to provide in-service courses for thousands of teachers, but the academics and the government had conflicting views of what was needed and, in the end, the government disowned the training material and refused to allow it to be published (Carter 1990; 1996). It's not clear what the governmental concerns were, but it's possible that they were disappointed by the almost total absence of grammar from the training materials. Once again, then, the LINC project might be counted as a failure; but in fact, the training materials were widely circulated (and indeed are still available from the University of Nottingham) and, together with all the local courses, had a major impact on English teachers. The result was a generation of English teachers who largely accepted the general ideas from Halliday's project, including the target of KAL, but who knew very little about language structure.

All these developments, including Halliday's project, were aimed at English teachers, but of course, many of the same issues apply to the teaching of foreign languages – whether to teach structures explicitly, how well the teachers themselves understand the language's workings, and so on. But a further issue that foreign-language teachers share with English teachers is their insularity. Traditionally, English teachers and foreign-language teachers view each other with suspicion, or even hostility, rarely collaborate and know little about each other's subject matter or pedagogy. Our next figure, Eric Hawkins, was a trainer of foreign-language teachers at the University of York who grasped this particular nettle and, with the aid of ideas from Halliday's English project, launched the movement called 'Language Awareness' (Hawkins 1987). The two leading principles in this movement were, first, the interconnectedness of first- and second-language teaching, and second, the need for explicit teaching so that learners were consciously aware of what they were learning. This movement now has a large and lively international following, with its own website, a journal and annual conferences; but, sad to say, its impact in the UK is slight.

More recently, linguists have engaged in a number of projects for reaching out to schools. I can pick out two ongoing projects that are particularly successful. One is the service called *Englicious* which is offered by the Survey of English

Usage (again at UCL), founded by Randolph Quirk but now run by Bas Aarts. Englicious applies computer technology and corpus linguistics to the teaching of English grammar (Aarts 2019) and offers both online and in-person training to schoolteachers, covering its costs by small charges to users. It has already reached more than a thousand teachers.

The other project is funded by the government but based at the University of York (again): a service called National Centre for Excellence in Language Pedagogy (NCELP), whose aim is to improve foreign-language teaching across the country. It is co-run by an applied linguist, Emma Marsden, and a schoolteacher, Rachel Hawkes, and is guided by a report on the pedagogy of foreign-language teaching (Bauckham 2016) in which linguistics looms large.

Other projects are in the pipeline. I should like to end by mentioning one which is particularly promising, called 'Linguistics in Modern Foreign Languages' (Corr, Kasstan, and Sheehan 2019). The aim here is to produce teaching material which could be used in teaching foreign languages in Years 12 and 13. One particular challenge in this area is that different languages are taught, and each language needs a different set of materials.

To summarise this list, linguists in the UK have been building bridges to schools for over 50 years and have had a significant impact on the school curriculum. However, the main constraint on these bridges is that teachers can't teach what they don't know, so linguists have contributed partly by focusing on areas of linguistics that are relatively accessible and partly by offering training in the less accessible parts. However, there are about half a million full-time teachers in the UK, so the challenge is enormous and, even if we assume steady progress, the job will certainly take generations rather than decades.

Top tips for public engagement

A number of general tips emerge from this paper. I present them below simply as bullet points, without any attempt to synthesise them.

- *Patience*. Halliday's project had a major impact on the thinking of a lot of people, but it had very little direct impact on schools until long after it had finished. This should be seen as typical of this kind of work, because its aim is to change the culture, which means changing the minds of all the relevant individuals in the face of other pressures that push in the opposite direction. We should think of our work as planting meme-seeds, which may take a generation to germinate.
- *Cooperation and compromise*. This kind of work can easily produce conflict where it threatens other people's agendas, so it's important to cooperate wherever possible and to build on trends that are running in a helpful direction – cooperation rather than confrontation. This requires acceptance of uncomfortable compromises. For example, one fact about UKLO not mentioned earlier is that fee-paying schools are seriously overrepresented among

participants. We (on the committee) don't want this, but it's a fact of life which we accept in order to establish the competition; maybe we shall be able to bring in more state schools later. Another example of compromise is the National Curriculum, which was brought in by a government which most academics disliked but which nevertheless gave KAL an official status in the curriculum which we support. We should never let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

- *Information*. Working for schools means learning about the world of schools. How are schools organised? What does the National Curriculum say? Who runs the examinations? How are teachers selected and trained? What text-books do teachers use, if any? What drives teachers to stay in their job? What are the main pressures on them? And so on and on. This information is available, but it takes time to assemble and absorb through roaming the internet, lurking on email lists and even reading books. If you want to build a bridge to the other side, you need to be prepared to build at least half of it, and maybe a lot more than half.
- *Research*. Keep an eye open for research topics that are relevant to schools. There are plenty of possibilities, not least the development of language through the school years, including the development of second languages in the classroom. Such research can qualify as educational research, but there is plenty for an ordinary linguist to do in simply analysing the language. Other major gaps exist: for example, where we would hope to find a clear and well-researched description of the distinctive features of Standard English or of a series of descriptions of the peculiarities of local accents and dialects.

I hope to have shown that the interface between linguistics and education is an important area, where linguists have already achieved significant impact but also where an enormous amount remains to be done. The impact has been achieved in spite of the funding arrangements for universities and testifies to the desire of many academics to use their skills to make the world a better place.

9

LINGUISTS IN SCHOOLS

Billy Clark

Introduction

This chapter describes and shares some thoughts about some of my own experiences in activities with secondary school students and teachers in the UK. I hope that it presents ideas applicable in a range of contexts (not only outwith and within in the UK) and also suggests reasons to engage with students and teachers (and others) and to explore ideas about language and linguistics with them. I have been involved in work with students and teachers in a range of contexts for many years. My interest in these activities has several motivations beyond my general interest in discussing aspects of language. As a teacher, it is useful to understand as much as possible about the contexts in which my current students have studied language and linguistics before joining courses I teach on. More broadly, it is in the interests of teachers, managers and policy makers in specific sectors to understand the overall picture. I have also learned a lot about language and interaction from working with students and teachers.

The work discussed here took place in three contexts: in sessions for students offered at schools and on university campuses, in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events for teachers, and in a residential course for students who were not studying linguistics at the time. Each of these contexts offered the opportunity to explore ideas about language and to find out more about them. They all, of course, also address some university aims for outreach, engagement, impact and recruitment.

Some features of linguistics help to make it attractive to students and teachers and are useful when planning and delivering sessions. It's important, though, to think carefully about what to present and how, partly because of how these relate to existing attitudes and opinions about language. I end the chapter with some 'top tips' for linguists in universities planning to work with students and teachers

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in schools. The tips I consider most important are about the kinds of activities to offer and the importance of talking to teachers about what will be valuable to them and their students.

Linguists everywhere

With a small number of exceptions, all humans engage in verbal and nonverbal interaction and almost everybody who does so makes at least implicit assumptions about their own and other people's language. To varying degrees, language users also think and talk explicitly about at least some aspects of language and language usage. People often notice and comment on different expressions used by different speakers. They might, for example, notice words associated with particular parts of the country, such as *peerie* – used in Shetland to mean 'small' or 'tiny' – or words used with different meanings in different places, such as the word *canny*, which has meanings such as 'careful' or 'shrewd' in some parts of the UK and a range of more general positive meanings in North-East England. There is, of course, variation associated with all areas of language, including accents, syntax, morphology and prosody, each of which are noticed and thought about or commented on to varying degrees.

People also sometimes notice and discuss creative uses of language, such as in jokes, poems and songs, or misunderstandings, which are often the source of humour in jokes.

People are also often interested in questions about language, e.g. how babies acquire languages and the stages they go through in doing so, how similar or different human languages are to animal communication systems, how languages vary from each other and why this is so, how language and languages have evolved and so on.

In a broad or informal sense, we might say that there are lots of linguists in any community. This has advantages and disadvantages for professional linguists aiming to talk to others about linguistics. An advantage is that people are often keen to discuss topics about language and languages, and it is fairly easy to identify topics which will generate interest. Linguists often aim to attract audiences by raising questions which are likely to intrigue members of the public. Here are some questions I have asked in order to attract audiences and at the beginning of sessions:

- Why do some speakers in the UK say *aye* where others say *yes*?
- Why does an individual speaker sometimes say *aye* and sometimes *yes*?
- Why do speakers of French use structures like *I go often to the cinema* (*je vais souvent au cinema*) while speakers of English use structures like *I often go to the cinema*?
- Why do characters in Shakespeare's plays use forms like *he went not home* where current speakers would use forms like *he didn't go home*?
- Why and how does language change?
- Why do babies generally find it easy to acquire their first language?

Questions like these, which I'm sure are similar to ones raised by other linguists at university open days and similar events, are a useful way to begin discussion. Each of them is likely to lead on to further discussion, including how they relate to particular research on linguistics, and to possible projects which might help us to find out more.

Working on linguistics in schools and universities can be understood as developing ways of finding out about aspects of language and communication which are more systematic than informal discussion and sharing what you find out with others. A natural way to develop discussion of this is to look at similarities and differences between various kinds of informal discussion of aspects of language and the more systematic approaches taken by linguists. This can be approached by starting from general questions such as those above as well as by comparing informal statements with the findings of linguists.

Linguists in school and at university

This section is about sessions I have been involved in for students and teachers exploring ideas about language and communication as part of the school curriculum, usually as part of A Levels (which are taken in the final two years of secondary school in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and sometimes with students working towards the International Baccalaureate, an alternative at the same stage of education. There is no school qualification in the UK with the term 'linguistics' in its title but the content of A Level English Language is largely based on linguistics, and many if not most students and teachers are aware of this. It's not possible, of course, to cover topics in linguistics as fully at school as at university but I have noticed three things about students who have taken this A Level, which I take as (anecdotal) evidence of its success: first, they are generally interested in aspects of language and in finding out more; second, they are confident to work on language-focused activities, including fairly complex questions; third, they often have a clear sense of areas which they would like to focus on more fully. I have often heard students saying that they are keen to do more work on phonetics and phonology, syntax, pragmatics or sociolinguistics when they join undergraduate programmes. So students in this context are likely already to be interested in thinking about aspects of language and communication fairly systematically.

Students and teachers in this context are likely to be engaged and interested by the same kinds of questions as those who have not yet studied or taught linguistics, but they will answer them in different ways, often connecting them to ideas they have studied, and they will be engaged by questions which go into more detail, perhaps focusing on specific data, with questions about different kinds of linguistic theories, with ideas developed in fairly recent research, which might not yet be present in school curricula and teaching, and with methods for studying language which they might not be aware of or have much experience of working with.

My own experiences working with students taking A Levels have mainly involved either visiting schools (on my own or with one or two colleagues) or organising sessions at university for students to visit us. The models have included:

a. School visits to offer sessions on studying language at university.
b. School visits to focus on particular topics.
c. Students and teachers visiting a university campus for one or more sessions on language.

Sessions on studying language at university have usually come about through schools contacting my university and inviting us to visit them, sometimes as part of larger events, e.g. in higher education fairs. These sessions typically have a number of aims as well as focusing on what it's like to study linguistics at university, including thoughts about how universities vary and more general questions about how decisions to offer a place are made. They also often cover the whole of English, i.e. Literature as well as Language and Lang-Lit.

Despite this range of interest, my experience is that students and teachers find discussion of ideas from linguistics the most engaging parts of sessions, and I usually start by presenting examples to discuss. One thing I always stress is that work at university involves academic staff and students working together to explore things, including identifying their own examples to discuss. I regularly encourage students in my classes to bring along their own examples and often begin sessions by sharing some of these. As I point out, we are typically involved in lots of linguistic interactions every day, whether face to face or through various other kinds of mediated communication. Every interaction can be used to illustrate ideas about language and communication but some are likely to spark particular kinds of interest. Examples which students have raised in class with me recently include:

a. A report of a young child who, according to a teacher, avoided using nouns, instead saying things like '*I'm looking for a put things in*' (here avoiding the word *box*).
b. A Twitter post from a parent asking about their child making a sniff noise in the place where adults would use a fricative sound, e.g. at the end of plural forms such as *cakes* or possessives such as *daddy's*.
c. A student who noticed (following discussion in class) that they often say '*yeah*' in response to yes-no questions like '*how did the seminar go?*'

Considering examples like these can lead on to further discussion and sometimes to further complex questions. One thing we noticed about the child who said things like '*a put things in*' was that they clearly used nouns appropriately since the phrase they used in place of *box* included the noun *things* used in a similar position to where it would appear in adult speech (between *put* and *in*). Discussion of the child who produced sniff noises led on to discussion of some details of phonetics and phonology (about particular kinds of fricative sounds) and further details of the acquisition of phonology (about the acquisition of fricatives).

These examples can suggest directions for more fully developed future projects, e.g. a fuller exploration of creativity in the language of children, of the acquisition of phonology, of child language acquisition more broadly, of attitudes to different varieties, and to how the use of different forms contributes to and is affected by the construction of identities.

They can also lead on naturally to discussion of questions about research methods. The very informal method of just trying to notice anything that seems interesting is not, of course, going to provide strong evidence about linguistic phenomena. A natural next step is to ask how we might develop fuller investigations with evidence whose nature and strength is clearer. This can include discussion of methods currently used by linguists, discussion of issues associated with different methods, and pointing out fairly accessible methods which students might not be aware of. For example, students and teachers are not always aware of the range of free corpus tools available online and are also often keen to hear of new ways of using tools which they are aware of. Google ngrams (https://books.google.com/ngrams/) and WebCorp (http://www.webcorp.org.uk/live/) are two useful tools to begin discussion of this. Students can access these immediately and run quick searches. It is useful to point out some of the features of each which could lead to false conclusions and to raise questions about the nature of the data. From this, students can move on to look at other tools such as the range of corpus tools made available by Mark Davies (https://www.english-corpora.org/).

Students and teachers are also often keen to hear about recent research methods and findings. Teachers do not have time to read recent research, and it is useful to provide updates. These can be fairly specific pieces of research or more general updates. Two online resources on specific research are the Linguistics Research Digest offered by the Department of Linguistics at Queen Mary, University of London (http://linguistics-research-digest.blogspot.com) and the LangLitLab offered by the Integrating English project (https://www.integratingenglish.com/langlitlab), which also offers suggestions for related teaching activities.

More general updates are also useful, e.g. on areas such as language acquisition, sociolinguistics or language and gender. Research in pragmatics, for example, has moved on quite far from the initial suggestions made by Paul Grice (1975, 1989) and the initial ideas on politeness developed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Pragmaticists are generally very happy to discover (if they don't know) that Grice's ideas feature in A Levels; I remember one pragmaticist being surprised when he started to explain who Paul Grice was to a group of A Level students, and one of them asked, 'Is he the dude with the maxims?' However, work at school still tends not to have moved on much from there, and students and teachers are usually interested to hear about some of the recent developments, including focus on 'im/politeness' rather than just politeness, on the idea that questions of relative politeness are relevant to all interactions, that meanings are constructed from the interaction of all participants and across extended turns, that not all pragmatic principles are seen as maxim-like, that some approaches assume heuristics of various kinds and so on.

Sessions at university, of course, also offer opportunities for students to experience what it is like to be on campus, including classroom sessions very like what students would experience as part of a BA programme. Where possible, it is also useful for students to attend sessions alongside current undergraduates. Seminar sessions are not easy to arrange in most contexts, as this can significantly change the nature of the session for undergraduates, but attendance at lectures or research seminars is sometimes an option.

Sessions for teachers

I have been involved in Continuing Professional Development provision for teachers in several contexts, including with awarding bodies. This section describes work I have done with the Integrating English project. We have run a series of conferences for teachers to explore ways in which research ideas can be applied in classrooms and in other teaching activities. These have been supported by publishers and awarding bodies as well as the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA; https://www.pala.ac.uk). While we offered a two-day event one year, we realised that one-day events are easier for teachers to attend. While it is hard for teachers to be released on weekdays, we also decided that weekends are precious, so we now aim to offer these on a weekday.

These events combine presentations and workshops, offered by university and schoolteachers, and resource development sessions, where we work in groups to consider ways of applying ideas discussed during the day in teaching. We also invite teachers from earlier events to return to discuss some of the ways in which they have applied ideas. A key aim is to present ideas which 'integrate' different areas of English, including language, literature and writing. The members of the project team (the other members are Andrea Macrae and Marcello Giovanelli) have different research interests, but we all work on stylistics and see this as a natural way to connect areas which are sometimes thought of as distinct.

We aim for our sessions to be relevant to current curricula and consult with teachers on this. Sessions have focused on a wide range of topics and approaches, including conflict in literature, im/politeness, point of view, recreative writing, text world theory, dialect representation, and many more. A key idea is that we can understand how texts are produced and responded to by asking questions and exploring them in a wide range of types of activities, including analytical, creative and critical approaches. We assume also that these overlap and that many activities involve more than one of them simultaneously. The 'textual intervention' work of Rob Pope (1995) is a key influence here.

Programmes from previous events are available at https://www.integratingenglish.com/our-events. A typical day will begin with an introduction explaining the aims of the day and emphasising that we aim to work collaboratively to explore ideas from research, to use analytical tools in hands-on sessions exploring texts (understood broadly to include film, TV, theatre, poetry and prose) to explore ways of applying these in teaching and to develop resources. Sessions have included: a workshop on the role of dialect in film, literature and performance, exploring the effects of representations of different varieties in a range of texts; an introduction to discourse analysis leading to attendees gathering and beginning to analyse their own data from videos on YouTube and Facebook; an introduction to text world theory which involved attendees producing drawings to indicate how they represented developing narratives in texts and how these reflect perspectives; a hands-on session using the Corpus Linguistics in Context (CLiC) web app (https://clic.bham.ac.uk) to explore texts by Dickens and children's literature.

Two particularly useful types of sessions are resource development sessions and sessions offered by teachers who have attended previous events. Resource development sessions are usually the final ones in the day. Here attendees (presenters and teachers) gather around tables and discuss ways in which specific activities might be developed based on the day's sessions. We write the ideas on large post-it notes and post them around the room so we can all view and then share some further thoughts before the session closes.

When teachers return to offer sessions, they discuss some specific activities they have put into practice, report on what went well and share tips on these and on developing further activities and resources.

The response to these events has been very positive (see information and comments from attendees here: https://www.integratingenglish.com/our-events). Things which teachers have valued include the opportunity to step outside the classroom and think about ideas about pedagogy and relationships with recent research. As with students, teachers enjoy the sense that academics and teachers are working together to explore ideas. Eagle-eyed stylisticians might recognise some of the higher education academics working with teachers in images on the website just mentioned, even if some of them are only showing their backs to the camera.[1]

How to be a language detective

'Linguistics: The Language Detective' is a residential course, which I delivered at Villiers Park (https://www.villierspark.org.uk) with Graeme Trousdale[2] from 2007 to 2012. Villiers Park is a residential site in Foxton in Cambridgeshire run by the Villiers Park Educational Trust, a registered charity whose aims (as stated on their website) include to:

> deliver unique programmes for high ability students aged 14–19 from less advantaged backgrounds … [to] … empower young people to succeed and overcome barriers to success … [and to] … help raise academic achievement by developing personal and employability skills.

The trust offers a number of residential courses which are designed to contribute to these aims. This course was designed to offer an introduction to linguistics for students taking A Levels other than English Language or English Language and Literature. We would ask students which A Levels they were studying at the start of the course, and the most common ones were a language A Level (classical or modern), a science subject or maths. An early finding was that students of maths and sciences were interested in finding out more about linguistics. This chimed with our finding that a significant number of students entering the UK Linguistics Olympiad, UKLO (http://uklo.org, discussed by Hudson, this volume) were studying these subjects.

The course was initially offered to students who had been identified as 'gifted and talented' at that time (before the phrase was dropped from official guidance) and among its aims were to offer students additional activities and a beneficial experience distinct from their work in school. Some students asked us to confirm their attendance as part of their work for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (https://www.dofe.org).

The course ran over five days with arrivals at lunchtime on a Monday and departures on the Friday afternoon. Students covered a remarkable amount of ground in the five days (particularly considering that the first and last one were not full days). We began with initial discussion of what 'language' is and what's involved in linguistics, moved on to consideration of specific areas of linguistics and methods for studying it and the students worked on group projects which they then presented on the final day. As well as all of this, we took the students on a trip, invited visiting speakers and organised social events, including a film screening and the Villiers Park Linguistic Olympiad, which was organised in teams like a quiz but where teams worked on puzzles from the Linguistics Olympiad. At the British Library, we looked at linguistically relevant material such as the Lindisfarne Gospels (with Aldred's Old Northumbrian gloss constituting one of the earliest written representations of a particular variety of English), and students attended a talk by Jonnie Robinson, a dialectologist and the library's lead curator for Spoken Voices. At Cambridge, we visited the Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics, where students attended workshops and presentations on aspects of language and linguistics which were independently interesting but also helped them to think about developing their own projects. Visiting speakers have included Jonnie Robinson (on years when we didn't visit the British Library) who also recorded students for the library's collection of recordings of regional varieties, Bas Aarts who spoke about the Survey of English Usage and offered students the opportunity to work with the British Component of the International Corpus of English ('ICE-GB'), and Julia Snell, who spoke about her research on language in a school playground context in a school in Middlesbrough. In the student conference on the final day, students presented their group projects to an audience which included some other linguists who we invited for this. This was run like an academic conference with a chair and time for questions after each presentation. Table 9.1 provides an indication of what a typical programme would look like.

TABLE 9.1 A typical Language Detective programme.

Monday	• Arrivals and lunch • Introductions (An introduction to Villiers Park staff, tutors and other students. Students also completed one questionnaire about their previous studies and linguistic experience and another with a number of questions to provide informal data for a later session.) • 'So, what is linguistics?' (Exploring initial assumptions about what linguistics might be about and how to study it.) • 'How to be a Language Detective' (Building on initial ideas, indicating and exploring some of the assumptions made by linguists and methods used to explore aspects of language.) • Film (Screening of a film on an aspect of linguistics to develop interest and spark further discussion.)
Tuesday	• Breakfast • Parallel sessions (Two parallel sessions on aspects of linguistics, e.g. language variation; language and meaning; language change. After a break, groups changed, and the sessions were repeated for the two groups.) • Lunch • Projects (Two sessions explaining what is involved in student projects, allocating students to project groups and exploring initial ideas.) • Evening meal • Film (While this film would have some relevance to ideas about language, as any film would, this was mainly a social event.)
Wednesday	• Breakfast • Trip (A trip with packed lunch, supplied by Villiers Park, to a location relevant to language study.) • Evening meal • Villiers Park Linguistics Olympiad
Thursday	• Breakfast • Parallel sessions (Two further sessions on aspects of linguistics, with groups swapping after a break.) • Lunch • Projects (Continuing project work in groups.) • Visiting speaker • Evening meal • Film (Another language-related film.)
Friday	• Breakfast • Villiers Park Student Conference (Presentations and discussion.) • Lunch • 'Becoming a Super Sleuth' (A presentation considering ways in which to develop fuller investigative projects, with advice on following up an interest in language or linguistics at university.) • Course evaluation (Students met with the Director of Villiers Park to offer feedback and complete evaluation questionnaires.) • Goodbyes

Our initial aim was to create a friendly, informal atmosphere where students would feel comfortable to contribute. We began with ice-breaker activities and then moved on to questions about language and linguistics. The first ice-breaker activity (which has a range of names, including the 'birthday line-up') led naturally on to questions about language. We asked students, without speaking, to arrange themselves along a wall in order of when their birthdays were located in the calendar year, i.e. running from the closest to the 1st of January through to the closest to the 31st of December. Students could do anything they chose to while doing this apart from making sounds with their mouths. We never had sign language users, but of course, signing would also have been ruled out. After checking how successfully students had completed the task (typically they were completely successful, with at most one or two out of sequence), we would ask students to think about whether things they had used in completing this task counted as 'language,' if so, why, and if not, why not.

We then offered fuller sessions asking about what counts as language and why and exploring some features of language. This included cross-linguistic data so that students could think about how languages vary. We next assigned students to project groups and offered them the chance to begin to discuss possible projects. Possible project ideas were written on flipchart sheets and posted on walls around the room. We then looked at and discussed possible projects together (students as well as tutors discussing each other's ideas). Students came up with a surprisingly varied range of possible projects, and we discussed methodological and other practical issues around each one. There were then further sessions during the week when students could work together on their projects. On the Friday morning, students presented their work in the Villiers Park Linguistics Conference. We organised this like a conference, with a chair (Graeme and I took turns) and a section after each presentation for questions and comments.

We discovered several things from this experience, some of them quite general and some about specific parts of the course. The first and possibly most important general finding was that the students were very quickly interested in the topics we discussed and keen to talk about them more with tutors and with each other. We also found that students were fascinated by linguistic data and quickly understood the complexity of the questions we raised about them. Several students each year reported that they had now either decided to, or were considering, changing their plans for further study to include at least some linguistics.

Another important finding was that students of subjects such as maths and physics enjoyed the course and often had an aptitude for particular aspects of linguistics. Students working on particular topics, including Linguistics Olympiad puzzles, would notice similarities with maths in particular. One student pointed out that puzzles were often very much like maths in that 'it's all about spotting patterns.'

Some of the general points are ones which will be familiar to teachers in many contexts, including the need to be sensitive when discussing aspects of language and identity. Students were quick to understand that linguists do not assume that some varieties are 'better' than others but some language usage can be problematic, particularly informal ways of describing particular varieties, which might be spoken by some but not all students, and of referring to particular social groups.

There were also some issues arising from students having varying aptitudes for different things we worked on. This was fairly unproblematic in general but we had to be careful when students were working on puzzles in the Olympiad on the Wednesday evening, as some students worked through some puzzles very quickly while others didn't find it so easy to keep up, with the risk that they would become disengaged. We organised the rounds in ascending order of difficulty so earlier rounds were less problematic but we had to keep an eye on how groups were interacting in later rounds, and we sometimes shared hints (to all students) to help everyone feel involved.

We were extremely impressed by the ingenuity of students in working on their projects. Students gathered their own data for these, sometimes with questionnaires which they would share with each other and with staff working on the site of the course. One group gathered contemporary data on language change in French by making online recordings of regional radio stations in different parts of France.

The language detective metaphor worked very well here. We did not push this too far, but it helps to think about the nature of different kinds of investigation, how to find and think critically about evidence, how any investigation or research project can lead on to others and how detectives and researchers can work together to find out more.

Working on the course was a very rewarding experience, and it showed that many students find linguistics interesting and will be keen to do more work on topics in linguistics if they have the opportunity. It also showed that the subject has appeal for students who work on maths and science as well as on languages.

Of course, Villiers Park is an unusual institution, and there are few places where courses such as this one can be offered. However, some of the activities offered here can be offered in school and university classrooms and in other contexts. We have, for example, offered some of these as part of training camps for the UK team for the International Linguistics Olympiad (see Hudson, this volume).

Conclusions and tips

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with students and teachers in the contexts described above. Like many linguists, I'm very happy to talk about language and linguistics in any context. Luckily, there is lots of interest in aspects of language and communication, and so many people are keen to join conversations. The subject is particularly accessible for students because any of us can provide data about our own varieties and language use and because it is fairly easy to begin asking questions and exploring topics. At the same time, there are some things which can make it tricky, including general perceptions and assumptions about language, which often diverge from what linguists assume. In my opinion, it is worth addressing these issues and aiming to have useful conversations with a wide range of people, including school students and teachers. Working on these projects has helped to develop my own understanding as well as my teaching practice and communication skills.

Top tips

To conclude, here are some ‘top tips’ (with some more general thoughts and observations) for working with school students and teachers.

- *Practise talking about linguistics.* Everybody is interested in language and communication, but not all linguists find it easy to talk about their work. So take opportunities to talk to a wide range of people about ideas from linguistics to develop your ability to engage them.
- *Know your audience.* Find out as much as you can in advance about the students and/or teachers you will be talking to so that you can talk about things which interest them and which they will find useful.
- *Talk to teachers and students.* Take every opportunity you can to talk to teachers and students about what they are doing and what they will find useful. It’s particularly useful if you know about particular parts of current curricula so that you can offer sessions which address them.
- *Find out about the current context for teachers and students.* Find out as much as you can about current concerns and how this might affect responses to what you present. If, for example, teachers and students are feeling that they have to work too much on technical terms without seeing clear benefits, it might turn your audience off if you focus quickly on terminology. In some contexts recently (focusing on earlier stages than A Level), I have seen teachers being suspicious of linguists who are perceived as focusing too much or too quickly on terminology.
- *Start simple.* Questions about language are fascinating but sometimes this is because the facts are quite complicated. Be careful not to start with ideas that are complex and to introduce complexities slowly and carefully after you have established initial confidence in thinking about topics.
- *Respect prescriptive attitudes.* A related possible issue (which linguists will be aware of) is that initial discussion can connect quite quickly with prescriptive attitudes which diverge from the findings of linguists. This can lead to awkward or difficult conversations if members of your audience feel that their views are being contradicted or ignored. There is no one way to deal with this, and it’s important not to be seen as directly contradicting or opposing views like this. In my own conversations, I acknowledge that we all have things we feel more or less positive about, not always with a clear reason as in cases of unconscious bias, and it is not confrontational to say that linguistics is not about judging which forms are ‘good’ or ‘bad’ but

about describing and explaining language and communicative behaviour (including attitudes to language forms). I sometimes refer to cross-linguistic variation here, since most people do not object to the existence of forms in other languages even though they do object to forms like this in particular varieties of their own language. Examples include the difference mentioned above between English forms like *I often go to the cinema* and French *je vais souvent au cinema* mentioned above and the use of non-variant tags such as *n'est-ce pas* in French and *innit* in some varieties of English.

- *Encourage cooperation.* I have two thoughts in mind here. The first is something I think most if not all linguists already do, which is to encourage a sense that everyone in the room is working together to find things out rather than an expert delivering ideas to an audience. The nature of language means that there are some ways in which students know most about their own language varieties and usage. The second thought is to work with students and teachers in schools as much as possible to establish common interests and aims, and ways of working together.
- *Visit schools.* If you are interested in engaging with students and teachers, it is very useful to visit schools and not only invite students and teachers to university campuses or other venues. There are practical difficulties in arranging activities in schools, including that we can only visit one school at a time while we can invite a number of schools at once to events on campus. It's not uncommon for events at my current university to attract over 100 students and teachers from a good range of fairly local schools. At the same time, it is hard for students and teachers to be able to leave schools for events like these. School visits are often more practical from the point of view of teachers.

Work like this is not for everyone, but I would encourage anybody who's thinking about it to consider proposing or taking part in activities like these. I have learned a lot about language and linguistics and about the broader contexts of my own teaching and research, from working with school students and teachers in these ways.

Notes

1 I might have missed some, but these include Chloe Harrison, Peter Stockwell, Michaela Mahlberg, Rob Pope, Marcello Giovanelli and myself.
2 https://www.ed.ac.uk/profile/graeme-trousdale

PART 2

Communicating linguistics

10

COMMUNICATING LEXICOGRAPHY

Danica Salazar

Introduction

My career as an editor for the *Oxford English Dictionary* began with a book published by Cambridge University Press.

It was 2007, and I was in the first year of a doctoral programme in Applied Linguistics at the University of Barcelona. I was a student volunteer at a conference on language testing being hosted by my department, passing the time between sessions by browsing the linguistics books on display at the conference book exhibit. A very kind lady at the Cambridge University Press booth showed me a book that had just been published – *World Englishes: Implications for International Communication and English Language Teaching* by Andy Kirkpatrick.

I was born and raised in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. Like many Filipinos of my background, I grew up bilingual – English was as present in my life as Filipino, the national language of my country. I was always aware that there was something unique about the way we spoke English in the Philippines, but it was not until I read Kirkpatrick's book that I saw my native variety of English as a subject of linguistic analysis, being studied within a conceptual framework that at that moment was totally new to me. It was also around this period that I started taking a course on lexicology and lexicography taught by a professor in my department, Isabel Verdaguer, who at the time was starting a funded research project to create a corpus-based dictionary of scientific English. I found the course fascinating, and I wanted to work with no other thesis adviser but Prof. Verdaguer. I did not know it then, but that budding interest in both World Englishes and lexicography was what would lead me, five years down the line, to a job at Oxford University Press and a degree of public engagement with my work as a linguist that I never expected it to have.

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Becoming a lexicographer

One does not really plan to become a lexicographer. Unlike 'doctor' or 'pilot' or 'president,' children do not usually give 'dictionary editor' as an answer to the question 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' The thing about dictionaries and other reference books is that many people have them – either as a heavy print volume on their desks or an app on their phones – but very rarely think of them as having been written by other people. Names such as Johnson and Webster can be emblazoned on their covers, but people are more likely to think of these names as brands rather than names of real persons who lived real lives, much of which they decided to spend writing a dictionary.

And so, becoming a lexicographer was something I did not anticipate, although many of my grade school and high school classmates now insist that they saw it coming. I was always the word nerd of the class, doing much better in humanities than science in school and spending a lot of my time reading and writing. It was my fascination with words that motivated me to choose to do a language degree at university even as most of my classmates went off to study to become nurses and engineers except, when I made that decision, I thought that I would take the language skills that I would acquire and apply them to a career in journalism or diplomacy. However, it was not long into doing my undergraduate degree in European Languages at the University of the Philippines that I realised that I wanted to study languages, not just learn them; that I wanted to be a linguist and have a career in the academe.

I threw myself into the study of Spanish and French and, by my fourth year at university, I had learned enough Spanish to be able to write my undergraduate thesis in the language and graduate with honours. A few months after graduating, thanks to a grant from the Spanish government, I found myself living outside of the Philippines for the first time in my life, working towards a Master's degree in Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language at the University of Salamanca. I stayed in Salamanca for a year, then moved to Barcelona to try and get into a doctoral programme. By that time, I had spent over half a decade studying Spanish, and I decided that I did not want to do my PhD on the language. I spoke two languages natively, another one very fluently and had basic knowledge of two others, and I did not want to spend the rest of my academic career doing research just on one of the languages I knew. I wanted a PhD programme that could give me a wider view of language, and so I applied and got accepted to the doctoral programme in Applied Linguistics at the Department of English and German Philology of the University of Barcelona (UB). That was how I ended up discovering World Englishes at that book exhibit at a language testing conference in 2007.

I received another grant, this time from the Catalan government, to work as a research assistant in (my thesis adviser) Prof. Verdaguer's then newly funded research group on lexicology and lexicography. The group's objective was to use corpus methods to identify the formulaic expressions that characterise scientific writing in English, in order to create a phraseological dictionary of scientific English that can aid Spanish scientists in writing their research papers for publication in English (Verdaguer et al. 2013). My doctoral thesis (Salazar 2011), which was later published as a monograph (Salazar 2014), was an investigation of these phraseological items – termed *lexical bundles* in biomedical English. While working on my thesis, I also applied corpus linguistics to the study of Philippine English, my native variety of the language (Salazar 2010).

A few months after obtaining my PhD, I saw an advertisement on Linguist List for a postdoctoral position in the Faculty of English of Oxford University. The post was for a researcher wishing to study anything related to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*). At that point I knew of the *OED*, of course – Prof. Verdaguer also taught history of English courses at UB and used the *OED* in her teaching and research. I myself never had occasion to use the dictionary prior to seeing that job advert, but it seemed to me like an amazing opportunity to combine my research interests in lexicography and World Englishes. I submitted a research proposal where I outlined a plan to help improve the *OED*'s coverage of Philippine English by, first, identifying Philippine English words from existing corpora, dictionaries and lexical surveys of the variety and suggesting their inclusion in the dictionary; and second, by studying the treatment of Philippine English words in the *OED* and proposing effective lexicographic descriptions for these words.

I was not particularly confident in this job application. Who was I to think that the *OED* needed improvement and that this improvement should be implemented by me? I was very surprised when I received an invitation for an interview and was even more surprised, a mere hour after the interview, to be offered the post. It turned out that I was at the right place at the right time. The *OED* was at that moment looking to broaden its coverage of varieties of English spoken in different parts of the world, and my research proposal fit perfectly with that objective.

I arrived in Oxford in November 2012 as the university's new Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in English Language Lexicography to work under the guidance of Prof. Charlotte Brewer, at Hertford College and the Faculty of English, and Dr. Bernadette Paton, at Oxford University Press (OUP). I was ushered into a world of formal dinners in grand dining halls of medieval college buildings, but where I felt most at home was in the *OED* office at OUP, in a room full of lexicographers, who showed me all the work that went into the dictionary and how I could contribute to it. During the two years of my postdoctoral fellowship, I was able to carry out the research that I described in my original proposal, and this work resulted in the addition to the dictionary of 40 new words from Philippine English – its largest, most wide-ranging batch of Philippine English words ever (Salazar 2015). These new entries were published as part of the *OED*'s quarterly update in June 2015, by which time my postdoctoral fellowship had ended, and I was several months into my new job as an *OED* editor specialising in World Englishes. I had become a lexicographer.

The work of a harmless drudge[1]

It is not often that people write novels or make films about dictionary editors, but when they do, they tend to romanticise the job. Lexicographers are often portrayed as isolated eccentrics, driven by a single-minded obsession with documenting words, writing dictionary entries on napkins in the middle of dinner or poring over dictionary slips spread out all over the floor. Such a portrayal is not entirely accurate. First of all, OUP is a fair enough employer to provide *OED* editors with proper desks and writing implements, so there is no need for dinner napkin- or floor-editing. Secondly, I would like to think that my colleagues and I are normal people with lives outside of our jobs and, as dedicated as we are to our work, we do find time for our families, friends and personal interests.

There is also a tendency to think of lexicographers as geniuses in the mould of Samuel Johnson or James Murray, the *OED*'s first Chief Editor – ambitious, polymathic men who drove their dictionary projects to (in the case of Murray, near) successful completion through the strength of their intellect and the sheer force of their will. I am happy to be able to say that it is not necessary to be a genius or a man to be an *OED* editor, as can be gleaned from the fact that I am an *OED* editor. One does not even need to have degrees in English, linguistics, or philology – my colleagues come from all sorts of academic backgrounds, from history to literature to classics. Some have even trained as lawyers, scientists or medical doctors.

I am saying all this because dramatised depictions of lexicographers can make lexicography seem like an impenetrable world that is open only to a very specific kind of person. As I hope I have been able to demonstrate in the above description of my career trajectory, dictionary making is just like any other profession that one can enter through many different paths.

That does not mean, however, that lexicography does not require a specific set of skills. When the *OED* advertises openings for new editors, it asks for candidates that have good knowledge of English and its linguistic features, as well as experience using various resources to investigate a topic. Knowledge of other languages is also valued. Successful candidates are those who are able to work through often complex texts and understand broad concepts in a wide range of disciplines, as they will be asked to write dictionary entries not just for general English words, but those relating to specific subjects and interests, from cookery to finance, from surfing to knitting. A lexicographer should also be a good communicator who speaks and writes clearly and concisely, as well as an organised, detail-oriented professional who knows how to prioritise individual tasks so as to meet certain deadlines and standards.

And then there is what Merriam-Webster lexicographer Kory Stamper calls *sprachgefül*. In her book, *Word by Word* (2017: 15), Stamper defines *sprachgefül*, a German loanword, as 'a feeling for language' and

> a slippery eel, the odd buzzing in your brain that tells you that *planting the lettuce* and *planting misinformation* are different uses of *plant*, the eye twitch

> that tells you that *plans to demo the store* refers not to a friendly instructional stroll on how to shop but a little exuberance with a sledgehammer.

It is the ability to distinguish between the shades of meaning of words, no matter how fine. It is the skill of identifying what is most important about a certain sense of a word or phrase and conveying this in the most unambiguous yet elegant way to a reader. Applicants for an editorial post in the *OED* have to take an aptitude test, which is designed to look for their s*prachgefül*, or at least the seeds of it – because *sprachgefül* is also something that can grow and bloom as a lexicographer gains experience.

People who thrive as *OED* editors are also collaborative and team-oriented, because making the *OED* is a group effort. The work may start with you at your desk researching and writing a dictionary entry but, after you are finished with it, that entry will leave your hands and go to those of your highly skilled colleagues, each one with their own specialisation. Your fellow editors will undertake a peer review on your entry; etymologists will confirm the origin of the word; pronunciation specialists will check your transcriptions; bibliographers and library researchers will ensure that your citations are complete and correct. The *OED* also has editors with expertise on specific kinds of entries, such as science editors who work on entries for scientific terms and Old English or Middle English researchers who look for evidence for the oldest words in the dictionary. And then there are the finalisers and the Chief Editor, Michael Proffitt, who do a final review and make further improvements before entries are approved for publication. There are currently over 70 people in the *OED* editorial staff, working alongside the wider team in Oxford Languages, its department within OUP, and each one plays a key role in the massive task of updating the dictionary four times a year.

It is also important to note that lexicographers today have one significant advantage that Johnson or Murray, in all their genius, never had: a computer with an internet connection. Although we still maintain and consult the many thousands of paper slips on which most of the editorial work on earlier editions was based, our present-day work is now largely digital. Modern technology has transformed the practice of lexicography, giving *OED* editors and researchers access to a wealth of information that was unavailable to editors and researchers of previous editions of the dictionary. Lexicographers can now instantly consult a wide range of evidence sources available online.

The *OED*, as a historical dictionary, does not focus only on current meanings of words but also shows their individual histories, traced through quotations taken from written examples of authentic language use. This means that most days for an *OED* editor mean going through that day's list of words, finding out their meaning, researching their origin and development and writing definitions for them. The following are just a few examples of the things I have had to ask myself during the course of a normal workday:

- Is there enough evidence for the adjectival use of *traffic* in Philippine English to merit its inclusion in the dictionary? (In 2014, when I first asked this question, no. Since this use of *traffic* as an adjective (e.g. 'It's very traffic in Manila during rush hour') is typical of informal Philippine English, it was very difficult to find textual evidence for it in our usual sources. But a few years later, with greater use of quotation evidence from the social media site Twitter in *OED* entries, we were able to find more than enough evidence for this usage to be added to the dictionary – it was published in the *OED*'s December 2020 update).

- Who first used *dutty wine*, the name of a very popular Jamaican dance move? (Doing the *dutty wine* involves vigorously and rhythmically rotating the neck while gyrating the hips and moving the legs in a butterfly motion. This compound combines *dutty*, the Caribbean variant of *dirty*, with *wine*, meaning to move the waist or hips in a circling motion when walking or dancing. *Dutty wine* first appears in and was widely popularised by a 2006 song by Jamaican dancehall artist Tony Matterhorn, whose lyrics encouraged everyone to 'do di dutty wine.')
- Why are Bermudians called *Onions*? (A particularly sweet variety of onions was Bermuda's major export crop from the eighteenth century until the early twentieth century. As a result, the island came to be known as 'The Onion Patch' and its inhabitants as 'Onions.')
- What makes the Filipino dish *sisig* a *sisig*? Is it the chopped-up pig's head? If it is, then how do I explain tuna sisig? How do I describe a dish made of deconstructed porcine skull and innards and make it sound mouth-watering instead of vomit-inducing? (I leave it to the reader to judge whether I have been successful. The *OED* definition for *sisig* reads: 'In Filipino cookery: a dish consisting of chopped pork, onions, and chillies, usually served on a hot plate, seasoned with calamansi[2] and topped with an egg.' This definition is accompanied by the following explanatory note: 'Traditional Kapampangan[3] *sisig* is made with chopped pig's head and liver, but later popular versions of the dish are made with other types of meat, as well as fish and tofu. It is typically eaten as an accompaniment to alcoholic drinks (cf. pulutan *n.*[4]).'
- What is a *gotch*, and is it the same as a *gitch*, a *gaunch*, a *gonch* and a *ginch*? (*Gotch* is a Canadian slang term for underpants which traces its origins to the Ukrainian language. It was borrowed from the Ukrainian word for trousers, *gači*, and combined with the English *-s* plural ending to form the variants *gotchies, gotchees*, *gitchies*, *gonchies* and *ginchies*. These were then transformed through back-formation to the variants *gotch*, *gitch*, *gaunch*, *gonch* and *ginch*. The choice of variant depends on which part of Canada a speaker is from – there seems to be a preference for *gotchies* in Ontario, for *gitch* and *gotch* in Saskatchewan and Manitoba and for *gonch* and other variants with *n* in Alberta and British Columbia.)
- What is the spelling of the Indian English noun *chaudhuri* 'the headman of a region, community or occupational group'? (There are 19 different spelling variants for the word. The headword form, *chaudhuri*, is the

most frequently used spelling, but it can also be spelled *chowdri*, *chaudry*, *chaudhari*, *chowdury*, etc.)

- To what does the word *mama put* refer in Nigerian English? To a street food vendor, her stall, or the food she sells? (It refers to all of them. The *OED* defines *mama put* as ‘a street vendor, typically a woman, selling cooked food at low prices from a handcart or stall; also: a street stall or roadside restaurant run by such a vendor; (as a mass noun) the type of food sold by such vendors.’ The entry’s etymology states that the word probably originally reflects the first part of a request ‘Mama, put…!’ (with the verb in the imperative), asking for food to be put for (i.e. given to) the customer.)

Apart from my editorial tasks, in my role as World English Editor, I am also responsible for the planning and coordination of the *OED*’s World English initiatives. Since 2015, the *OED* has undertaken targeted projects to broaden its coverage of several world varieties of English, publishing particularly large batches of new entries for varieties spoken in Bermuda, Canada, the Caribbean, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Malaysia, Nigeria, the Philippines, Singapore and South Africa. I am closely involved in all stages of these projects, from selecting existing entries to revise and new words to add, drafting and revising entries, liaising with an international network of external consultants who provide us with specialist advice on their varieties and finally, when the entries are published, writing or commissioning the release notes and taking part in publicity. Over the years, public engagement has increasingly become an essential part of my work as a lexicographer.

A built-in public profile

Building a public profile is something that I did not have to do, as the public profile came automatically with my job in the *OED*. OUP is one of the world’s most recognised dictionary publishers, and the *OED* is its flagship dictionary, so the public has a lot of interest in both institutions. The *OED* publishes an update every quarter of every year, and in most of them, the media finds something newsworthy to report.

I first realised just how much public interest there would be in my work a few months after I started my postdoctoral position in Oxford. I travelled to the Philippines to do some research, and I received an invitation to give an interview to a reporter for the Filipino online newspaper *Rappler*. The article came out with a headline which I am still unsure if I have been able to live up to almost ten years on: ‘Filipina wants to shake up Oxford dictionary’ (Papa 2013).

My first experience of publicity surrounding an *OED* quarterly update was in June 2015, when the large batch of Philippine English words were published – my first big World English project to come out since I joined the *OED* as an editor. I knew there was going to be media attention in the Philippines, as I had already given email interviews to Filipino reporters days prior, and the country’s major newspapers were ready to run front-page articles on the addition of such a large number of Philippine English words to the *OED* as soon as the news embargo was lifted at midnight on publication day. What surprised me was that the British press became interested too. When I arrived at the office the day of the update, I was told the BBC wanted to interview me that very evening at their studio in London. They wanted to know my address as they were going to send a car to pick me up from my house and then take me home afterwards.

The first thing I did was to call my mother to let her know. The interview was for a morning news show on BBC World for the Asian market, and I wanted her to watch it. She saw that her cable subscription did not include BBC World, so she immediately called the cable company to have it added. However, just a few minutes later, the interview was cancelled, after the BBC saw my address and realised that I was not in fact based in London but in Oxford.

In the end, the interview was rescheduled to the following afternoon, so I could appear on a late evening news show on BBC World in Asia, doing a remote interview from the BBC studios in Oxford. My mother did not change her cable subscription in vain. Yet that initial cancellation was very instructive to me, as it made me aware very early on of what my role is in all of this publicity. The media is interested in the *OED*, not in me personally. My job is to represent the dictionary the best way that I can and to communicate to the public the core messages about the English language that the *OED* wishes to convey with every editorial project I am asked to talk about. Although dealing with the media is part of my work, the spotlight is not on me but on the dictionary. This makes me feel more comfortable about doing publicity.

Another thing that gives me a lot of confidence is the amount of support I receive from the *OED*. I was given media training, in which media professionals taught me how to prepare for and perform effectively in an interview, whether for print, radio, or television. I also receive plenty of advice from more experienced fellow editors, particularly from our Chief Editor, and our Public Liaison, Fiona McPherson, who for many years has been representing the *OED* in the media. In addition, all my media engagement activities for the *OED* are planned and organised by my very capable colleagues in our Publicity and Marketing teams.

The following are the types of interviews that I am often invited to give:

- Live television interviews. Despite being the most nerve-wracking, I find live interviews on news programmes preferable because they are short (they usually do not take more than a few minutes), and I have more control over them. Since they are live, I know that whatever I say during the interview is exactly what the audience hears. I just make sure that I come prepared so that I do not say anything I will regret. I also try to forget while I sit there in that small room in BBC Oxford with the city's dreaming spires green-screened behind me, that although I can only see a red light and a camera, I am actually speaking to millions of people around the world.

- Live radio interviews. Some of the most enjoyable interviews I have ever done were on live radio. They are usually longer than television appearances, and perhaps not having the pressure of knowing that your face can be seen by an audience makes these interviews feel so much more like a casual conversation.
- Recorded television interviews. This type of interview takes the longest time, sometimes even as much as half a day. This is because aside from filming you as you answer questions, you also need to be filmed doing other things for supplemental or alternative footage. For these interviews, I have been asked to pretend to be working at my desk, to walk back and forth down a London street or the corridors of the *OED* office, to riffle through the pages of a volume of the 1989 Second Edition of the dictionary (the last print edition) as if I were looking for a specific entry – this is probably the closest to acting I will ever get to do in my life.
- Email interviews. These are the interviews I do most frequently, as print journalists generally prefer to send their questions and get answers via email.
- Interviews via video conference. This type of interview has become more typical in the past two years, during the coronavirus pandemic. Whether broadcast live or recorded, I like the fact that I can do these interviews from the comfort of my own home, although I have to ensure that I do them in a quiet, well-lighted part of my house that is free from distractions.

I believe what is most important about public engagement with the *OED*'s World English updates are the wider conversations they open up on the status of minoritised varieties of English. One good example was when the *OED* added 29 new words from Nigerian English in its December 2019 update (Salazar 2020). The press enthusiastically covered this story, with articles appearing in major Nigerian newspapers such as the *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Punch*, *Vanguard* and the *Guardian* (Nigeria), as well as in international news outlets such as *Reuters*, the *Times* (UK), the *New York Times*, the *Guardian* (UK) and the *New York Post*. I also spoke to the BBC World Service, BBC World News and CNN about the Nigerian update.

The media coverage included not just the typical news articles listing the words that have been added, but also think pieces that discussed the broader implications of the *OED*'s efforts in recording Nigerian English. Reuters (Ukomadu and Carsten, 2020) quoted Nigerian author TJ Benson, who said, 'When [Nigerian English] is being suppressed or we are being told that there is a better way (of saying something), or this is what is correct and then this is what is not correct, I think it affects us and it also demeans us… I think this (recognition) is empowering for lots of us writers and for everyday people because, at the end of the day, it ties back to identity and how we perceive ourselves and how we express ourselves.' *Guardian* (UK) columnist Afua Hirsch (2020) wrote how English and other European languages were finding their 'centre of gravity shifting to Africa.' Olabisi Deji-Folutile (2020), a member of the Nigerian Guild of Editors, stated in her column for the *Premium Times* that 'Nigerians should freely express themselves in their own ways and continue to push themselves to acceptance on the world map … we need to reflect our cultures in our languages.' These opinions show that, by simply adding a few words to the dictionary, the *OED* is able to raise the profile of localised Englishes, encouraging previously marginalised speakers of English to question the hegemony of standard British English and embrace their own unique way of using the language.

More recently, in October 2021, an even bigger wave of publicity was generated by the addition to the *OED* of 29 words of Korean origin (Salazar, 2021). This was set off by an article in the *Guardian* (UK), which highlighted the Korean loanwords in the *OED*'s September 2021 update and linked the dictionary's inclusion of these words to increasing global interest in the country's popular culture, as evidenced by the rise of K-pop acts such as BTS, of Korean films such as the Oscar Best Picture winner *Parasite* and of K-dramas such as the Netflix smash hit *Squid Game*. The *Guardian* article was soon followed by extensive coverage in both the South Korean and international press. South Korean President Moon Jae-in even released a public statement on social media expressing how proud he was of the *OED*'s recognition of the increasing influence of the Korean language across the globe.

Just as with the earlier Nigerian update, the Korean update also led to interesting commentary on what it means for words of Korean origin to be documented by the *OED* and how this reflects larger shifts in the evolution of the English language. The *OED*'s release notes were quoted by almost all reports published, particularly the concluding lines:

> The adoption and development of […] Korean words in English […] demonstrate how lexical innovation is no longer confined to the traditional centres of English in the United Kingdom and the United States. They show how Asians in different parts of the continent invent and exchange words within their own local contexts, then introduce these words to the rest of the English-speaking world, thus allowing the Korean wave to continue to ripple on the sea of English words.
>
> *(Salazar 2021)*

However, it is not only through the print or broadcast media that the *OED* can spark important conversations on World Englishes. In the past couple of years of the pandemic, the dictionary has hosted several free webinars on various topics relating to World Englishes attended by hundreds of people from around the world. Its most recent and successful event was a roundtable discussion in which a panel of experts representing a wide range of expertise and sociolinguistic contexts talked about the social and economic impact of language prejudice on certain language communities and how the documentation of minoritised varieties of English can help fight this prejudice.[5]

Top tips

The following are three pieces of advice that have served me well in communicating lexicography to a wide audience:

- Always be prepared for your media engagements, especially if they are live. Craft clear, brief and concise answers to the questions you expect to be asked. For live interviews, also prepare a short opening spiel in case your interviewer starts your conversation with an open-ended request, such as 'So, tell me about…'
- Something very important that I learned in my media training is that I should lead with examples. My first experience of public speaking is at academic conferences, where the convention is to lay the theoretical groundwork first before moving to specific examples. The opposite is required in media interviews, where you normally have a quarter or less of the 20 minutes you get for a conference presentation. It is thus better to draw the audience in with good examples that illustrate the point you want to get across. For a lexicographer, that means showing up to the interview with a few interesting words.
- You always have to appear serious and professional in your media engagements, but there is also nothing wrong in showing a bit of your personality. I find it much better for my nerves to treat an interview as a conversation with an interested interlocutor on a subject I am enthusiastic about.

Conclusion

Contrary to popular belief, *OED* editors are generally not word lovers – I certainly am not. I am too busy analyzing words to love them. What I love is not the individual words themselves but the discoveries I make about them, the tiny details and wider patterns that tell me so much about language and about people. I love going to work every day knowing that I will learn something new and contribute something fresh to this monumental work of scholarship to which much greater individuals than I am have dedicated their labour and talents over more than 100 years. The most rewarding thing about public engagement is connecting with other people who share this enthusiasm for linguistic discovery and appreciation for language in all of its diversity. I am grateful to be part of the *OED* and to have it as a platform from which to influence the way speakers of World Englishes perceive the way they speak the language, to play a small role in amplifying voices that have long been left unheard.[6]

Notes

1 'Lexicographer, n.f. A writer of dictionaries; a harmless drudge, that busies himself in tracing the original, and detailing the signification of words.' Definition of the word *lexicographer* in Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755).

2 The fruit of the calamondin. Also: the tree producing this fruit. Green, unripe calamansi are commonly used in Philippine cooking, and the tree is frequently cultivated elsewhere as an ornamental garden plant (*OED*).
3 Of, relating to, or designating the Kapampangans […] a people of central Luzon Island in the Philippines, principally inhabiting its central plain around the Pampanga River (*OED*).
4 Food or snacks provided as an accompaniment to alcoholic drinks (*OED*).
5 A recording of this event is available to view on the OED website: https://public.oed.com/blog/webinar-language-prejudice/
6 Many books of both fiction and non-fiction have been written about the *OED*, lexicography and lexicographers. The following are my favourites. ***Books on the* OED *and its history*:** Brewer, C. (2007) *Treasure-House of the Language: The Living OED*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Gilliver, P. (2016) *The Making of the* Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ***Books on the lives of lexicographers*:** Murray, K. M. E. (1977) *Caught in the Web of Words: James Murray and the* Oxford English Dictionary. New Haven: Yale University Press; Simpson, J. (2016) *The Word Detective: A Life in Words: From Serendipity to Selfie*. Little, Brown; Stamper, K. (2017) *Word by Word: The Secret Life of Dictionaries*. New York: Pantheon Books. ***Books featuring fictional lexicographers*:** Miura, S. (2017) *The Great Passage* (J. Winters Carpenter, trans.). Amazon Crossing. (Original work published 2011); Williams, E. (2020) *The Liar's Dictionary*. London: William Heinemann.

11

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF FIGURATIVE COMMUNICATION AND ADVERTISING

Reflections on a collaboration between linguistics researchers and a Midlands-based marketing agency

Samantha Ford and Jeannette Littlemore

Introduction

Metaphor is a powerful and widely used device in advertising, and there has been a substantial amount of research into the roles that it plays and the reasons for its success (Chang and Yen 2013; Gkiouzepas 2015; Jeong 2008; Pérez-Sobrino 2016; Phillips and McQuarrie 2002). However, much of this research has been laboratory-based, and much of the analysis of metaphor in advertising has been reliant on researchers' intuitions to interpret the 'intended message' of an advertisement. The main reason for the lack of real-world focus in this area is largely due to the fact that there has been limited proactive engagement with professionals from the advertising industry itself.

Research into the role played by metaphor in advertising has much to gain from the inclusion of input from advertising professionals. Metaphors can be read in many different ways, and the ways in which they are understood by metaphor scholars may differ considerably from the ways in which they are understood by the creative professionals who produced them or indeed the consumers at whom they are targeted (Littlemore and Pérez-Sobrino 2017; Pérez-Sobrino et al. 2019). In academic metaphor studies, a metaphor is deemed to be 'effective' if it has elicited a positive response from participants, or if the participants have said that the advertisement would make them more likely to buy the product that is being advertised or to engage in the action that is being promoted (Fishbein et al. 2002: 239). As the majority of academic studies have not incorporated actual distribution and sales data for live campaigns, perceived effectiveness measures (e.g. self-reported participant ratings) are deemed to serve as a 'best estimate' to indicate the degree of 'persuasive potential' (Dillard et al. 2007: 617) and as a proxy for actual effectiveness (i.e. how people would respond to a live campaign).

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However, 'perceived effectiveness' scores can be unreliable in predicting actual effectiveness, as people tend to over predict the extent to which an advertisement may encourage sales or lead to behavioural change (Dillard et al. 2007).

Moreover, some of the research into the role played by metaphor in advertising has tended to assume that the main goal is to 'sell a product,' whereas advertising is increasingly being used for brand building (i.e. building a brand's reputation) or for discussing a particular ideology or social issue (Binet and Field 2013). Indeed, the annual Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity for innovative campaigns frequently awards top prizes to agencies who have produced campaigns that enact a social duty, whether that be charitable donations and investment in community projects (e.g. Nike: *Just Do It HQ at The Church*[1]) or the incorporation of inclusive considerations of their product design (e.g. IKEA's *ThisAbles*[2]). Therefore, the notion of an 'intended message,' which is discussed in much of the metaphor literature, cannot be accurately confirmed without consulting the original authors of the advertisement, and little research has been done that asks advertisers what exactly they intend to communicate when developing campaigns.

In our research, we have attempted to bridge the gap between metaphor researchers and advertising professionals by working together on research projects based around advertising campaigns that are in the process of being developed. The research began as an EU-funded Marie-Curie funded project, EMMA: *European Multimodal Metaphor in Advertising*,[3] with Dr Paula Pérez-Sobrino as the Research Fellow. The aim of this project was to explore people's comprehension of, and emotional responses to, metaphor in advertising across different cultures. Within the context of the EMMA project, we worked with various communication and branding agencies, ranging from large-scale multinational organisations to small local agencies, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how metaphor is used in advertising and received by consumers.

Through these partnerships, we hoped to gain deeper insights into the intended messages of the advertisements and to explore first-hand how and why certain metaphors are used in campaigns, as well as to measure how people engage with metaphor and whether the use of metaphor in different formats contributes to advertising effectiveness. Working with advertising agencies meant that we were able to access and observe measures for both perceived and actual effectiveness.

Enter Big Cat…

Our most successful and enduring partnership has been with the Birmingham-based marketing agency Big Cat Agency.[4] We first met the CEO of Big Cat, Anthony Tattum, at a Birmingham 'Business Breakfast' event at which business leaders and researchers are invited to give talks on a common theme. The theme of the Business Breakfast at which we presented was: *Examining Language in Business*. We had not met Big Cat before the event, but during the course of the event where we each presented our ideas (EMMA on 'metaphor in advertising' and Anthony from Big Cat on 'creative clarity') we realised that we had a common interest in maximising the effectiveness of the language used in advertising and that there was therefore potential for collaboration. Our collaboration grew out of a mutual interest in gaining an insight into the workings of metaphor in advertising and in measuring its impact on consumer attitude and behaviour. We believed that we could investigate these issues by combining our knowledge of metaphor in linguistics with the extensive experience of Big Cat in creating campaigns.

The partnership began in 2018 and was informal to begin with. It has since transitioned into a collaborative PhD project with Samantha Ford as the PhD student, and Jeannette Littlemore and Anthony Tattum as joint lead supervisors. The project is funded by the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) government body. In the context of this more formal collaboration, we have conducted studies that have investigated the effective use of metaphor in different environments in advertising, including websites, logos and billboards.

The variety of clients with whom Big Cat works, including charities, healthcare and leisure providers, and the range of media through which they work has provided us with opportunities to use a variety of approaches and frameworks in our research. We have combined eye-tracking technology and electro-dermal measurements (EDA) with focus groups, interviews, surveys and corpus linguistic techniques to test the use and effectiveness of figurative language in five Big Cat campaigns for clients (to date, 2021): Right Track (professional training solutions); Solihull Community Housing (housing association); Aspire's Channel Swim (spinal cord injury charity), Umbrella Health (sexual health NHS trust); and Absolutely Fitness (gym brand). We have also contributed to a number of other projects and clients including the Mental Health and Productivity Pilot (MHPP) funded by MidlandsEngine and Coventry University for mental health at work[5]; Royce Lingerie, specialised lingerie for post-operation and maternity women; and BHSF health insurance.

This collaborative work has had multiple benefits, which have included extending the reach of the clients with whom Big Cat works (many of whom are charities), improving creative practice in Big Cat itself and (for us) deepening our understanding of the ways in which advertising and communication work, which has had a significant impact on our academic work.

The benefits of collaborating with Big Cat

Working with Big Cat has been highly beneficial to our research. It has opened our eyes to the real aims of communications and branding campaigns, which are often more subtle than we had previously understood them to be. We have had opportunities to develop research projects and investigate aspects of figurative language that we would never have thought of investigating. These have included, for example, investigations into the interaction between metaphor and humour in the context of creative puns; the interaction between language, colour and shape in terms of metaphorical expression; and studies of the myriad different forms that metaphorical creativity can take in different forms of expression. The research projects have provided us with an opportunity to work with large amounts of naturally occurring data and this has helped us to develop theoretical approaches that are more reflective of 'real-world' communication (some of which are reported in Sobrino et al. 2021). Recommendations that we have made arising from our research have been implemented in developing campaigns, and the impact of our work has been measured objectively through product sales, consumer behaviour, website traffic and social media engagement, where comparisons have been made with previous campaigns that had been created without insights from our research. Developing relationships with marketing professionals has also broadened our network, providing potential opportunities for future collaborations.

Big Cat have benefitted from the collaboration too. We have provided them with findings based on rigorous research studies that, when implemented, have helped their clients, many of whom are charities and non-government organisations (NGOs). The collaboration has also helped them to improve their creative practices, as well as contribute to the overall success of their campaigns. This has added a unique selling point (USP) to their business which has helped them to attract new clients.

The challenges we have faced and how we have overcome them

Somewhat ironically, one of the main challenges that we have faced in this collaboration involves language. One of the first things that we discovered when working with Big Cat is that academic linguists and marketing professionals sometimes use different words to talk about very similar concepts, and conversely, that we sometimes use the same word to mean very different things. We have therefore needed to take great care in explaining terminology to one another and not assume that those on the other side of the collaboration will necessarily understand exactly what we mean. For example, we have found that, when using terms such as 'metonymy' and 'hyperbole' with Big Cat, it is useful to illustrate them through the use of memorable examples, and in turn, when Big Cat uses terms such as 'marketing effectiveness,' they provide detailed explanations showing the complexity of the meaning of the expressions. Even the word 'metaphor' has been susceptible to different interpretations. Big Cat employees tend to use the term somewhat loosely, to refer to different kinds of creative language, and are less familiar with the idea of implicit, conceptual metaphors. They have been interested to learn of the work that has been conducted on the use of metaphor in forms of expression other than language.

In order to learn more about how to 'speak each other's language,' we have had to ask many questions in order to clarify unfamiliar terms. Furthermore, in order to familiarise ourselves with the genres that characterise the advertising workplace, we have observed meetings between Big Cat and their clients, attended events with marketing audiences (e.g. The Marketing MeetUp, Birmingham[6]) and read up about marketing trends by marketing experts (Binet and Field 2007, 2013, 2017, 2019; Chun et al. 2018; Field 2019). We have also continued to learn throughout the partnership, and one of the authors (Ford) has taken up several training opportunities, including studying for and receiving the Eff Test Certificate, accredited by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA). She has also attended behavioural science workshops delivered by Richard Shotton, author of *The Choice Factory* (Shotton 2018). These opportunities have been made accessible through Big Cat, who have always been willing to share their resources with us. In taking these opportunities, we have not only expanded our knowledge and appreciation of the industry in which we are researching metaphor but we have also developed our ability to interpret and converse with our partners more effectively.

We approached the early stages of our partnership with an open mind and an adaptive attitude, which helped to build rapport. We tested out different ways of working together, identifying similarities and differences in our respective goals. For each project, this has meant identifying what each party wants to achieve, who should correspond with whom and how frequently we need to meet. We review the progress of the project on a regular basis and ensure that everyone involved is aware of the outputs to date. We communicate with each other at each step, check whether the project is on track and decide whether it needs to change course. Sometimes unexpected findings lead us down new and unanticipated paths. At times, we have had to negotiate the requirements of a particular project, including the need for academic rigour (i.e. sample sizes with suitable power and effect size for reliable statistical inferences to be made) and the potential for open access research and publication of findings from the studies that we have worked on together. In these discussions, we have emphasised the importance (for us) of gaining recognition from our institution, funders and academic peers.

We found out very early on in our partnership that academics and advertisers sometimes work to very different timelines. While academic studies require space to think about, design and conduct, advertisers work on a fast-paced schedule with multiple client campaigns in various stages of production at any one time, with sometimes only a few months from client instruction to campaign creation to the distribution of a live campaign. A fast turnaround for reports of our study findings has sometimes involved intense periods of work. In order to deal with this issue, we have been somewhat selective in terms of which campaigns we choose to work on. In general, we tend to choose campaigns that are beneficial to society, such as professional training, housing, public health charities and trusts, and fitness and wellbeing brands. We have found that the brief reports we produce for Big Cat summarising our findings provide the basis for longer publishable papers.

Maintaining regular contact has been an integral component of our relationship. Samantha Ford (co-author) has a hot-desk space at the Big Cat office where (before the Covid-19 pandemic) she worked once a week to work among the marketing staff. Samantha's physical presence within the organisation has served multiple purposes. In addition to providing a physical manifestation of the partnership, it has also facilitated progress in-person updates, enabled us to attend in-agency meetings with clients to gain a contextual understanding of each campaign and allowed for spontaneous conversations in which exchanges of expertise and discussions have taken place that may have otherwise been missed.

The view from Big Cat

We felt that it would be useful in this chapter not just to present our own view of the collaboration but also the views of Big Cat. As part of the research collaboration, we have conducted interviews with seven colleagues[7] at Big Cat, including the CEO, creative designers, account managers, human resources and administrative staff. We asked them, among other things, to talk about the kinds of things they consider when putting together a campaign, how they define creativity and effectiveness in advertising and what benefits and drawbacks our collaboration has brought. Here, we collate some of their thoughts.

Many of the Big Cat employees commented on the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and expertise that the collaboration has brought: 'It's a mutually beneficial relationship … born out of longevity … we [advertisers] are trying to be more scientific and you [academics] are trying to understand the area of industry that you're interested in, and so it is that two-way relationship' [001]. They particularly appreciated the academic rigour that the collaboration has brought to their work: 'If you're supported by academic rigour and you're supported by theories that have a foundation in academia, then you're going to make so much more progress and you'll also develop a wider array of understanding than you ever would by just trying to figure it out of the macro sense' [002].

Some commented on the importance of effective communication that acknowledges the different backgrounds of those involved in the partnership: 'I would just say that communication is the absolute key to building an established relationship between any two bodies who technically speak two different languages, as it were. Finding the middle ground and being able to discuss and having a secure and confident open area where people can ask their questions, people can say, actually you know what, I don't understand that, please could you explain a little bit more' [002].

The advertising professionals commented on the fact that the research can make the mechanics of the creative process more tangible and can facilitate easier communication within a creative team as well as with clients: 'For all those times we couldn't put a label on something and you knew that you had to achieve a certain objective but you weren't quite sure how, it gives you both the support when you go to your clients to sort of explain and verify what it is that you're discussing' [002]. 'It makes a campaign a lot more effective when you've got all these different angles and different pieces of information; we learn a lot of things along the way as well' [006]. Others commented on the fact that applying advertising practices that are supported by academic research can also strengthen pitches to clients: 'If you can start bringing actual research into your pitches, that is a really strong statement. Once people understand that what you're trying to say is actually backed up by strong academic principles, then it adds a lot of weight to what you're saying' [005].

Some interviewees reflected on the wider implications of the partnership: '[A collaborative academic-practitioner partnership] is about different viewpoints, but it's [also] about breadth and depth of insight and understanding' [001]. In other words, it is not just identifying the use of figurative language in advertising but interrogating how and why figurative language is used creatively in advertising and thinking about the impact of language more generally: 'It's really, really useful to have the bank of knowledge from an academic perspective because it gives us [advertisers] that robust proven evidence-based approach… Gut feeling intuition is not enough alone' [004]. The added value provided by the collaboration was a focus of many of the interviewees: 'Something that is quite widespread within marketing … if you look at some of the adverts I've seen, you know, there's not real insight to it at all. It's just they've grabbed a celebrity and they've put his or her face on the ad without really any thought. I guess it does work to a certain extent. But to be more effective, it's got being driven by an understanding of the audience. That's where it starts. The more you can understand that audience, the better. And then you can apply the studies and experiments and then you can test it' [004].

Some of the interviewees commented on the need to find a balance between 'hard-nosed' empirical research and the creative process, and on the complementary nature of these two approaches: 'I think for me, I've always been nervous about testing creative campaigns because there have been so many stories of campaigns that have actually turned out to be really effective… but I think it's all down to the context of how you test it' [003]. 'It does worry me a little bit in terms of people getting stuck on numbers… I know that numbers are important to a campaign to see what a campaign's reach is, for example, but I wouldn't want that to influence the creative side of it' [007]. These interviewees suggest that combining academic rigour with practical observation of consumer behaviour may provide more realistic insights into creativity. For instance, [003] explains that academic lab testing may encourage more rational responses from people because they are presented with an advertisement and asked to explain how they feel about it; whereas, observing people viewing an advertisement on TV at home focuses more on their emotional response in a natural setting: 'I think there's always a bias to people responding to questions. So, for me, robust research, and the ways academics can help, is to assist agencies and marketers in testing their creative [campaigns] through observing people, asking people questions, whatever tricks they've got up their sleeves, and then putting that all together to get a better picture' [003]. A common theme that ran through all of the interviews was the need for synergy and a recognition of the respective skillsets and approaches that are brought by advertisers and linguists.

A case study: working together on a sexual health campaign

One of our most successful studies conducted through this partnership is our work with Big Cat on a sexual health campaign developed for Umbrella Health (Ford et al. 2021). Umbrella Health is an NHS trust with sexual health clinics based in Birmingham and Solihull, UK. Umbrella wanted to increase the uptake of home testing kits for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the form of increased orders and returns for testing in the West Midlands region. Sexual health is still a stigmatised subject in the UK (and further afield), and so Umbrella were looking for a way to raise awareness of sexual health and STI testing in a more indirect and palatable way. Metaphor lends itself very well to this task, as it can be used to talk about something in terms of something else (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003) and has been found to engage attention and elicit positive attitudes from viewers in the context of advertisements (Pérez-Sobrino et al. 2019; van Mulken et al. 2010). Humour can also serve as a powerful tool for mediating embarrassment caused by sensitive topics (Chapple and Ziebland 2004) and increase people's acceptance of messages involving sex-related topics (Sparks and Lang 2015).

We were a part of this campaign at every stage, from conception to distribution of the live campaign, which meant that we were able to make recommendations to Big Cat and to Umbrella, based on our findings for how metaphor and humour may be used effectively together in this campaign. Our study involved an online quasi-experiment that presented 12 advertisements to 355 participants from across the West Midlands region. The advertisements used humorous double-entendres (i.e. puns that can be interpreted in 'an innocuous, straightforward way, given the context, and a risqué way that indirectly alludes to a different, indecent context'; Kiddon and Brun 2011: 89) of well-known landmarks in the West Midlands. The names of these landmarks could be alternatively read as referring to sex- or relationship-related activities. For example, there is an area of Birmingham called 'Sparkbrook.' One of the advertisements in the campaign contained the question 'Got a spark with Brook?' – which suggests that someone may be contemplating a romantic (or sexual) relationship with someone called Brook. In another advertisement, the independent shopping and business workplace known as 'The Custard Factory' was reformulated into the question: 'Having fun with his Custard Factory?' which refers to the idea of playing with a man's genitalia.

As we can see in these examples, the double-entendres had a metaphorical basis. The decision to employ metaphor in the context of double-entendres was driven by the fact that double-entendres (like metaphor) work on different levels and contain an element of unexpectedness. They have been shown to be a useful tool in advertising in that they attract attention (Abass 2007) and resonate with viewers (Djafarova 2008). The fact that double-entendres allow people to talk indirectly about sex, whilst appearing to talk about something completely different, makes them an ideal tool for use in advertising campaigns focusing on sexual health.

We tested the effectiveness of advertisements where the double-entendre had been manipulated in three different ways: (1) with and without word insertion; (2) with and without a creative metaphorical expression; and (3) whether they referred to the beginning, middle, or end of the sexual scenario.

It is beyond this chapter to go into more detail of this study (for more details, see Ford et al. 2021). But in summary, we found that the advertisements with double-entendres that kept the place name together without word insertion (making the cue for the alternative meaning more indirect), that made use of creative metaphors and that referred to the most active 'middle' part of the sexual scenario (sexual intercourse) were rated higher for perceived effectiveness, humour and likelihood of engagement on social media (e.g. like, comment, share or tag a friend). We recommended to Big Cat and Umbrella Health that they include more of these effective items in their campaign, which went live in June 2019. A corpus-based analysis of the free-text responses revealed variation in the types of interpretations that were offered by participants depending on their age, gender and education, and this information was also used by Big Cat to help them target the campaign more effectively.

The campaign was highly successful in comparison with expected outcomes and previous campaigns. Marketing evidence showed that outdoor engagement with the campaign exceeded its target by 7.66% (N = 655,648 from prospected 608,984) and on Facebook, online post views increased by 63,281 from the previous year (2018). During the campaign, the Umbrella Health website attracted 1,000 more unique visitors than prior to the campaign, with the 'Appointments' page (step one for ordering an STI kit) views also increasing by 1,000 unique visitors. A 51% increase of STI testing kits were ordered and returned for testing (from 3,784 per month to 5,729 per month) during the campaign (April–July 2019). Of these kits, 10% tested positive meaning that an additional 778 STIs (including HIV) were diagnosed and treated as a result of the campaign.

It is important to note that there are likely to have been multiple factors that contributed to the campaign's success and that our contribution was only part of the picture. However, this case study provides an example of how metaphor research can at least contribute to improvements in sexual health.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the benefits, opportunities and challenges we have faced in our ongoing collaborative partnership with Big Cat. Working with Big Cat has enabled us to learn more about each other and about our respective industries, and to contextualise and empirically test our research on figurative language and creativity in advertising. Finally, we would like to say that as academics engaging with non-academic or non-linguistic partners, we must ensure that we speak plainly for lay audiences but also remember that the research and expertise we offer is specialist and valuable. We have found that collaboration with practitioners can lead to developments in the theoretical underpinning of the discipline and to the methods that are employed in the research as well as to improvements in professional marketing practices, client services and (in some cases) public health and wellbeing.

Top tips

- Try to involve your non-academic partner in the design of the study from the outset.
- Expect to be working with different timeframes and work out ways to deal with this.
- Be on the lookout for terminology that means different things to you and your non-academic partner.
- Look for opportunities to learn from your non-academic partner and consider how this learning might contribute to your discipline.

Acknowledgement

We would like to give a special acknowledgement to Dr Paula Perez Sobrino for leading the foundational work on which our collaborative research has been based.

Notes

1 Nike's *Just Do It HQ at the Church* was a collaborative campaign that renovated a disused Church in Chicago to give young people a safe space to play basketball, in an area with high rates of gun violence on the streets, and was awarded the 2019 Cannes Lions Grand Prix for Industry Craft (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcPMxwqV8BQ).
2 IKEA's *ThisAbles* was a collaborative campaign that produced specialised add-ons to IKEA furniture using 3D printing that increased the accessibility of furniture for people with disabilities and special needs, winning the 2019 Cannes Lions Grand Prix award for Health and Wellness, among other awards (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0PA_VpLlDw&t=1s).
3 Visit the EMMA project website for more details (https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/edacs/departments/englishlanguage/research/projects/emma/index.aspx).
4 Big Cat Agency (www.bigcatagency.com).
5 Mental Health and Productivity Pilot (MHPP, www.mhpp.me).
6 MeetUp is a platform for events by groups (very similar to Eventbrite), and The Marketing MeetUp group in Birmingham holds regular events that involve networking opportunities with and talks by marketing experts (www.meetup.com/The-Marketing-Meetup-Birmingham).
7 Advertisers are attributed ID codes to anonymise their data and adhere to ethical practices, denoted as e.g. [001], [002], etc.

12

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Natalie Braber

Introduction

Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins (2009: 34) stated: 'Linguistic research is […] at the very least a social act and not simply an isolated intellectual act.' In other words, our research takes place in the community and would be impossible without collaboration. That collaboration can take the form of public engagement through community projects.

This chapter is about the prospects of these projects for linguists and some of the difficulties they may encounter. It deals with practical issues, shows how to overcome hurdles and gives useful tips. As a linguist, I have been involved in numerous community projects during the last 15 years. The information in this chapter relates to my experience in a specific area of linguistics, and I describe only two projects in detail, but the contents of this chapter can be applied across the entire field.

Challenges and opportunities of public engagement in community projects

The term *community projects* here refers to research carried out with groups outside universities. These groups, from official government agencies to voluntary local charities, are extremely diverse, but in general they share certain characteristics and constraints, which influence how academics engage with them.

A major issue is self-perception. Some group members feel that working with universities is exclusively for people who have studied at university themselves or are similarly qualified. Some may have had negative experiences with academics who seemed to have come from an 'ivory tower.' It is important for academics to help individuals or groups to overcome such feelings, showing that individuals

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and their groups are valuable partners in the project. Rather than emphasising academic leadership or knowledge, we have to empower groups to take ownership and feel part of the project through collaboration which will be discussed later. Some groups are very experienced in working with academics, but for many others it is a novel experience. Frequently, collaborators explain that this is the first time they have taken part in such activities, and they now feel that they can take part in such research projects.

Researchers may therefore need to give up some of the control over the project. Academics are used to being in control of all aspects of their research, from planning to collecting and analysing data. Benoit et al. (2005: 276), for example, carried out a project where the community members conducted all the interviews. This meant that the academic partners initially felt distanced from the data. However, if the project participants are involved from the outset, and have been adequately trained and supported, this problem need not occur. As part of my projects, I have been involved with the setting up of a forum of community groups, to allow them to become involved in the project and work together to share knowledge and experience with the university and each other. In fact, the reversal of traditionally assumed power relations (with academics leading projects top-down) can ultimately benefit the project by encouraging wider engagement and inviting those with in-group information and contacts to fully participate. This needs to be planned carefully (Stoecker 2003: 36) to maximise benefit to the project.

Another challenge is finance. Most community groups have little financial support. For example, they may struggle to pay for travel or other expenses. Some groups may not want to apply for financial support, as they feel ill-equipped or do not want to be responsible for managing the funding. Finding the right funding is therefore an essential way to increase public engagement. Funding can also help to involve marginalised and minority groups, thereby giving a voice to the experiences of people who may otherwise remain inaccessible. Funding also plays an important symbolic role to outside groups, signalling that research on a particular topic is worthwhile.

Other challenges come from the time pressure and lack of human resources that community groups may suffer from. In this, researchers not only need to help the groups overcome these hurdles, but they should also remember that very short-term projects could negatively impact on the group's ability to plan forward. Furthermore, many group members have other work and responsibilities, which limit the amount of time they can spend on projects, particularly in the pre-funded stages. They may also have to pull out of projects unexpectedly or prove unable to complete tasks. Sometimes there is a discrepancy between the amount of time envisaged in the funding bid and the actual time required on the project. This is generally seen as 'normal' within academia, but it can be a real problem for groups. It is best to be honest and realistic from the outset about what is expected from a group. Time lapses are also relevant because it can take so long to apply for and receive responses about funding, which may affect the enthusiasm of groups.

Moreover, building relationships takes time, starting well before the start of a project. Solid relationships are based on mutual trust. Researchers have to earn this trust. This can be a problem in short-term funded projects, which only last a limited time. For projects that deal with sensitive issues, a high level of trust is crucial to the integrity of the project and its results. Reaching that level takes even more time. There is no quick fix, but one way to overcome the problem is working together from the start of a project – not from the final planning stages or later – ensuring that all participants fully understand the value of the project and what is required of them.

By doing so, you may find that your community collaborators are likely to have useful insights that you might not even have considered. But this can also take place in reverse. Many of the groups I collaborated with did not actively work on their local language as they thought it was slang and not worthy of academic investigation. When they realised that someone from a university was actually interested in their language, they came to engage very actively with it and spread the word to other individuals and groups. Do not feel you can only do such work if you have a large grant. Much of it can be conducted on relatively small budgets, and much activity is already taking place, so all you have to do is simply become part of it.

Finally, academics need to realise that the value of a community project may be perceived differently by the participating groups. For example, they may have an urgent need to be heard by the wider public, and reaching this audience through publication and promotion of the project is for them a valuable goal. It is even possible that the aims of the linguist and the community group may not coincide. These aims may even be at odds. However, this does not pose a problem if it becomes clear early that both sets of aims can be achieved.

In my experience, working with community groups is both enjoyable and useful. This life-enhancing quality is confirmed by many others. For instance, Facer and Enright (2016) have reported the benefits of such collaboration, including groups being able to take a step back and review their objectives, gaining legitimacy by working with academics, offering authenticity to research projects and sharing values and interests. Participatory and collaborative research allows projects to flourish, knowledge to be built and legacies to be created (Facer and Enright 2016: 153).

Collaboration with outside partners also offers other opportunities for academics. Over the past few years, issues around public engagement and impact have become ever more important in academic life. For the UK in particular, the focus of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) means that universities and academics are judged not only on the quality of their output and the research environment but also on the impact of their work, resulting in higher funding for 'higher quality' departments. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) state that public engagement and impact of projects on communities is crucial to many of their projects (AHRC 2015–16). Impact is now a significant criterion for some research, as funding bodies increasingly turn their attention to real-word applications. This impact can be demonstrated through the work which is carried out with community groups.

Challenges and opportunities of public engagement for sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics studies the effects that aspects of society have on the way language is used. This means sociolinguists examine language in relation to social factors, including gender, sexuality, age, social class, ethnicity and regional variation. Labov (1982) has argued that much sociolinguistic research relates to questions which face society and suggested that if we have a chance to study pressing social issues, then we should do so because we can help solve these problems.

Collaborative research is one way in which the study of language can be combined with concern for social issues. Sociolinguistics is outward looking and it is often natural for participants to become stakeholders in projects. On the whole, in my experience, people may not know what sociolinguistics entails, but they are interested in language variation and feel an important link to their identity (see also for example Wolfram 2015: 732–4). Local variation, for example, is inherently interesting to a large proportion of the population. Most have had experiences of sounding different, not understanding someone or being misunderstood. This means that finding ways to work with communities can be relatively straightforward, and there may be a wide interest in the project, the results of which can be disseminated easily to the general public through radio, television and social media (see Lawson and Sayers 2016). Working with community groups is thus very effective in sociolinguistic research and can be beneficial to both academics and the groups involved.

Nevertheless, there are specific challenges. A major one is how to become an insider. Linguists have historically worked with community groups, where frequently the linguist was an outsider to the group (Czaykowska-Higgins 2018: 111). Methods have changed, but earlier work mainly involved the linguist collecting and analysing data, where 'the language speaking community's participation in the research was limited mostly to being the source of fluent speakers with whom a linguist could work' (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009: 16). Linguists often gave little back (Rickford 1997: 161), although there were ways that linguistic research could be combined with concern for social issues (Wolfram 1993: 225). And it was not always so one-sided. For minority and disadvantaged groups, sociolinguists were important in ensuring dialect differences were not treated as language deficits (Wolfram 193: 226).

Furthermore, Wolfram has argued that linguists should be proactive rather than reactive (1993: 228), meaning they should think of ways in which their research could benefit the people they work with. Increasingly, linguists find more productive ways of working with communities and creating partnerships (see also Czaykowska-Higgins 2018: 112). This change from what Yamada refers to as 'helicopter research' (2007: 258) – where the researcher comes in to collect data and then leaves – to more collaborative work is not just taking place in linguistic research, but more widely in humanities and social sciences. This has created methods such as participatory research, action research and community-based research[1] (Czaykowksa-Higgins 2009: 18; Stoecker 2003: 35). It also means that for a community project to be successful, we cannot adopt a researcher-dominated method but should share the project by defining common and community-beneficial goals.

Finally, what if linguists uncover certain attitudes in the groups they work with, such as sexism, racism and other prejudice? Do we include such opinions in the collected data to ensure the accuracy of the data but risk alienating people? To a great extent this will depend on the actual research questions and what data the project is attempting to collect. The neutrality of the researcher was of particular importance in one of my community projects (discussed below). In general, academics must be aware that group members can have different opinions and consider them carefully to ensure that they do not affect the project. Plus, academics need to realise they are not necessarily 'detached' from certain issues and themselves can hold dissenting opinions. Researchers such as Czaykowska-Higgins have stated that researchers cannot be neutral, detached or apolitical, (2009: 35) but I have found that it is in fact possible for a researcher to be neutral if they do not have existing relations with specific groups and that in certain cases being neutral can aid projects or even be essential to their success. How I believe this was achieved will be discussed later in the chapter.

In addition to the general opportunities discussed above, working in community projects allows researchers to give back to the community which enabled their studies and academic career to develop. Overlooked or unknown issues can be highlighted; wrongs can be righted. Collaboration can lead to new social focuses. It can make openings for a group. For example, it may be that highlighting the value of local dialects can empower people to use such varieties in their own creative practices where they did not feel confident enough to do so before. It may also lead to the development of independent research projects and funding applications for new research, which can continue once the initial project has been completed.

Giving back can also take the form of helping people sharpen their skills. Taking part in community projects can offer members of the collaborating group a chance to learn new skills. In one project (Benoit et al. 2005: 272), members of stigmatised groups acquired skills which they were able to apply in their jobs. New skills as well as increased knowledge, deeper understanding and growing confidence can be successfully put to future use. If the community group is involved from the start of a project, specific training needs can be factored into funding bids, ensuring group members have the skills and experience for the project as well as their future life and career. Good collaborative projects can also give groups the enthusiasm and trust to continue their work from which society benefits.

Last but not least, sociolinguistic researchers can benefit from collaborative work, as it increases their reach – particularly when they require access to hard-to-reach or minority groups. For example, working with community groups can help ensure a representative sample. And having the community on board can lead to wider engagement and research results that reflect the reality more accurately than without community participation.

Benefits of public engagement to my research

My research focuses on the accents and dialects of the East Midlands of England, the relationship between language and identity and the role of language in heritage. I have worked in several community projects. Here are two examples.

The project 'Community, Commemoration and the First World War' ran from 2014 to 2020. It came out of the 'Centre for Hidden Histories,' funded by the AHRC and was one of the five World War I engagement centres funded by the council. The role of these engagement centres was to support a wide range of community engagement activities across the UK, by connecting academic and public histories of the First World War as part of the commemoration of the War's centenary, which began in 2014. Their support and expertise enabled researchers from universities to connect with communities by disseminating their interests together. The specific aim of our centre was to engage with community groups as they sought to commemorate and reflect upon the century-long legacy of the War with a focus on hidden histories, the stories which are not usually remembered in traditional commemoration. The centre led or supported over 20 projects in which academic researchers collaborated with community groups to jointly investigate aspects of the war that previously been overlooked in mainstream commemorations. Full details of different projects can be found on the project website at: http://hiddenhistorieswwi.ac.uk/.

The topics of our project included the treatment of 'enemy aliens' in the UK, both by the public and the UK press. We worked with the Young People's Learning Hub, which coordinated First World War research workshops with schools and young people's voluntary groups. These sessions advanced the ideas of the young people and gave them the tools to pursue their own interests. The session activities included the examination of primary sources, artistic creation and performance, formal debating and investigation of period artefacts and locations.

One part of the project was entitled 'Hidden Strangers' and was carried out in collaboration with Pomegranate Youth Theatre in Chesterfield (Derbyshire, UK). It explored the relationship between anti-German propaganda and violence against German citizens living in the East Midlands during the First World War. This was achieved through a combination of research examining the ways which German citizens had been represented in local and national newspaper stories and the writing of a play in workshops led by the playwright Louise Page, the theatre group and me. The play examined how the spread of anti-German feeling was experienced by members of the German diaspora in Britain. For example, in Chesterfield and the surrounding area, German butchers had their shops stoned and windows broken in response to the sinking of the Lusitania in May 1915. Germans who had been living in the UK for many years, some who had come to escape persecution in Germany, lost their jobs, suffered discrimination, were arrested and interned. The participating youth group members co-produced the play, and its performance encouraged interaction with a wide audience, discussing what life was like for Germans in the UK during the War, how this informs us about prejudice and discrimination more generally and the present-day treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

Another part of the project, 'Germans in Nottingham,' involved a longer-term participation from different schools across the East Midlands, with a particular link with one school in a socially deprived area. The participating teachers and pupils were involved from the outset, planning and conducting visits to local archives, libraries, the Imperial War Museum in Manchester and Nottingham Trent University for workshops with documents and artefacts. The immediate outcomes included a play which was written and performed by pupils at a school to show what they had learned. For example, they examined the use of language in representing German citizens in the UK and changes in that usage. The pupils also produced reports, published in school newsletters and other publications such as web blog posts, and they collaborated in collecting data analysed in one of the two articles for academic journals which resulted from the project. It also produced a new lesson plan, which is used by further cohorts of secondary school pupils. For many of the participating pupils, it meant their first visit to a museum, archive, library and university. Such visits were an important aspect of giving back to the communities and individuals involved in these projects. Much of the pupil feedback centred around the opportunities they felt they had been given in deciding what to investigate and how they wanted to take part in the project.

One of the main challenges in this project was that much of it consisted of working with schools. Fitting in with busy curriculum demands and busy teachers can make such projects hard to fulfil. Having strong links with individual teachers in schools who have invested in the project makes this much easier to achieve. It is important to strike the right balance between regular schoolwork and extra-curricular activity to give pupils experiences they would not otherwise receive. Ensuring that the teachers and pupils have an active say in the focus of the project ensures their enthusiasm and shows them they have the ability to take part and contribute to research, which is very empowering. Allowing time to showcase their work to their peers and their families is also rewarding and allows the results of the research to be disseminated to an even wider community. We organised visits to local archives and libraries, and the pupils were active researchers, following up news stories which were about German citizens in the UK at the outbreak of the First World War, examining how they were treated and how language was used to describe them, for example, the changing use of the word *alien* throughout the years of the war (some of the related research questions form part of a publication by Braber and Braber 2021).

My second project example related to coal mining. When I first started work on language variation in the East Midlands, some people suggested I speak to local coal miners as they had their own language – which I have since referred to as Pit Talk. As a result, I interviewed over 50 miners from around the region to talk about the terms they used in their everyday work to describe the jobs, processes and tools they used. Working with both individuals and mining heritage groups from the regions of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire showed that there were regional differences (making the language different to other regions, such as Yorkshire and the North-East, but also within the region itself). In 2015, the last mine in the East Midlands closed, and it became clear that this language would disappear, as it was no longer used. Documenting and preserving the lexis, or vocabulary, used by these miners in collaboration with the people who used this language was (and is) part of my research. There were already a number of mining heritage groups, often working in isolation. They were concerned with preserving objects of mining heritage but never their language. Following some initial interviews, many of the former miners expressed their changing opinions, stating that their language was actually a very important aspect of their identity and should be preserved. One of the members of these mining heritage groups commented that following our collaboration, their group now considered language as part of their cultural heritage, which they had not done before.

Although my research interests were focused mainly on the linguistic aspects of coal mining, particularly the specialised lexicon that was used, the miners were also concerned with ensuring that the heritage of coal mining was preserved, and they feared that younger generations would not remember what coal mining was. This has resulted in years of collaboration. Our main aims were to raise awareness of mining heritage and language, to encourage collaboration within mining groups and to think ahead for future projects.

This collaboration resulted in setting up the East Midlands Coal Mining Heritage Forum, which meets twice a year to discuss what the heritage groups are working on and how to work together. Setting up this forum has meant additional work not directly related to my own research, but this is an important part of giving back to the community and also allowing for continued collaboration between me and the community groups. For many of the community groups, this was the first time they had met each other, visited each other's collections and been able to discuss them, along with methods of good practice and their needs. These were all community groups run by volunteers (mainly elderly miners) who were all worried about the future of their groups and particular skills they felt they were lacking. Thanks to internal funding from Nottingham Trent University, I was able to organise training workshops to show them how to use social media, work with oral histories, apply for funding and discuss issues of archiving with local archives and museums. We were also able to organise conferences and invite speakers from around the country to present their research on mining heritage.

Internal funding from my university as well as funding from the British Academy and the National Lottery Heritage Fund allowed me to run further projects which connected the community groups with young people and local communities not involved in mining. We ran art, creative writing, poetry and music workshops and activities, which raised the profile of mining heritage in the region within the wider community. We arranged school visits to mining groups and heritage centres. We organised social events, open evenings and photographic exhibitions as well as creating strong links between these community groups and local museums. As a result of these projects, we were able to produce an art and sound installation, which was exhibited at a museum, and produced a book and CD of people's work. One of the main challenges of such projects is that it can mean that the project moves away from a researcher's central interests, and it is important to bear this in mind. The community groups and individuals have to be able to learn and grow from such projects, but the academic also needs to be able to fulfil their academic requirements. This means that academics have to ensure that such additional projects are still allowing some focus on their own research interests and strike a balance between the interests of both sides.

An important feature, which contributed towards to the success of the Pit Talk project, was my neutrality. In a former mining region, which is still split by the year-long strike in 1984–5, all miners are either 'working miners' or 'striking miners.'[2] Memories run very deep, and there is still much distrust. As an outsider (female, Scottish, non-miner), I was seen as a neutral participant, who did not take sides, and both sides agreed to work with me. I ensured that every exhibition and publication contained representation from both sides. This meant that both sides could see that their views were being represented to the public. Working long-term with groups, gaining trust and expanding knowledge helps to guide us to where future projects should take us. As it involves thinking carefully about ways to engage community groups and individuals in research, while ensuring that they also benefit from the projects and carry out enjoyable activities, the participants learn more about other groups, acquire skills and grow a sense of community.

These projects have also resulted in closer working relations with local and national archives and museums. Being able to work more closely with these institutions is beneficial on different levels and allows future collaborative work with communities.

Some aspects of the projects have encouraged participants to form a 'network of participation,' where they meet and engage with others, including events organised by third parties. Several groups have reported an interest in collaborating with one another and have been doing so. Some of these groups have agreed to take part in future projects for which funding is currently being sought.

The more tangible outcomes of this project have been very diverse. Working with different community groups allowed me to gather data from a much wider variety of sources than would otherwise have been possible. This created extensive collections of voice recordings and transcriptions, which I have analysed for my own research, and have developed my linguistic theories, for example, comparing lexical variation of mining communities around the UK. Extracts of these recordings are available on a website which also contains information about the work that we are doing. These recordings, in turn, inform further and future research projects. As well as publishing a large but still growing series of academic papers and books, an important focus of these projects has been producing publications which are accessible to the wider community as they are available in local bookshops (and not just specialised academic books) as well as being available at affordable prices, which is often not the case for academic publications. This includes books on Pit Talk and a collection of images of the local coalfields (see Braber 2015, Braber et al. 2017, Amos and Braber 2017). A separate book with creative writing from project participants and the accompanying CD with miners' songs and music immediately sold out (Braber and Amos 2018). More recently, we completed an East Midlands coal mining anthology, which includes short stories and poems by local miners and their friends and families – the first of its kind (Braber and Amos 2021).

Working with community groups also enables me to disseminate research findings even further. Word of mouth has resulted in invitations for presentations and invitations to accompany collaborators to social events. Along with the writers and musicians, we have taken part in poetry and heritage festivals, I work extensively with other schools and, because of the 'local' interest, I have presented our findings in local newspapers. In addition, radio, television and social media recognise me as an expert in the field, and I am often asked by the media to comment as a specialist expert on language issues, not just about mining language or local language but language issues more generally.

These two projects also showed non-academic participants that academic research can be done by them. With regard to the first project, for many participants the First World War was considered a 'sacred' event, and they felt that researching it was the province of specialists. Several long-term participants reported a growing confidence in their ability (even their right) to critically examine the past and its place in our present life and culture. They also realised they can do more than they might have expected. For example, part of the project involved public engagement with a local mine. It had been German-owned and therefore shut down at the outset of the First World War. The local community became involved in the research, and this resulted in the publication of a booklet that was shared with the wider community. Many of the people involved with producing this booklet, as well as the play and other publications mentioned above, had never participated in creative writing groups and courses, and this was their first experience of having their own work published. On a different note, the participating musicians were able to record their mining songs in a professional recording studio and performed their work widely. Enabling projects which are interdisciplinary can have really positive impacts on community projects.

For me, of course, the overarching outcome is that now more people think more about their language. It is a crucial part of our identity and thus of our heritage. However, this is often overlooked. People do not actively think of their language as being part of their local heritage. Much of the research on language documentation is on endangered and minority languages – often these are 'exotic' and linked with faraway places. In some of the UNESCO literature on heritage, there are pictures of 'other' cultures. However, this is an issue relevant to all of us. In our everyday lives, language is an important part of our individuality and our community culture. Community projects have enabled me to get people to consider the language they use, see it in a positive light and engage with it.

Top tips

When you want to work with community groups, the following tips may be useful.

- Remember that you are the one learning from your community. Often people working with an academic feel worried or insecure. So, make sure you remind them that they are the ones who have the knowledge and experience and that you are the one learning from them. They are not being tested to see whether they have the right answers to your questions.
- People in community groups are very likely to have good ideas that you may not have considered, if only because they view the project from a very different angle than you. Is there a way to set up a forum or an informal advisory group to keep the group involved with your progress? If you have a budget, you can put on teas, coffees and biscuits to encourage people to come along.
- It takes time to build trusted relationships. You cannot expect just to go in and 'get data.' You may need to organise events to inform people of what the project is about. And it is just as important to have an event at the end of your project to celebrate the findings. It is a really nice experience to share knowledge with the people who provided it. They can bring along family and friends. If you have a budget, put on some food and drink and have the event in a suitable venue, be it a pub or café or the university campus. It might be a city location people have not been to before, even though they have lived in the city all their lives. Make sure it is accessible and close to public transport.
- Think of ways of giving back to the community. Community groups will express specific topics they are struggling with – social media, websites, networking or funding. Run events to provide training in these fields, which will be seen as very beneficial.

- Think about the ways you publish your results. It is fine to publish academic books and journal articles, but these are generally not affordable or accessible to community groups. Are there also ways you can disseminate your findings in non-academic outputs? Are there ways in which your community can be a part of such publications?
- Rather than seeing impact and public engagement as something you have to do, you can see it as something that will support your research and make sure that others benefit from it – rather than reserving it for the 'ivory tower' of the university. The public perception of what linguists do is limited, but we do really great things! Articulate how our research can improve and change people's lives and behaviour, and then, let's celebrate that!

Notes

1 To briefly define these terms which show significant overlap with each other: *participatory research* has as a primary objective to hand power from the researcher to the research participants who may be community members or community organisations. These participants have control over the research agenda and analyse findings from the research. *Action research* is defined as an enquiry which is conducted *by* and *for* those taking part in the research (see Reason and Bradbury 2001). *Community-based research* is a collaboration between community groups and researchers for the purpose of creating new knowledge or understanding.

2 The miners' strike of 1984–5 was a major industrial action to shut down the British coal industry in an attempt to prevent colliery closures. It was led by Arthur Scargill of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) against the National Coal Board (NCB), a government agency. Opposition to the strike was led by the conservative government of the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who wanted to reduce the power of the trade unions. The NUM was divided over the action, and many mineworkers, especially in the Midlands, worked through the dispute. Few major trade unions supported the NUM, primarily because of the absence of a vote at national level. Violent confrontations between flying pickets and police characterised the year-long strike, which ended in a victory for the conservative government and allowed the closure of many collieries.

13

COMMUNICATING RESEARCH ON METAPHOR AND ILLNESS

Elena Semino

Introduction: an unlikely case of an 'engaged' linguist

If someone had told me at the beginning of my career that I would one day be writing a chapter like the present one, I would not have believed them. While I was working on my PhD in Stylistics at Lancaster University in the 1990s, I could see happening around me activities that were later going to be called 'engagement' and 'impact,' especially in language teaching and learning, literacy studies and computational linguistics. However, as someone with a traditional humanities background and a PhD on language and text worlds in poetry, those activities were initially neither part of my professional identity nor something that I felt I could realistically aspire to (but see, for example, Giovanelli 2016 for later applications of text world theory to the teaching of English in secondary schools).

This began to change in the early 2000s, for a combination of personal and professional reasons. Setting aside the personal motivation, I began to realise that what I could do with my expertise in metaphor analysis, in particular, could be applied just as much to communication about illnesses such as cancer as it could to the analysis of poetry. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), which I had discovered during my PhD, provided theoretical support for why metaphor mattered and for continuity between metaphor use in the literary genres I had been trained to study and other types of genres and contexts of communication. In addition, working in an environment where colleagues were investigating 'real-world problems in which language is a central issue' (Brumfit 1995: 27) gave me the motivation and inspiration to turn my attention to metaphor in communication about illness and, eventually, to attempt to share that research in ways that might contribute to positive change in the world around me. In this respect, I belong to a fortunate generation who *chose* to 'communicate

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linguistics' before the onset of the external pressures that are now associated with the 'impact agenda,' in the UK (McIntyre and Price 2018) and beyond. I will return to those pressures in the conclusion.

The path from that initial aspiration, over 15 years ago, to the point where I am writing this chapter, was always rewarding, but neither smooth nor linear. In this chapter, I begin by briefly introducing three strands of my research on metaphor and illness, and the main ways in which, in collaboration with many colleagues, I have shared it with different audiences beyond my academic research community. I then present and reflect on the opportunities, challenges and mishaps that I have encountered along the way and try to distil from them some lessons that may be helpful to others.

I should emphasise that this is very much a personal, subjective and generally optimistic perspective on 'communicating linguistics' or 'public engagement' – terms that I am using in the broad sense of interacting and working with people outside academia, based on my research. Others, including in this volume, are better positioned to theorise concepts such as 'dissemination,' 'engagement' and 'impact' and to critique the institutional and governmental practices and policies in which they are defined and evaluated (e.g. McEnery 2018; McIntyre 2018; Murphy 2018).

Research projects on metaphor and illness

Three main strands of collaborative research provide the foundations for the activities and experiences I discuss in this chapter, namely on metaphor and cancer (Semino et al. 2021), chronic pain (Padfield et al. 2018) and Covid-19 (Semino et al. 2020). These projects are all motivated by the fact that illness, like many other subjective experiences, is often talked about metaphorically (e.g. Demjén and Semino 2017; Tay 2017) and that metaphors are framing devices, that is, they both reflect and shape how we think and feel about the experiences that they relate to (Thibodeau et al. 2017). Similarly, all three strands of research highlighted patterns and variation in metaphor use on the part of patients and other stakeholders in healthcare that reveal important aspects of 'lived experience' and provide further evidence that metaphor can both help and hinder quality of life and communication. For these reasons, metaphor use in relation to illness needs detailed attention, both from researchers and practitioners.

With regard to cancer, we showed the forms, functions and implications of different kinds of metaphors (Semino et al. 2018) and contributed to a long-standing debate about whether war metaphors, or what we call Violence metaphors (e.g. 'my battle with cancer'), are harmful for patients and should be avoided (Sontag 1979; Miller 2010). We provided textual evidence that these metaphors can indeed cause distress and undue pressure (e.g. a patient with incurable cancer saying 'I feel such a failure that I am not winning this battle') and that other metaphors, such as Journey metaphors (e.g. 'my cancer journey'), do not seem to have the same potential to do harm. However, we also showed how all metaphors, including Violence and Journey metaphors (Semino et al. 2017a), can be empowering or disempowering for patients, depending on how they are used, by whom and in what context. Therefore, what matters is to foster sensitive and effective communication by encouraging and enabling patients to use the metaphors that work best for them.

With regard to chronic pain, we found that people tend to use both verbal and visual metaphors to describe their experiences and that the use of visual metaphors in particular can facilitate emotional disclosure in doctor-patient interactions. For example, in Padfield et al. (2018), we mention a patient who is inspired by an image of a rag doll to describe herself as being 'like a rag doll' and then goes on to talk about feeling guilty for lying to her friends about why she can't go out with them.

With regard to Covid-19, we have shown the role of creative metaphors in providing alternative framings for the pandemic (Pérez-Sobrino et al. 2022), and partly in response to media enquiries, I have shown how Fire metaphors have proved to be particularly appropriate and versatile to describe different aspects of the pandemic (Semino 2021).

Doing public engagement based on these different research strands posed a number of challenges, as I explain below (see also Demjén and Semino 2020). However, my work and that of my colleagues was facilitated by the fact that there is interest in and awareness of the role that metaphor plays in communication about illness on the part of professionals in healthcare, the charity sector and the media. Therefore, the door was at least half open for us to engage with different audiences about our research.

Public engagement activities

Our engagement with different groups of stakeholders in the course of the projects I have just described did not, of course, begin after the research was conducted. Rather, wherever possible and appropriate, people with different kinds of interests and expertise became involved with our work while the research was being carried out. For example, the project on metaphors for cancer benefited from regular meetings with the Lancaster Research Partners Forum, a group of local people with experience of cancer and end-of-life care, as patients, carers or volunteers.

More formal public engagement activities took a variety of forms, and included the following:

- Talks for patient groups, e.g. on metaphors and cancer at a meeting of the Morecambe Bay Prostate Cancer Support Group.
- Talks for healthcare professionals, e.g. on metaphors and pain at the Royal Society of Medicine.
- Training workshops for healthcare professionals, e.g. on metaphors, cancer and the end of life at St. John's Hospice, Lancaster.

- Public lectures, e.g. on metaphors and Covid-19 for Lancaster University's Public Lectures series.
- Blogs for professional organisations, e.g. on metaphor, cancer and the end of life for eHospice and the European Association for Palliative Care.
- Media interviews, e.g. on metaphors and cancer for 'Health Check' on BBC Radio 4 and metaphors for Covid-19 for OMNI news, Canada.
- Press releases resulting in media coverage, e.g. on metaphors and cancer, and metaphors and Covid-10 in *BBC Radio 4*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, *TIME*, *New York Times blog*, *The Vancouver Sun*, *New Scientist*, *VICE Canada*, *New York Magazine*, *Il Sole 24 Ore blog*, *El Pais* and *Der Spiegel*.
- Use of Twitter to disseminate findings, foster debate and advertise events.

These activities came about through a combination of our own initiative (e.g. press releases and contacting the editor of the blog of the European Association for Palliative Care) and, especially as each project became better known, responses to invitations.

In addition, I have been involved in two different initiatives for reframing, through a variety of alternative metaphors, cancer and Covid-19, respectively: the Metaphor Menu for People Living with Cancer and #ReframeCovid. These initiatives will be described in more detail below, as I discuss some of the challenges, mishaps and opportunities I have experienced in the process of preparing for or conducting the engagement activities I have just listed. For more detail on the challenge of communicating 'nuanced' results and the pitfalls of being misrepresented in the media and popular science writing, see Demjén and Semino (2020).

Challenges, mishaps and opportunities while trying to communicate about research on metaphor and illness

'Hello, I'm a linguist. Will you work with me?' The challenge of finding collaborators and partners

Sometime in the summer of 2011, I found myself sitting on a train from Lancaster to London, wondering whether I should be on that train at all. I only had time to spend a couple of hours in London before catching a train back. The reason for the trip was to attend an exhibition at University College London Hospital entitled 'Mirror, Mask, Membrane,' which consisted of images for the experience of chronic pain that had been co-created with pain patients by artist Deborah Padfield. I had been interested in metaphorical representations of pain for a while, and had written to Deborah out of the blue when analysing some of her previous work (Padfield 2003; chapter 9 in Deignan et al. 2013). Deborah had been kind enough to reply with useful and enthusiastic feedback and subsequently invited me to the opening of her new exhibition. Even though I only had a very narrow window for the trip, I decided to accept the invitation: the images looked fabulous, and I was conscious that, at that point, I had no contacts outside my linguistics academic circles with whom to discuss my interest in representations of chronic pain. So, even as I had a moment of doubt after boarding the train, I thought I did not have anything to lose by making the trip.

In the couple of hours I actually spent in London, Deborah found the time to talk with me about the work she was doing and introduced me to Joanna Zakrzewska – a pain specialist at the Eastman Dental Hospital who had a long-standing interest in the language and particularly the metaphors that her patients used to describe pain. To cut a long story short, Deborah, Joanna and I have worked together ever since (as well as become friends), and my work on language and pain has reached patients and different kinds of healthcare practitioners thanks to the opportunities and further contacts that they have provided for me (e.g. the talk at the Royal Society of Medicine mentioned earlier; also Semino et al. 2017b, 2020; Padfield et al. 2018).

My initial contact with another healthcare researcher and practitioner who made a huge difference to my research, engagement and impact, Sheila Payne, only happened because we both shared failed funding bids with the same colleague, Paul Rayson, who suggested that we should meet and join forces to turn our luck around. Meeting with Sheila, who is a specialist in cancer and end-of-life care, led to the project on metaphors for cancer and the end of life, which was indeed funded by the UK government. Even more importantly, Sheila was then instrumental in the initial phases of the project's public engagement activities, for example, by suggesting that we write blogs for eHospice and the European Association for Palliative Care and that we present at the World Congress for Research in Palliative Care. Without those two failed bids and that colleague's suggestion about turning two failures into a possible success, none of this would have happened.

These two anecdotes show that some degree of good fortune is often needed for that initial contact from which many good things follow. However, it is also the case that neither of my lucky breaks would have happened if I had not persevered in those lines of research in spite of the lack of a network of contacts (and some earlier failed attempts at finding such contacts) and if I had not taken up the opportunities that led me to meet the people who made a difference to my subsequent work. I could so easily have decided that a return trip to London in just a few hours was not a good use of my time or that meeting someone to try to revive two bids that had failed was a hopeless enterprise.

What I have experienced since then is that, not surprisingly, finding new contacts is easier when you already have some, and building my own track record of research and engagement means that opportunities for communicating my research often come to me directly (see also McEnery 2018 on some other challenges with maintaining a network of contacts). Now I can even sometimes do for other people what Deborah, Joanna and Sheila did for me. But that initial dogged perseverance and desire to take any opportunity that came my way was essential to get to a place where things are much easier.

'Wow, did you really do that many interviews?!?' The perils of assuming common ground

During one of my first talks to a healthcare audience about our project on metaphors for cancer, I was surprised by a rather startled reaction from some of the people sitting in front of me when I turned to a slide with an overview of our corpus of data, reproduced here as Table 13.1. I stopped to check what the problem was, and a member of the audience asked: 'Did you really do that many interviews?' I looked at the table again and realised the misunderstanding. As a (corpus) linguist, I am used to providing the precise number of words in each section of the data. That is what the figures in the table indicate. To me, that was obvious. However, from the perspective of non-linguists, the numbers could only indicate how many interviews (and blog posts) we included in our data. But of course it seemed implausible to have those numbers of interviews – hence the reaction to that slide. Since then, I always clarify what the numbers mean, regardless of my audience.

The general point behind this mishap, however, are the perils of assuming common ground with one's audience, especially when speaking with people outside one's discipline or professional sphere. When the research involves terms that are generally familiar to non-specialists, such as 'metaphor,' assuming common ground is particularly problematic.

I became aware of this, once again slightly too late, in one of my first conversations with Deborah Padfield about the visual representations of pain she had co-created with chronic pain sufferers as part of her projects (Padfield 2013; see also previous section). I said that I found them particularly interesting because they involved metaphors (e.g. photos of rotting apples aimed at representing how the pain affects the person; see also Deignan et al. 2013: 296). Deborah seemed uncomfortable with my comment and objected to it: 'But they're not just metaphors. They are important and true.' It took me a few minutes to realise that, from her perspective, my comment about metaphoricity suggested that I was potentially dismissive of the reality of the representations in the images and their relationship to the experiences they were meant to convey. I then explained that, from my perspective, metaphors are one of the most important tools we have for communication and thinking, and that, in the case of subjective experiences such as pain, they can do justice to people's lived experience better than literal language or visual representations can.

TABLE 13.1 Composition of corpus for project on metaphors for cancer and the end of life, with word counts for each section. (Semino et al. 2018: 50)

	Patients	*Carers*	*Healthcare professionals*	*Totals*
Interviews	100,589	81,564	89,943	272,366
Online fora and blogs	500,134	500,256	253,168	1,253,558
Totals	600,723	581,820	343,111	1,525,924

This particular misunderstanding was only a minor blip in what became a long-standing personal and professional relationship, but it taught me a lesson about clarifying my standpoint and anticipating others' sensitivities that saved me from causing confusion or even offence on many other subsequent occasions. For example, when speaking at the conference of the Trigeminal Neuralgia Association, I caught myself just before using the term 'hyperbole,' which I usually gloss as 'exaggeration,' to describe conventional metaphorical descriptions of pain such as 'splitting headache' or more creative ones, such as 'You could possibly describe it as swords on fire. […] I think it is probably one rod and a million swords' (Padfield 2003: 60; Deignan et al. 2013: 288) and 'My pain feels like someone has wired my cheek up to the national grid and flicks the switch off and on at a time of their choosing' (Semino 2019: 80). For me, hyperbole is a technical term that captures the way in which some figurative representations of pain involve extreme versions of familiar pain-causing scenarios, to the extent that, in some cases, they are beyond the realm of possibility. In other words, my technical use of 'hyperbole' is descriptive rather than evaluative. However, from the point of view of chronic pain sufferers who are often disbelieved about the nature and extent of their pain, any allusion to exaggeration could sound dismissive and offensive.

'But that's a simile, not a metaphor.' Challenges to your expertise

In November 2020, I came across, thanks to a colleague, what I thought was a useful metaphor for how the speed of development of vaccines for Covid-19 was not in contradiction with safety and decided to tweet it (see Figure 13.1). Sharing and commenting on different metaphors for the pandemic was one of the ways in which I used my Twitter account throughout 2020, and I had enough evidence of interest from my followers to try to do it regularly. The example in question compared the phases of vaccine development to the cooking of the different courses of a restaurant meal, and explained that, for Covid-19, what normally happens in sequence was:

> effectively happening all at once, as if a restaurant brought out your starter, mains, and pudding simultaneously. The cooking time for each is no shorter, but the meal isn't half speeded up.
>
> *(Hinsliff 2020)*

My comment in the tweet referred to this extract as the first good 'metaphor' I had seen for how the vaccines had been produced faster than usual. Within a few minutes, someone had replied to my tweet: 'Well, technically, it's a simile, not a metaphor, isn't it?' (Figure 13.1).

Technically, the respondent was quite right: because the comparison with the cooking of the restaurant meal begins with 'as if,' the example is indeed a simile, as far as its linguistic form is concerned. However, I tend to use 'metaphor' as

FIGURE 13.1 Twitter interaction on metaphor for vaccine development.

an umbrella term for any linguistic realisation of what Conceptual Metaphor Theory calls a 'cross-domain mapping' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), or, to put it in more general terms, for any instance of talking and, potentially, thinking about one thing in terms of another where the two things are different but a similarity can be perceived between them (Semino 2008). More importantly, the point of the tweet was the aptness and novelty of the figurative comparison, and not whether it was made via a simile or what I would call a 'metaphorical expression.' Calling it a simile in my tweet could have drawn attention away from the point I was trying to make.

The problem with my approach for the purposes of public engagement is that it overlooks the fact that the difference between similes and metaphors, as types of linguistic expressions, is often taught in school. Indeed, this Twitter incident was not the first time when someone pointed out to me that I was using 'metaphor' to refer to a simile. Sometimes these reactions come from genuine puzzlement. Sometimes they seem to be taken up as an opportunity to trip up an 'expert' and make them look clueless, especially in public and when the person claims expertise in something that is not widely known to require expert knowledge, such as commenting on language use. There may well also be a gendered dimension to this kind of public correction of a specialist's claim. Regardless, it can be problematic to come back from a sudden loss of credibility, particularly when an explanation of my use of terminology is inappropriate in context, or too long for a tweet.

When I am giving talks, I often point out in passing that I use 'metaphor' to refer to a phenomenon that also includes similes. When it comes to Twitter, the character count does not allow for that kind of explanation, so I just accept that I will receive the occasional put-down, and decide on a case-by-case basis whether to explain myself or just move on.

'Can we put your name on our new communication tool?' Saying no to consultancies

Every now and again, I receive invitations to do consultancy work that force me to reflect on where my own red lines are with regard to this type of work. Here's a typical scenario.

I find in my inbox an email from a communications agency that specialises in healthcare. The agency has been commissioned by a pharmaceutical company to create and disseminate a 'tool' to improve communication between patients and doctors in a particular area of healthcare – in my case usually cancer or a chronic pain condition. The motivation for the pharmaceutical company tends to be that some of their competitors already have similar tools available online, and, more broadly, that they aim to improve their image by offering something to patients for free.

In some cases, the tool in question has already been created before I was contacted. In other cases, there is a plan for collecting some data from patients, usually via questionnaires or focus groups, and creating the new tool on the basis of people's responses. The reason why someone like me is approached is to have an endorsement for the tool from an academic with a doctorate and a relevant research track record. In essence, what I am asked to provide is my name and qualifications to lend credibility to the tool.

Of course, one could have a policy never to become involved with certain types of companies, such as pharmaceutical companies. I make decisions on a case-by-case basis, and I have therefore sometimes had to evaluate the specifics of particular proposals. Setting aside fees and availability, the issue at this point is usually the quality of the tool that would be produced. The agency, and the pharmaceutical company behind them, usually have no expertise nor interest in what I regard as the research needed to arrive at something that is solidly grounded in the experiences of patients and healthcare professionals. There are also always pressures of time and resources that can make it impossible, or minimally difficult, to carry out the kind of data collection and analysis that I think is needed. In a nutshell, the risk is that I end up having my name associated with something that I cannot feel proud of. Therefore, in the vast majority of cases, I have ended up saying no, or I have set minimum requirements for data and analysis that are not acceptable to the other party, so that the offer evaporates.

I remain relatively naive with regard to dealing with such potential consultancies (including non-disclosure agreements, fees and contracts), so I usually ask more experienced colleagues for advice at various stages. But, having wasted too much time on proposals that went nowhere, I am now more aware of my own red lines, and better able to ask for the information I need to assess proposals quickly and turn them down, if appropriate, without spending too much time on them.

These negative experiences should not, however, be taken as a criticism of consultancies generally. Consultancy work for linguists can involve different kinds of organisations and take a variety of forms, with different challenges and rewards, and not just financial rewards (e.g. see the chapters in Mullany 2020 and especially: Darics 2020; Koller and Ereaut 2020). Indeed, some of my interactions with, for example, cancer charities, have involved consultancy-type work, with some evidence of benefit for those organisations and some useful experiences for my colleagues and myself (see Demjén and Semino 2020). The main note of caution is to avoid being flattered into accepting something that one may regret later.

'Can you please tell us what metaphors should and should not be used?' Turning prescriptive expectations into non-prescriptive resources

A major turning point in my approach to public engagement occurred sometime in 2013 during a meeting with the Lancaster Research Partners Forum, who as I mentioned earlier, were involved in an advisory role in the project on metaphors in cancer and end-of-life care. In the first part of the meeting, my colleagues and I had presented to the group some of our findings. We had shown how our data provided evidence of the potential harmful effects of what we called Violence metaphors for cancer, particularly when people who knew they would not recover felt responsible for losing their battle (as in the example above where someone says they feel 'a failure' because they are 'not winning'). We had also, however, shown how even these metaphors were meaningful and empowering for some of the patients in our data, and, more generally, that there was considerable individual variation in terms of which metaphors seemed to be most appropriate and helpful. When we opened up the floor for discussion, one of the members of the forum challenged us by saying: 'So, how will your work improve things? Will you produce a list of good and bad metaphors, so that people know what to do?' I was slightly taken aback by this question and replied that our findings about individual variation and preferences in metaphor use made it impossible for us to produce prescriptive lists of good and bad metaphors that could work for everyone (see also Demjén and Semino 2020).

When I reflected on this exchange in the following days, however, I was unhappy with my response. What I said was indeed consistent with our findings, but could also be described as the stereotypical academic claim that things are more complex than non-experts imagine. And that answer had, at least in the moment, functioned as an excuse not to attempt to use our research to produce something that could be of practical use. This dissatisfaction led to the original conception of what became the 'Metaphor Menu for People Living with Cancer' – a collection of different metaphors for the experience of cancer, drawn from our data and other sources, accompanied by images. The menu includes some Journey metaphors and Violence metaphors, which were found to be the two most frequent types of metaphors in our data (Semino et al. 2018), but also metaphors that describe having cancer in terms of music, nature, fairgrounds, and so on. The goal is to provide alternative framings for cancer that could validate people's experiences, as well as potentially suggest new perspectives. As in a restaurant, the goal is that everyone will hopefully find something that suits them, but that would be different for each person. In other words, the menu is a non-prescriptive resource for people with cancer and those who care for them. As such, it is consistent with our findings, but also meets the spirit, if not the letter, of the original question from the member of the Research Partners Forum.

The menu was a long time in the making and involved the input of many people, including patients at the Royal Preston Infirmary and staff and volunteers from St John's Hospice and Cancer Care in Lancaster. Eventually, it was launched in November 2019, in two different hard copy formats (leaflet and a pack of cards) and online, including as a downloadable PDF (http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/melc/the-metaphor-menu/). It has been well received by patients and healthcare professionals, it has travelled widely around the world, and it is recommended on the website of Cancer Research UK. It continues to be one of my most rewarding experiences, personally and professionally, and it also taught me that it is possible to mediate between different perspectives on the same issue, with a bit of effort, ingenuity and support.

The idea of a menu of metaphors for complex problems has been adapted in other contexts, including coaching (https://solutionsacademy.com/metaphor-menus/) and the Covid-19 pandemic. In spring 2020, two Spanish academics, Paula Pérez Sobrino (University of La Rioja) and Inés Olza (University of Navarra), used social media to launch #ReframeCovid – an initiative to crowd-source metaphors for Covid-19 other than War metaphors, which were dominant, and controversial at the start of the pandemic (https://sites.google.com/view/reframecovid/home). At the time of writing, the #ReframeCovid collection includes over 550 examples in 30 languages, as well as some visual and multimodal metaphors, contributed by approximately 100 individuals. It has attracted attention in the mainstream media (e.g. *El País*, *Der Spiegel*, *Daily Mail*), and is also beginning to be exploited for academic research (Olza et al. 2021, Pérez Sobrino et al. 2022). The collection is covered by a Creative Commons licence, so that anyone can use it, with an acknowledgement.

'My wife died of cancer. I attach her poems.' Receiving and responding to personal communication

The most humbling and personally challenging part of my experience of public engagement has been to be contacted by individual people who heard about our research, usually via the media, and have relevant lived experience that they want to share. This has been the case particularly in relation to our work on cancer and the end of life.

I have received many emails and the odd letter that have stopped me in my tracks in my usual daily juggling of different tasks and deadlines. Sometimes people just write to say 'Thank you for the work you're doing. Keep it up!' Sometimes they write to agree or disagree with something specific that they have read or heard about our research. And sometimes they write to send personal testimonies from themselves or people close to them about the experience of cancer and the end of life. This has included diaries, letters and poems, as well as examples of metaphors from an online group of parents whose children have cancer. In most cases, what has prompted the person to write is the desire that the traumatic experiences they have had would not be in vain and that they might help other people if they are included in our research or in the Metaphor Menu.

I will not go into the ethical issues posed by people's desire for me to use what they send me for research or engagement purposes. The reason for mentioning these experiences here is that I was initially entirely unprepared for the emotional consequences and sense of personal and professional responsibility of receiving such communication. I do not know if I have always managed to provide the responses that such painful and generous personal disclosures deserve, but I have certainly grown as a person and a researcher in attempting to do so.

Conclusion

Overall, I have greatly enjoyed both the challenges and the opportunities I have had in my efforts to engage with different audiences about my research over the years. The challenges have taught me lessons about myself, my job and other people that I greatly value. The opportunities have enabled me to meet and work with interesting and committed people, and to feel that, together with my colleagues, I have helped to raise awareness about both the strengths and weaknesses of metaphor in healthcare communication, and, at least to a small extent, influenced the practices of professionals and the experiences of patients for the better.

My own thinking about metaphor has also benefited from being tested against the perspectives of non-experts in more than one way. For example, I have had to think hard about which terms and distinctions are really critical to explain why metaphors matter, and why, in some cases, people may have to pay greater attention to it, or use it differently. The concepts of framing and reframing through metaphors have often proved to be the most important common ground between my scholarly approach and the concerns of healthcare professionals, journalists and the general public. And this has led me to sharpen my thinking about exactly where I stand in relation to descriptive and prescriptive perspectives on metaphor use and communication more generally. Both the Metaphor Menu and my writing on the usefulness and versatility of Fire metaphors for the Covid-19 pandemic (Semino 2021) have arisen in response to challenges from non-linguists dealing with concrete communication problems.

I am acutely aware, however, that I have been lucky. I have worked with fantastic people, including other linguists, researchers in other fields and people outside academia. I could not have done anything I have done on my own.

I have also been lucky that, even though I have been affected, like everyone else, by the growing focus on engagement and impact in UK academia, I started to think about and get involved with communicating linguistics before external pressures made it part of what is required for promotion, institutional evaluations and research funding. I strongly believe that research generally, and research into language specifically, does not have to lend itself to public engagement to be worthwhile. That should barely need to be said. On the other hand, I also think that research on language and communication holds enormous interest and can have enormous benefit for people outside academia; so, it makes sense for all of us researchers in linguistics to think about how our work might be relevant to people outside university campuses. Public engagement can also take such a wide variety of forms – from writing a successful blog on American vs. British English (Murphy 2018) to improving nursing handovers in Australian hospitals (Eggins and Slade 2016) – that almost everyone can have the opportunity, at some point in their career, to be involved with it, regardless of institutional pressures.

Regarding those external pressures, the extent to which they apply and the forms that they take cannot easily be influenced at the individual level. However, one cannot do good work in public engagement (and research generally), never mind enjoy that work, if the motivation is entirely external. Therefore, even with the pressures we are all under, it is important that we try to carve out a space for ourselves in which we do what we do because it matters to us and other people, and not to tick a box in our yearly review or promotion application. In this way, we can play our part in making the world a better place and enjoy the process.

14

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT VIA CONSULTANCY

Communicating the language of mental illness

Hazel Price

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe my work in the area of health communication, specifically my research that explores how topics related to mental health and illness are discussed in the UK news media. I discuss how I have communicated this linguistic research outside of academia and describe the challenges and opportunities for researchers communicating linguistic research by drawing on my own experience. In particular, I focus on building a public engagement plan into a research project from the outset in order to increase the researcher's chance of success in communicating their findings outside the academy. I discuss how following this process led to my doing consultancy work on the lexicology of mental illness for a dictionary publisher. I also discuss what might be termed the 'PR problem' in linguistics, where what linguistics is understood to be outside of academia does not reflect the discipline. I begin by describing my research before turning my attention to public engagement and communicating scientific research more generally in section 3. In section 4, I draw some conclusions and offer some tips for public engagement based on my own experiences.

My research

My research in linguistics has focused in the last few years on health communication, specifically how the UK press discuss topics related to mental health and illness (see Price 2022). I did this on the basis that studying media discourse enables the analysis of 'the reporting of individual events […] but also at the linguistic patterns that are indicative of public perceptions of mental illness, such as the labels used to describe specific mental illnesses and the people that "have" mental illness' (Price 2022: 5). In order to explore press representations, I adopted

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a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach combined with corpus linguistics. The reason for adopting CDA is that there is a well-established body of research in this area that aims to explore inequalities manifested through language, with much research exploring media representations. I adopted corpus linguistics to allow for the exploration of any change in the representation of mental illness over time. In terms of the methods used and the topic matter, my research falls within a broader conception of applied linguistics with a focus on social justice. The research explored four broad research questions. These were:

1. How were the terms ‘mental illness’ and ‘mental health’ used in the data?
2. What linguistic strategies are used to label and describe people with mental illness in the data?
3. How do the press describe the experience of mental illness (e.g. ‘suffering’ vs. ‘experiencing’)?
4. Is the depiction of mental illness realistic, and are symptoms accurately portrayed?[1]

The research questions were designed to facilitate both bottom-up analysis (e.g. what naming strategies did the press adopt to talk about people with mental illness?), as well as top-down analysis (e.g. whether symptoms were accurately portrayed in the press). In this respect, my research topic may be perceived to be immediately relevant or applicable. However, simply picking a salient social issue to explore linguistically does not mean that the research will be inherently applicable, or even communicable. Moreover, research in linguistics should, I believe, have the primary aim of furthering the discipline in some way. With this said, language mediates very many realms of social life, and therefore an indirect benefit of the research may be that it can be applied outside of linguistics or be relevant outside of academia. This is particularly true in health communication, where everything from the interaction between patient and GP to diagnostic criteria is mediated by language. In order to make sure that I gave my research the best chance of being both academically and socially relevant, I explored the social context of the topic alongside the academic context. For example, it is a customary part of starting a project to conduct a literature review in order to situate your work within the broader academic context of research on that topic; however, it is less common to conduct a similar review of the socio-cultural or socio-historical, non-academic context of your research which asks very general questions about the topic matter, e.g. what do the public understand this thing (in my case, mental illness) to mean? I talk more about how I took account of social context in the research planning process in the next section.

In order to conduct my research, I built a corpus (a sample of naturally occurring language data) of 45 million words which I called the MI 1984–2014 Corpus. I then searched this corpus for linguistic patterns that related to, for example, how the press named people with mental illness, or how ‘having’ mental illness was represented in the press. Press data is a valuable text type to study given that 'media texts constitute a sensitive barometer of socio-cultural change, and they should be seen as valuable material for researching change' (Fairclough 1995: 52). Despite much research into the stigma around mental illness, very few studies used linguistic methods to explore how stigma was created through language. Moreover, such studies were often conducted by researchers in psychiatry which meant that the analyses did not privilege language as an object of study in its own right. The result of this was a wealth of research articles using cross-linguistic and cross-cultural language data which showed that stigma exists in news articles on mental illness and yet very little explanation of what constituted stigma in language or how stigma was created linguistically. Furthermore, researchers from disciplines other than linguistics often collected data using search terms (e.g. 'mental health' or 'mental illness') without accounting for any possible language change over time or cultural differences. From my perspective as a linguist, then, the methods used to capture data as well as analyse it were lacking the rigour that I knew linguistics could provide. This provided some of the academic context for my work. In addition to this gap in the previous research, it was also important to me that the research should have both an applicable and a theoretical component; that is, the knowledge gained from the project would be required not only to address the research gap but to further the field of linguistics in some way, as well as provide better insight into what I saw as an increasingly important social issue (mental illness). In order to further the discipline, I outlined a clear methodology for creating corpora to explore social issues (Price 2022: 87–90) and made my work maximally relevant to mental health stakeholders by tailoring my research to language guidelines proposed by mental health charities. I discuss precisely how I made my research relevant in the next section.

Making research relevant to external stakeholders

In order to make my research maximally useful, I aimed to focus my analysis on answering questions related to stigma and exploring the common misconceptions in society about mental illness (e.g. that people with mental illness are dangerous or violent). During my initial scoping exercise, I found that several charities listed on their websites a series of 'myths' about mental illness. And some had language guidelines related to these myths, e.g. advising the avoidance of the term 'inmates' in favour of 'patients' to refer to people being treated in hospital for their mental illness. One example of these guidelines was the 'Mind Your Language' section of the *Time to Change* initiative, which was founded in 2007 by the mental health charities *Mind* and *Rethink Mental Illness*. *Time to Change* states that its aims are to 'end mental health stigma' (*Time to Change* 2022). On the *Time to Change* website, the linguistic guidelines read:

> **Avoid using:**
>
> - 'a psycho' or 'a schizo'
> - 'a schizophrenic' or 'a depressive'

- 'lunatic', 'nutter', 'unhinged', 'maniac' or 'mad'
- 'the mentally ill', 'a person suffering from', 'a sufferer', a 'victim' or 'the afflicted'
- 'prisoners' or 'inmates' (in a psychiatric hospital)
- 'released' (from a hospital)
- 'happy pills'

Instead, try:

- 'a person who has experienced psychosis' or 'a person who has schizophrenia'
- someone who 'has a diagnosis of' is 'currently experiencing' or 'is being treated for …'
- 'a person with a mental health problem'
- 'mental health patients' or 'people with mental health problems'
- 'patients', 'service users' or 'clients'
- 'discharged'
- 'anti-depressants', 'medication' or 'prescription drugs'

*(*Time to Change *2019)*

Using the language guidelines put forward by mental health charities allowed me to explore common myths about mental illness that have already been identified as problematic by stakeholders. This meant I could be confident that my research findings would be relevant to stakeholders in mental health. Using the language guidance also provided me with some structure for my analysis, as it enabled me to explore the validity of some of the prescriptions put forward by *Time to Change*. Additionally, as many of the language guidelines promoted by mental health charities are not informed by any linguistic (or even academic) research, my project had the potential to provide an evidence base for the guidance. Interestingly, *Time to Change* did commission some research (see Rhydderch et al. 2016); however, the research was not intended to assess the validity of the language guidelines but was instead focused on evaluating the newspaper coverage of mental health topics since the *Time to Change* campaign began. Moreover, this research was conducted by psychiatrists who were not interested in the linguistic properties of the news (this was not their research aim). As a result, very little information about the patterned linguistic features of news articles reporting on mental illness existed.

In addition to a lack of research evidence for the language guidelines proposed by charities, I also took issue with the fact that the guidelines as they were then formulated constituted prescribed linguistic forms. Much of my research in linguistics falls within the area of pragmatics, and therefore exploring how language is used (as opposed to how it ought to be used) was a central research interest of mine. From a pragmatic perspective, one linguistic form may be used in many different contexts and function in different ways; therefore, providing prescriptive guidelines for language use was from the outset an unviable option since these could never account for the contextual differences in language use. Moreover, the guidelines did not seem to reference how some terms have and are still being reclaimed, e.g. the reclamation of 'mad' as part of the 'Mad Pride' movement.[2]

My research aimed to advance the discipline of corpus linguistics, specifically through the methodological points raised in Price (2022), while also furthering our understanding of mental health and illness as it is perceived in society. Furthermore, an indirect benefit of having researched the social aspects of the research topic prior to beginning the linguistic component of my project was that I was more aware of my own language use when reporting on my analysis of mental illness. For example, I was more aware of my own use of potentially stigmatising language in my reporting of the analysis, e.g. using 'suffering' to describe the process of experiencing a mental illness. I was also more aware than I otherwise would have been of the political and cultural differences between different (mental) health organisations and how these were manifested in the language used; e.g. whether an organisation used 'mental illness,' 'mental ill health' or 'mental health.'

What constitutes relevance anyway?

So far in this chapter, I have used the term 'relevant' to describe research that has the potential to be applied. However, relevance and applicability are not wholly synonymous. For example, some research may be designed in order to be maximally relevant to a stakeholder, however, the research may not ever get the chance to be applied due to broader political or bureaucratic reasons. This is an issue particularly in health communication research where many stakeholders are reliant on outside funding to continue their work. An example of this is that during the coronavirus pandemic, some mental health charities saw cuts to their funding, as money was diverted to coronavirus care. Consequently, however relevant a piece of academic research may have been to their core activities, such cuts meant that there was a much-reduced chance of it actually being applied. Factoring relevance and application into research is a positive thing; however, making it the goal of the research is not, as it can stifle the reach of that research in unknown ways. Moreover, prioritising relevance over research means that researchers risk doing 'kneejerk linguistics' (Price 2018: 45), whereby commentary on a social issue is provided prior to any comprehensive research. Furthermore, conducting research in this way is not sustainable for the discipline and, most importantly, relevance is a shifting concept. What is relevant now may change in two years' time, but good research can take years to carry out.

The desire to be relevant in linguistics is a strength of researchers in the field; however, the tendency to make relevance and application the goal of research is possibly a reaction to something that we might term the 'PR problem' in linguistics. This is the fact there is a lack of understanding in society about what linguistics is (such as where linguistics fits in the false science/arts binary). If nobody knows what linguistics is, then excellent research that is widely applied will not be attributed to linguists. Exacerbating this problem is the fact that there are no regularly broadcast TV documentaries presented by academic linguists (at least in the UK). This is curious when one considers that comparable documentaries exist on the BBC on the topics of science, history, art, etc. I would also argue that there is another problem related to communicating academic research in a UK context, and this is that there is a disconnect between the interesting facts outlined on TV by celebrities and the roots of those facts in academic inquiry. For example, the naturalist David Attenborough is one of the most popular celebrity documentarians and has done excellent work raising the profile of things like global warming. However, the programmes he presents and narrates are founded on the work of researchers and academics who, whilst contributing hugely to the knowledge shared via the documentary, are not formally recognised.[3] For instance, the Emmy and BAFTA award-winning *Blue Planet II*, a nature documentary broadcast on the BBC, does not showcase any of the academic teams whose research Attenborough presents. This is not to say that *Blue Planet II* is not an incredibly valuable project, which communicates scientific research excellently. But it does provide an example of how academic research seems only to be interesting when a celebrity fronts it. The effect of this is that academic-adjacent celebrities become the experts on topics in the media, not the people who have spent years researching a topic. Of course, academics and TV presenters have very different skillsets, but arguably the academic research should play more of a role in documentaries. I also believe that making the link clear between documentaries like *Blue Planet II* and the scientific research conducted in universities or research groups more generally is vitally important for raising the visibility of academic research in society as a public good.

In terms of my own research, I have found people much more interested in my health communication research than any of my previous research on, for example, pragmatics. When I tell people about my research on mental illness, they are often interested straight away and can see the value in it. Yet I would not have been able to conduct the research into language change that I did without a knowledge of pragmatics. Moreover, my own experience working with journalists and non-academic stakeholders is that they often want pithy comments which undercut the nuance of research findings. For example, I have had meetings with journalists where they will listen intently to me talk about my research and the nuanced picture of mental health news reports, and respond with 'So, the press is to blame?' In addition to this, when speaking to non-linguists about my work, people often conflate my research with my own opinion. I think this is particularly common in research on mental illness because so often terms related to mental illness are contentious and tied to identity. I see my role as a researcher as being to report objectively my research findings, e.g. that the press routinely equate mental illness and violence. This finding, however, does not resemble my own opinion. To return back to the notion of relevance, you can make research relevant to the public as much as you can, but ultimately most journalists want headlines, and sometimes it feels like a threat to your integrity as a researcher to turn a nuanced argument or research finding into a headline. To gain partial control of this process, I created a 'Research Summary' or 'Research Headlines' document that I send to journalists interested in my research ahead of time. This means that I don't feel pressured in the moment to summarise years of work into a single headline because I've considered it ahead of time, and the journalist has a document that they can refer to in order to structure their questions. This also gives you some control over the framing of your research, given that academic research is not always attractive to journalists if it doesn't fit media narratives. This is not to blame journalists, or to question their working methods; often, journalists are the key to communicating linguistic research and it is therefore important that we work well with the press. There is on occasion, however, a potential clash of interests and therefore there has to be some compromise, and at times that might look like diluting or simplifying a point or finding that you have laboured over.

Communicating my research

In this section, I describe the work I have conducted as a linguistic consultant, drawing specifically on my work with a monolingual dictionary.

I already had a background in linguistic consultancy work having been the Project Coordinator of Language Unlocked at the University of Huddersfield between 2014 and 2018 (http://www.languageunlocked.co.uk/). In this role, I was responsible for overseeing the projects conducted as part of Language Unlocked, from working with potential stakeholders to conducting academic research. Our clients during my time on the project ranged from mainstream political parties to local archiving companies. One thing I learned very quickly in this role was that what clients often wanted and what was feasible were not always the same thing. Given that Language Unlocked was a consultancy that used methods from corpus linguistics primarily, one problem we often encountered was clients wanting us to somehow incorporate AI technology into our projects. This became increasingly possible with the addition of a programmer and a specialist in the digital humanities, though we were always at pains to point out the importance of expert human analysis in the solution of problems.

In addition to my role as part of Language Unlocked, I also became involved in *Babel: The Language Magazine* (see McIntyre and Jeffries, this volume), for which I continue to act as Editorial Assistant. The magazine aims to bring linguistic research to a non-specialist audience, and as part of my contribution to this endeavour, I write the regular feature 'Language in the News.' I explore topics in linguistics that have been reported in the media (e.g. news stories claiming that cows can talk) as well as analyse the social issues reported in the news through a linguistic lens (e.g. how the press report on grammar teaching in schools). A big part of my academic career so far, then, has been about communicating academic research outside of academia. Of course, a lot of luck and chance played a part in me getting this public engagement and communication experience. I was lucky enough to work in a department where these initiatives were valued by senior members of staff in the subject area. However, it is certainly the case that opportunities to write for public audiences are open to all. *Babel*, for example, is open to contributions from academics at any level, and there are other outlets, such as *The Conversation*, that also accept unsolicited submissions.

My background in linguistic consultancy and public engagement stood me in good stead to work with external partners. However, my work with reviewing dictionary entries did not materialise as a direct result of this experience. Instead, it came about as a result of my academic work which the dictionary team had become aware of through speaking to another academic who provided consultancy work for them. In 2021, I was contacted by an editor at the dictionary and asked to review a selection of dictionary entries related to mental health and illness. The lexicographers I worked with on the project had a long history of engaging with academic research which meant that some of the issues I have outlined in the previous sections were not a concern. The entries in the dictionary are regularly updated so that they continue to reflect current usage. The dictionary team had recognised that some of their entries had not been reviewed for a number of years and, given the rate of change in public understandings of mental health and illness, had decided to commission a review. They were interested in a variety of terms related to mental health and illness, ranging from clinical and diagnostic labels (e.g., terms for specific conditions like 'bipolar disorder' or 'schizophrenia') to informal (non-medicalised) and offensive terms (e.g. 'barking mad'). The team wanted to review the entries so that they adequately and sensitively recorded usage information. In addition to reviewing the existing entries, I was also asked to suggest possible new entries, and to help the team draw up editorial guidelines for definitions: for example, whether or not to use person-first or identity-first forms in definitions, or whether to use 'sufferer' or another candidate term.

A meeting was arranged to discuss the review so that I could gauge more specifically what the team wanted from me, and they could assess whether I was an appropriate person to carry out the review and that I knew what the constraints were, e.g. that entries had to be concise. In the meeting, we discussed the three primary areas that were to be addressed in the review. These were:

1. To provide commentary on the existing entries, making suggestions for how they could be revised or reworded.
2. To identify any omissions, e.g., if a term was missing from the entries.
3. To write up guidelines for editors when writing about mental illness.

The team let me know that I did not have to comment on anything in the review that I did not feel I could adequately/comfortably comment on, and I was also briefed on the limitations when commenting on terms. For example, any suggestions I made needed to be able to be incorporated in a way that fitted in with other definitions. Furthermore, one limitation that the team had already identified was that the definitions relating to mental illness needed to be sympathetic whilst also being concise. They were interested in ways that definitions could be made thorough and inclusive whilst also being largely telegraphic in style. Another consideration was a general issue within lexicography more broadly. This related to the problem of how to accurately define how a word is used whilst also making sure the definition itself was not offensive. It is the purpose of a dictionary to define how words are used, even when the words are used in an offensive way. For example, the term 'schizophrenic' can refer to a diagnostic label (schizophrenia) but is also often used outside of a medical sense (and often metaphorically) to refer to unpredictable things, e.g. 'schizophrenic weather,' or things that are split, e.g. 'schizophrenic attitude,' despite the fact that split personality is not a feature of schizophrenia.[4] A dictionary needs to properly define how this term is used, even though it is often used in a non-medical sense, and using the term in this way is well-documented to create stigma around schizophrenia (Chopra and Doody 2007; Clement and Foster 2008; Duckworth et al. 2003; Magliano et al. 2011), given that unpredictability and splitting are not components of schizophrenia. Again, this issue relates to striking a balance between accurately documenting usage and avoiding offense, particularly when the dictionary being reviewed is not a medical dictionary. As part of my review then, I had to consider how to balance the purpose of a dictionary with the sensitive nature of some of the terms being defined.

My research background meant that I was aware of a range of mental illnesses as well as how to sensitively talk about experiencing mental illness according to anti-stigma guidelines, e.g. those produced by *Time to Change*. Furthermore, I was aware of how different terms were used across different policy documents; e.g. terms may vary between the Mental Health Act and The Equality Act. I therefore started my review by simply reading through the definitions and noting any language that stood out to me as being an older form or a form that would be marked against anti-stigma language standards (e.g. 'causes suffering'). I also noted where any entries relied on an older definition of a condition, e.g. where a term was defined according to an outdated version of the Mental Health Act. I also made sure to cross-refer any definitions of specific illnesses with the Diagnostic Statistical Manual 5th Edition (DSM-V), the NHS website and the *Mind* website to ensure that any medical definitions were informed by descriptions provided for practitioners as well as for a non-specialist audience. The reason for this was to make sure that any medical definitions were accurate but also accessible. I also made suggestions related to any entries that contained symptoms, such as making it clear that the symptoms were a list of examples and not an exhaustive list. This final point regarding symptoms relates back to my own research reported in Price (2022) and noted in Note 1, where symptoms of a mental illness are often experienced in different ways. Moreover, despite the fact that the dictionary I was reviewing terms for is not a medical dictionary (and therefore people are unlikely to consult it for medical definitions or symptomology of conditions), it is still prudent to note that any symptoms listed are non-exhaustive as the dictionary plays an educational role in people finding out about mental illness. After making any initial notes on the entries, I cross-referenced my comments based on my own research, my findings from the DSM-V and the NHS website with language corpora. The reason for doing this was to make sure that any changes I suggested reflected actual language use. For example, I was able to write as part of my review that my research suggests that the definition of 'mental health' was often used as a euphemism to refer to mental illness. The data I used for comparison was the MI 1984–2014 corpus, as well as general language corpora. My academic research, then, which was built for academic inquiry and not for lexicographical purposes, was both relevant and applicable for lexicography.

The entries also include 'usage information' which provides additional context, e.g. 'slang' or 'offensive.' Prior to the review, some entries already had detailed information relating to some sensitive terms. Such additional information is valuable since the process of defining terms, specifically terms within a sensitive semantic field, is 'complicated not just by ongoing semantic changes in vocabulary, but also by the diverse opinions among people on the expressive meaning of individual word' (Norri, 2020: 228). I was able to suggest adding similar information to the terms I was asked to look at to ensure that the reviewed entries were concise and in keeping with other entries. This also allowed for greater nuance when defining words, or different senses of the same word. Moreover, as Norri (2020) notes, when exploring data 'the relationship between the speaker and listener (or writer and reader) needs to be taken into account, as some basically depreciatory terms may be used in a neutral, even affectionate, fashion between members of the same in-group' (2020: 228). This was particularly relevant around terms like 'mad' which have been part of reclamation efforts.

As a result of working with the dictionary team, I was able to use my research background to inform my review of the dictionary entries as well as learn new skills about processes of lexicography. It also allowed me to see applications for my research that I had been unaware of. Most importantly, though, I was able to be part of a project that would make a difference, even in a very small way, to how people understand issues related to mental illness.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reported on my experiences communicating linguistics, specifically my consultancy work with a dictionary. I described how I took account of the social and academic context of my research to ensure that my research was informed by social issues. I also made the argument that academic research should precede any public engagement efforts, and I described how my experiences communicating my research came as a result of my research, rather than any concerted public engagement efforts. I described how my research informed my consultancy work and had huge benefits in terms of how I conceptualised the relevance of my research. I also briefly outlined some of the challenges that linguists face when trying to communicate their research, namely the 'PR problem' in linguistics, where linguistics is often misunderstood outside of academia. Moreover, I described my experiences communicating my research to journalists and some of the challenges I have encountered doing this, such as having to reduce nuanced research findings to 'headlines.' In response to these challenges, I suggested some ways that researchers can gain control of how they communicate their research in such settings, e.g. by creating a research summary document and sending this to journalists in advance. Despite the challenges communicating linguistic research, my experience communicating my research outside of academia has been very positive and has made me appreciate different working cultures, e.g. journalists do not have the luxury of page space or time to dedicate to your research (even if you think your research warrants time and space!). Communicating linguistic research has its challenges but it also has very many benefits, and we have a lot to learn through applying our research in varied and exciting new ways.

Top tips

- Write a 'headlines' document summarising your research and your findings for non-academic stakeholders.
- If possible, ask for questions in advance when speaking to journalists (but be mindful that they might deviate from those questions!)
- Don't comment on things you don't feel qualified to comment on (and feel comfortable saying that you don't feel qualified to comment).
- Format any documents/reports conducted as part of consultancy work so that they look professionally produced. There are a range of report templates available in Microsoft Word that can help make your document look professional. Send any files as a PDF.

Notes

1 As discussed in Price (2022), 'realistic' and 'accurate' here relate to the symptoms as stipulated by medical professionals, however people's experiences with mental illness are individual, and therefore mental illnesses are often experienced in different ways by different people.

2 Mad Pride,' founded by Mark Roberts, Simon Barnett, Robert Dellar, and Pete Haughnessy, is a civil liberties movement which aims to educate the public about mental illness. Part of the movement is the reclamation of terms like 'mad,' 'nutter' etc. in order to reclaim the terms from prejudicial use.

3 Interestingly, public-facing websites describing *Blue Planet II*, such as Wikipedia, do not mention the academic researchers at all. Moreover, the book which followed the series is authored by some of the producers, not the researchers.
4 It is interesting to note that schizophrenia was named by the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler (1911) and derives from the Greek 'skhizein' (to split) and 'phrēn' (mind). There have also been calls to rename schizophrenia as part of stigma reduction efforts (Lasalvia et al. 2021; Mesholam-Gately et al. 2021).

15

DEVELOPING RESOURCES FOR MODERN SOUTH ARABIAN LANGUAGES

Janet C. E. Watson and Abdullah al-Mahri

Introduction

This chapter describes public engagement during and beyond a Leverhulme Trust-funded project Documentation and Ethnolinguistic Analysis of Modern South Arabian (DEAMSA) (January 2013–December 2016). The documentation project did not include public engagement as an explicit strategy; however, from the outset, the project team insisted on wide community participation and full engagement with the various Modern South Arabian (MSAL) communities. The public engagement aspects of the project have resulted in significant linguistic and socio-cultural benefits for the participants and other community members. DEAMSA involved community speakers in a project to document and disseminate information about the languages, their cultures and ecosystems, designed to extend well beyond the lifetime of the western researchers. Public engagement included language revitalisation through script, production of children's e-books, raising the status of the languages, upskilling of community members involved in the project, joint dissemination of research findings with native speakers, documentation of threatened legacy and culture, public lectures, a podcast for the British Academy on Language and Nature, training workshops, international courses on language and nature held in Dhofar and, since the first Covid-19 lockdown, online international workshops through Zoom on language and nature in Southern Arabia.

The DEAMSA research objectives, to produce open-access multimedia archives of the MSAL spoken in Oman and mainland Yemen, were motivated by the degree of endangerment of the MSAL languages and their associated cultures and ecosystems. The academic investigators were Janet Watson (PI), Miranda Morris and Domenyk Eades. The project team included a large number of Modern South Arabian speakers, who acted as local researchers, data collectors,

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transcribers and translators and Saeed al-Mahri, the local administrator. Research outputs included five multimedia archives housed at the Endangered Languages Archive Repository (ELAR) at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London (see Watson and Morris 2016a; 2016b); articles and chapters on the lexicon, phonetics and phonology and gesture of the languages; an article on fieldwork methods (Watson et al. 2019); outreach articles; a comparative cultural glossary across all six Modern South Arabian Languages (Morris et al. 2019); and a pedagogical grammar of Mehri (Watson et al. 2020). In this chapter, note that first person switches from 'I' to 'we' and back again through the chapter. 'I' refers to the first author, and 'we' refers either to both authors or to the DEAMSA research team.

This chapter begins by situating the MSAL and mentioning key issues relating to language endangerment. Section 2 discusses the types of public engagement conducted under the headings: Language revitalisation: Through script; Language revitalisation: Raising language status; Community training and upskilling; Documenting threatened culture and legacy; Training courses; Annual courses on language and nature; and Online international workshops on language and nature in Southern Arabia. Section 3 describes the challenges and opportunities of public engagement in relation to language documentation. Section 4 describes the practicalities of public engagement in relation to Modern South Arabian. In the conclusion, we present public engagement 'top tips.'

Modern South Arabian

The Modern South Arabian Languages, Mehri, Soqotri, Ṣ́herēt (also known in the literature as Jibbāli or Shahri), Ḥarsūsi, Hobyōt and Baṭḥari, are unwritten Semitic languages spoken by minority populations in south-east Yemen, southern Oman and the fringes of southern and eastern Saudi Arabia. The term 'Modern South Arabian' was adopted to differentiate the MSAL from the long-extinct 'Old South Arabian' languages. The MSAL belong to the South Semitic branch of the Semitic language family, which also includes Ethiopian Semitic. This is distinguished from the Central Semitic branch, which includes the more widely known Arabic, Aramaic and Hebrew. The MSAL are believed to be the remnants of a pre-Arabic substratum that once stretched over the whole of southern Arabia, and across the Red Sea, into the highlands and littoral of East Africa.

Language endangerment

Traditionally spoken by (semi-)nomadic communities in southern Arabia, since the 1970s the MSAL have been threatened by Islamisation and accompanying Arabisation, lack of direct government support, sedentarisation, urbanisation, migration to and from the region, modern technology and rapid depletion of ecosystems through desertification. After the bitterly fought Dhofar war (1963–75), the Oman government stressed social and cultural unity rather than diversity (al-Azri 2010), purposefully neglecting MSAL languages and cultures. In Oman, Yemen and Saudi Arabia today, the official language is Arabic: of education, government, the media and commerce. Being in competition with another more widely spoken and literate language is a common problem for purely oral languages. However, in the case of the MSAL, the official language in question is Arabic. As this is also the language of the Qurʔān, and one which Muslims (nearly a quarter of the world's population) work hard to learn and understand, it means that these six minority languages are competing with an extremely high-prestige language.

The six languages of the MSAL group are not equally endangered: all languages apart from Baṭḥari are typically the language of the home; and speakers of the more prestigious Mehri, Śḥerēt and Soqoṭri maintain considerable pride in their languages. With the exception of figures for speakers of Soqoṭri and Baṭḥari, the figures given below are best estimates, as census figures are not available for numbers of speakers of particular languages or members of particular ethnic groups (Watson, Morris et al. 2019: 84).

i. Mehri is the most widespread language, spoken by people of the Mahra tribes in Oman, Yemen, and parts of southern and eastern Saudi Arabia. The Mahra tribe are estimated to be some 200,000 people, although the actual number of those among them who speak Mehri is impossible to estimate since the language is spoken across three state boundaries, and many Mahra no longer speak Mehri.
ii. Soqoṭri, spoken exclusively in the islands of the Soqoṭra Archipelago, a World Heritage Site, has some 100,000 speakers (Kogan and Bulakh 2019).
iii. Śḥerēt, spoken by a variety of tribes within the Dhofar region of Oman, has between 30,000–50,000 speakers.
iv. Ḥarsūsi, formerly spoken by members of the Ḥarsūsi tribe across the Jiddat al-Ḥarāsīs in central Oman, has around 2,000 speakers.
v. Hobyōt, spoken by a variety of tribes on both sides of the Yemeni / Omani border, has around 1,000 speakers.
vi. Baṭḥari, spoken by members of the Baṭḥari tribe, who live along the shore opposite the Al-Ḥallānīyah islands and in the desert plateau above, has less than 20 speakers.

The areas in which the MSAL are still spoken are the only regions within the Arabian Peninsula to have retained the Semitic languages spoken prior to the spread of Islam and the subsequent Arabisation of the Peninsula. In all other communities, Arabic appears to have superseded the original languages. As such, the documentation and description of the MSAL is of crucial importance to understanding the historical development of the Semitic language family as a whole. It is also of importance to the MSAL speakers, both in terms of providing a body of material relating to their communities that they can watch and listen to, allowing them to listen to or see often older members of their tribes and families, and enabling them to participate in joint presentations and publications.

These languages are noted for their retention of ancient Semitic phonological and grammatical features that have disappeared from other Semitic languages, suggesting that the MSAL are the oldest extant Semitic languages. Retained linguistic features include:

a) In the consonantal phonology, a contrast of three plain voiceless sibilants (s-like sounds), known to have existed in Ancient South Arabian, of which one is a lateral sibilant. In Mehri, for example, *š̍əff* 'to fart silently' with a palato-alveolar sibilant, pronounced as in English 'sh' in 'sheep,' contrasts with *śəff* 'to want' with a lateral sibilant, pronounced similarly to Welsh 'll' in words such as *llid* 'song'; and *śkawn* 'thorns,' with a lateral sibilant, contrasts with *skawn* 'they m. lived in' with an alveolar sibilant, pronounced as in English 's' in 'soul' (Watson et al. 2020).
b) In the pronoun system, contrast of the dual with singular and plural in all persons. In Mehri, for example, *akay* 'we two' contrasts with *hōh* 'I' and *nḥāh* 'we.' Similarly, *atay* 'you two' contrasts with *hēt* 'you singular (s.)' and *atēm* 'you masculine plural (m.pl.)' and *atēn* 'you feminine plural (f.pl.)' (Rubin 2010; Watson 2012). Within the Semitic language family, no other purely spoken language retains the dual pronoun, and the long-extinct Ugaritic is apparently the only other Semitic language to have exhibited a first-person dual pronoun.

Other linguistic features of interest to the MSAL include:

c) A highly non-concatenative morphological system. By non-concatenation we mean that many inflections are expressed within the word stem rather than as explicit suffixes or prefixes. Thus, in Mehri while *tḥōm* means 'you m.s./she want(s),' *tḥaym* with a change in the vowel of the verb stem means either 'you f.s. want' or 'you m.pl. want.' In Śḥerēt, the difference between masculine and feminine in some adjectives is indicated by an 'o' vowel in the masculine, and 'i' vowel in the feminine, as in the word for 'green,' *š̍əṣ̌ror* in the masculine, *š̍əṣ̌rir* in the feminine, and the word for 'cold,' *ḳaṣmun*, in the masculine, and *ḳaṣmin* in the feminine (cf. Rubin 2014).
d) A great deal of syncretism, particularly in the verb system. By 'syncretism,' we mean that one particular form can indicate two or more morphological categories. Thus, in all the MSAL, the basic form of the perfect verb indicates both third person m.s. and third person f.pl., as in Mehri: *śīni* 'he/they f. saw' and *əssōfər* 'he/they f. travelled.' In Śḥerēt, this syncretism goes even further, with the basic form of the perfect verb indicating third m.s. and third m.pl. and third f.pl. Within the imperfect verb, certain verbal forms show syncretism for many more morphological categories. Thus, in the indicative of the verb *abōṣər* 'to go around twilight' in Mehri the form

tābaṣrən stands for all second persons – you m.s., you f.s., you m.pl., you f.pl., 'you go around twilight' – and for third f.s. and f.pl., thus 'she goes around twilight' and 'they f. go around twilight' (Watson, al-Mahri et al. in press).

e) The development of consonants not attested in other Semitic languages. These include the emphatic counterpart of *š̌* (pronounced as 'sh'), *ṣ̌*, in all the MSAL. Thus, Mehri, *fəš̌š̌* 'to release air' with a plain final 'š̌' contrasts with *fəṣ̌ṣ̌* 'to press hard' with an emphatic 'ṣ̌.' Śḥerēt has developed more consonants than the other MSAL, and contrasts *four* plain voiceless sibilants: in addition to *s*, *ś* and *š̌*, it has alveo-palatal sibilant produced with lip protrusion, which is commonly transcribed as *s̃*. Thus, *š̌um* 'they m.' contrasts with *s̃ohum* 'with them m.' Śḥerēt also has a voiced lateral sibilant allophone of /l/, commonly transcribed in academic work as *ź*, as in *iź īrun* [owners goats] 'goat owners.'

f) Finally, when using a possessive pronoun with a noun, Mehri, Śḥerēt and Ḥarsūsi, in contrast to other Semitic languages, require the definite article (Simeone-Senelle 1997: 389): Mehri *wōz* 'goat' becomes *ḥōz* 'the goat' and 'my goat' then takes the pronoun suffix *-i* to give *ḥōzi* [the-goat-mine] 'my goat.'

Language revitalisation: through script

Arabic speakers in southern Arabia frequently refer to the MSAL as 'dialects' of Arabic. This is not because Arabic speakers can, without training, understand the MSAL, or because the languages are linguistically close; this is rather because in Arabic the term *luġah* 'language' contrasts with *lahjah* (roughly translated as 'dialect'), where *luġah* denotes a language variety with a formally adopted script and *lahjah* a language variety without a script. At a time when mobile phones, and later smartphones, were becoming part of the culture, writing was becoming more important among the MSAL communities. Before 2013, texting between MSAL speakers was almost always in Arabic. Therefore, the first task of DEAMSA was to produce an Arabic-based orthography; this would both raise the status of the MSAL and produce a means of disseminating them in written form. The decision to opt for an Arabic-based orthography was made on the basis that practically all MSAL speakers under the age of 50 had been educated to some degree in Arabic and were familiar with the Arabic script.

All MSAL have consonantal phonemes which are not attested in Standard Arabic; therefore, additional characters had to be adopted from Unicode. In order to produce a unified script, characters were adopted for Śḥerēt, the MSAL with most consonants, of which a subset were taken for the other languages. The characters were shared for computer use by local researchers in the DEAMSA project. The local researchers used the new orthography to transcribe the audio and audio-visual material collected. In 2020, a keyboard for Mehri was produced through GBoard. Even where additional characters are not available for speakers, texting in Mehri and Śḥerēt is increasingly adopted, with speakers using the underspecified Arabic keyboard: for example, the character ث denotes both interdental /ṯ/ and lateral /ś/; the character ص denotes both emphatic /ṣ/ and emphatic /ṣ̌/; and the character ج denotes both velar /g/ and the voiced palato-alveolar fricative /ž/. Comments from MSAL texters include: '[T]exting in Mehri is one of the most important outcomes of the project [DEAMSA]… Now a large number of Mehri and Shehri speakers text in their native languages.' 'I never used to write [Mehri]… Now when I want to send something to my parents or my friends, I write to them in Mehri and they understand it and write back to me in Mehri.' Over 60 community members use the new script to communicate on social media, which has led to the establishment of WhatsApp groups, as one of the texters writes: 'Now me and my friends have a WhatsApp group and we write to each other in Mehri.' By facilitating an Arabic-based orthography for the languages, the DEAMSA project was able to give something back to the communities.

From 2015, the new script has been used to produce children's e-books. The books provide illustrations, text in the new script and voiceover by Abdullah al-Mahri for Mehri and Faisal al-Mahri for Śḥerɛ̄t. Two of the books were published in *Language & Ecology* (al-Mahri and Watson 2020; al-Mahri, Watson and Eades 2020b), a journal that publishes work in any language of the world. In autumn 2022, the first actual children's book, translated as Selim and his shadow, was published with illustrations by Domenyk Eades through Peculiar Press.

Language revitalisation: raising language status

DEAMSA promoted language revitalisation by encouraging speakers to speak and write their language. Through the project, older, illiterate community members became teachers of MSAL, posting voice messages in response to queries from younger speakers on WhatsApp groups. Younger community members now teach the languages to their children. One of the local researchers wrote: 'The young generation had felt that Mehri was irrelevant… [then] they wondered: "Why are British people interested in studying our language? It must be of great historic importance."'

DEAMSA raised the profile and status of the languages amongst speakers themselves and in the wider Arab community and was influential in establishing the Mehri Center for Studies and Research (MCSR) in al-Ghaydhah, Yemen, of which Watson is the only non-Mehri, non-Yemeni committee member. According to the MCSR, 'this project has aided [Mehri] greatly though winning international recognition for it and allowing it to participate in research projects with globally recognised academic institutions.'

Revitalisation had a particularly marked effect on the small, low-status Bathari community. The attitudes of Bathari speakers towards their language changed markedly during the project. Anna Zacharias of *The National* wrote: 'Khalifa Al Bathari expressed great pride [in] his work with the linguists and said the community's renewed interest and respect for Bathari stemmed from the attention shown by researchers. This was repeated to me independently by several women from Shuwaimiyyah, who proudly named relatives interviewed by academics.'

Community training and upskilling

DEAMSA played a significant role in upskilling community members, many with little or no schooling, providing them with transferable skills in data collection, digital recording, digital tools, project management, training of others, research dissemination and production.

Community training

Fifteen community members were trained to induct other community members in language documentation, ethical methods, use of the new script, and translation. Comments from MSAL community members include: 'I have learned how to document and write the language.' 'I learnt how to use… ELAAN [sic]… PRAAT and Tool Box… and I liked that.' Ahmed and Ali al-Mahri with Watson co-trained Mehri speakers in the documentation of biocultural diversity in al-Mahrah, who produced their own archive for ELAR (https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/MPI10949120), collecting 202 audio/audio-visual files from 21 speakers representing 7 tribal groups and 5 dialects (al-Qumairi and Watson 2020).

Research co-production

In total, 51 project presentations in mainland Europe, UK, US, Arabia and (during COVID-19 lockdown) online were delivered jointly with community members, endowing them with presentational skills. Ali al-Mahri writes: 'I enjoyed [giving] lectures very much, especially when I saw the reaction of the participants hearing these languages.' MSAL speakers co-produced six publications, providing them with the skills and confidence to produce their own academic papers. Abdullah al-Mahri was centrally involved in all collaborative outputs, including the children's e-books mentioned above.

Making women's voices heard

Muslim women are traditionally reluctant to record their own voices, or have their names mentioned publicly. The project recorded 25 women who now act as teachers of MSAL heritage to their younger relatives. MSAL women co-produced two pieces of underpinning research: three MSAL-speaking women collaborated on Morris et al. (2019), and Bxayta al-Mahri, a monolingual Mehri woman, collaborated additionally on *Təghamk Āfyət: A course in Mehri of Dhofar* (Watson et al. 2020). As a result, Bxayta now enjoys enhanced status as the 'dictionary' of her community.

Documenting threatened culture and legacy

One of the principal aims of the project was to document dying and past cultural practices. Yahya al-Mahri, one of the Mehri project participants, wrote: ‘The Mehri language is the product of a profound culture and history and… [would] gradually [face] the prospect of near extinction without the devoted efforts of academics like… Bart Peter (Daughter of Peter (Watson)).’ The project gave younger local research assistants insights into the pre-motorised past and increased their interest in learning about it. Said Baquir, a bilingual Hobyōt–Śḥerēt project participant, wrote: ‘Listening to the recordings… made me realise what our communities have lost in terms of skill and knowledge and has opened my eyes to how altered and degraded our environment has become.’

The MSAL archives produced by the DEAMSA team, linked in Ethnologue OLAC[1] provide the largest bank of audio/audio-visual data for any endangered Semitic language family. This enabled MSAL community members and the public outside the region to engage with cultural and linguistic material. During 2014–2019, the Mehri and Śḥerēt archives were visited 4,560 and 3,133 times respectively, by community members, the UK public, UNESCO staff, people with an interest in flora and fauna and researchers. Mandana Seyfeddinipur, director of the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme at SOAS wrote: ‘This collection is an exceptional resource for scholars and is having a substantial impact scientifically.’ Legacy work continued with the British Library, whose catalogue according to Dr Sue Davies of the British Library ‘now includes the content of the 20 [MSAL] sound recordings you assisted us with, making them accessible to the general public.’ The British Library have thus been able ‘to reconnect a portion of these sound recordings with the family members of the speakers featured in them, continuing the collaborative and proactive cataloguing process.’

Training courses

Through work conducted on language documentation, I was invited to host training workshops in Oman and Qatar. Workshops were held for academics and professionals from Northern Oman in Salalah, August 2018, students and professionals from Qatar at Qatar University, February 2018, and academics from Sohar University, Oman and community members from the Musandam Peninsula online through Zoom in October 2020. The August 2018 workshop was run together with Ali al-Mahri, a native speaker of Mehri and Śḥerēt. The October 2020 workshop was run together with Stephanie Petit, an archivist from the Endangered Languages Archive Repository, SOAS. These workshops enabled me to engage with Arabic-speaking academics and professionals about the MSAL languages, cultures and ecosystems, and relate findings to other indigenous languages spoken in the Arabian Peninsula.

Annual courses on language and nature

In January 2018, 2019 and 2020, ten-day courses on Mehri: Language and Nature were held in Salalah, Dhofar and run by Watson and Ali al-Mahri; in August 2018, a five-day course on Mehri: Documentation, Language and Nature was run by Watson and al-Mahri for academics and professionals from northern Oman; in October 2020, a ten-session online course was run by Watson and Stephanie Petit to train researchers from northern Oman and the Musandam Peninsula in the documentation and analysis of the endangered Kumzāri language. Each course had between four and nine participants. The courses stressed the symbiotic link between indigenous languages, cultures and ecosystems, with morning sessions dealing with grammar and lexis and afternoon sessions using the language in the natural environment. By 2020, Watson and al-Mahri had trained people from 14 different countries, ranging from Canada to Japan.

Online international workshops on language and nature in Southern Arabia

The COVID-19 lockdown from March 2020 meant that face-to-face training would no longer be possible for the foreseeable future. The facilities offered by Zoom, and the felicitous decision of the Omani government to withdraw the ban on video meetings, opened an opportunity to engage regularly with a far wider public. From 23 March to 14 July 2020, online workshops on language and nature in Southern Arabia (https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/modern-south-arabian-languages/news/article/1525/professor-janet-watson-hosts-series-of-online-workshops) were held on a weekly basis; from 1 September to 15 December, workshops were held twice monthly; and from 12 January 2021, workshops were held once a month. The workshops focus on the link between language and nature. They were designed to include three to six presentations, with at least one presentation by a native speaker of MSAL or of Kumzāri, and encouragement of presentations shared between early career researchers and members of the language communities in southern Arabia. The workshops have had between 18 to 56 participants, with the average participation rate being 35. In total, 27 online workshops have been hosted to date. The workshops have been attended by members of the MSAL community, by members of the UK public, and by professionals from organisations such as the Environment Society, the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, the Let's Read Programme in Oman and the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, making community members' knowledge of their flora, fauna and environment available to international and non-academic audiences.

Public lectures

Public lectures increased the range and number of people with whom we engaged in relation to the languages, cultures and ecosystems of southern Arabia. Public lectures on language and nature in Dhofar were given by Watson and Ali al-Mahri to the Anglo-Omani Society in July 2020 and by Watson and Abdullah al-Mahri to the University of Leeds in November 2020. A public lecture was given to G20k on the language and culture of al-Mahrah, Yemen by Watson and Saeed al-Mahri.

Challenges and opportunities of public engagement in relation to Modern South Arabian

We encountered two major challenges of public engagement in relation to Modern South Arabian.

First, the MSAL are not official languages in either Oman or Yemen; among some native speakers and Arabic speakers of the region, they are frequently considered to be 'dialects' of Arabic and, thus, not to be taken seriously.

Secondly, as non-official languages, the name of one of the languages remains a subject of contention: Śḥerēt, the name we and our Śḥerēt-speaking collaborators believe the language should have on the basis of it being originally the language spoken in the *śḥɛr* 'the green mountains,' is contested by present-day speakers of the language from elsewhere. Various names have been associated with this language, with the term Śḥerēt falsely perceived by some to designate the 'non-tribal group of this name whose social position, now greatly improved, was until recent times rather lowly' (Johnstone 1981: xi).

The region does, however, offer significant opportunities. We found the openness of the MSAL language communities to engagement and collaboration of foremost importance. Eleven native speakers have regularly contributed to workshops, international lectures and guest talks. Several MSAL community members, once trained in digital recording and data management, recorded audio and video cultural events to be held in the multimedia archives.

The digital revolution has greatly facilitated public engagement. This includes the use of WhatsApp voice and text messages, WhatsApp groups and video calls and the simple, but effective, facilities offered by Zoom since early 2020.

Challenges and opportunities of public engagement in relation to the field of language documentation

Language documentation is often considered to be a niche subject, such that in the early days it was difficult to engage non-academics with the subject. However, digital technology has greatly facilitated dissemination of, and about, endangered languages. The possibility of producing and sharing video demonstrations of cultural activities makes the languages and their position in the world real.

Endangered languages across the globe are becoming increasingly important in academic research. UNESCO produced a list of five categories to define how endangered a language is (UNESCO 2017). The international press has published articles on the importance of endangered languages globally: e.g. 25 endangered languages you need to listen to before they disappear (The Independent: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/endangered-languages-dead-listen-speakers-audio-belarusian-wiradjuri-cornish-a8268196.html). Recent best-seller publications on the environmental humanities have stressed the relationship between language and nature, both in the UK and elsewhere, showing what we as a species may lose through the loss of language. These include popular works by Robert Macfarlane (2012, 2015, 2017, 2019); Isabella Tree (2018); Jay Griffiths (2006); William Fiennes (2001); Mark Cocker (2018) and Tristan Gooley (2014). These publications demonstrate that language endangerment is not restricted to languages with very few speakers but affects all languages. *The Lost Words*, authored by Robert Macfarlane and illustrated by Jackie Morris, was designed to give new life to nature words that had been culled from the Oxford Junior Dictionary (2017). Griffiths (2006), through her travels across the globe, argues that words typically borrowed from other languages among indigenous peoples frequently relate to measure and quantification, terms that have little relevance locally as the richness of the lexicon is more than adequate to describe culturally significant distinctions. Gooley (2014: 339), describing walking with the Dayak in Borneo, provides one of many examples of cultural differences in expressing direction and location.

The benefits of public engagement to the research

Engagement with native-speaker colleagues opened the team's eyes to aspects of the languages and cultures they may not otherwise have known about. This includes expressions of quantification: time in terms of position of the sun or depth of darkness; measure in terms of relative volume; herd sizes in terms of approximate numbers, but without using numbers. Close collaboration with native speakers has also enabled both the western researchers and the native speakers to hear slight phonetic differences that either change meaning or are allophonic: gemination of voiceless consonants to express definiteness in nominals – so slight at times that it is barely audible; in weak prosodic positions, frication of consonants described by other researchers as 'ejective'; lenition of /b/ to a bilabial fricative or sonorant; the length and number of short vowels in word-final position; and utterance-final silent consonants – consonants that are articulated, but lack any acoustic signal.

The practicalities of public engagement in relation to Modern South Arabian

The most important take-home message of working with indigenous language communities is 'Stay in touch!' The communities are part of your wider social network, and many are friends. Digital technology, more than anything else, has provided the tools to make this possible. In addition to the online workshops, now hosted once a month, I stay in touch with my MSAL colleagues through WhatsApp and try to factor into my schedule virtual meetings through Zoom or WhatsApp video calls with someone from the community every week. They love to hear my news, as I do theirs – how my family is, places my husband and I visit during our long cycle rides, news of Covid-19 from the UK and their news from Oman, news of illness and death.

Training was conducted face-to-face during the period of the DEAMSA project, with trained researchers then training others. Since lockdown, training has been conducted virtually through Zoom. Zoom enables training to be conducted with people from several different locations and greatly cuts cost both in terms of economics and time. Zoom has also enabled us to engage with members of the public across the globe, disseminating information about the languages, cultures and ecosystems of the MSAL communities, demonstrating that their relationship with nature and ways of expressing that relationship are not unique to their communities but rather are part of the human condition: at some point in time, all languages had rich linguistic means of expressing the human–nature relationship.

Public engagement top tips

I (Janet) have five top tips, as below. Of these, tip number 5 is most important: remember that anyone can be your teacher. I remember eating lunch with my adopted family from Rabkut. The mother of the family said, 'Here you are, a professor, sitting on the floor and eating lunch with us.' I said, 'I may be a professor, but you are the professor of the professor.' Without my women friends, without Abdullah, Saeed, Said, Ali, Khalid, Musallam, Ahmed, Ibrahim, Yahya, Suhayl, Sulaiman, Abd al-Aziz and so many others, the research described in this chapter could not have been done, and the public engagement would have been meaningless.

- Be open.
- Never promise anything you don't feel you can deliver.
- Stay in touch.
- Acknowledge the contributions of all colleagues.
- Remember that anyone can be your teacher.

Note

1 http://www.language-archives.org/archive/ethnologue.com; *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* is a comprehensive reference work that catalogues all the world's known languages.

16

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

The case of respeaking

Zoe Moores

Public engagement: Access services and subtitling

In this chapter, I describe my research into how a particular form of live subtitling, called respeaking – where subtitles are created by a person in real time using speech recognition software – can be used to make live events more accessible and a series of public engagement events that took place in the course of carrying that research out.[1] Public engagement formed an integral part of this project. Not only were the research events I ran public engagement activities, but the entire research design was created in such a way as to embed the practice and values of public engagement into my work from the outset.

As a term, *public engagement* can be used in many ways and to describe a variety of activities, but I find the definition from the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement a particularly helpful one:

> Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.
>
> *(NCCPE 2020)*

This active sense of engagement, where knowledge and expertise are shared between both academia and public, is a vital part of my research. Since I was exploring how an access service – in this case live subtitling – would potentially be provided, consulting both users and practitioners to ensure that what I was proposing could meet their needs and expectations, and fit in with organisational considerations, was an essential part of the process. The action research approach I adopted, where learning happens by doing (O'Brien 2001), further embedded

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the possibility of communication and interaction, as we explored what circumstances were most conducive to good quality subtitling, and access provision and meant that whatever was learned at each event could be swiftly embedded into the practice and activities that followed.

What are access services?

From a disciplinary perspective, access services sit within audiovisual translation (AVT), media accessibility (MA) and the emerging area of accessibility studies (AS). More specifically, access services include a variety of techniques and modalities which provide access to media and non-media objects, services and environments for any person who cannot or would not be able to access them, whether partially or completely, in their original form (Greco 2019a: 27). These modalities include subtitling, dubbing, audio description and many more. For researchers in access services, texts are made up of audio and visual components which together create a meaningful whole. Each modality allows linguistic or sensorial elements (or a combination of both) to be captured and portrayed. This means that texts presented in different modalities are accessed in a different way but one which must respect and fit into the audiovisual product as a whole, if it is not to disrupt the content that is already present. For example, subtitles must fit specific time and space constraints so that they follow the flow of the programme and avoid obscuring key visual content; spoken audio description must be timed precisely so that it does not overlap with the original soundtrack. Like other accessibility efforts, the focus of my research, which I called the Respeaking at Live Events project, is on intralingual access, where the accessible content appears in the same language as the original.

As modalities such as subtitling and respeaking are used in new settings, extending beyond television and cinema into theatres, museums, conferences, etc., new constraints and considerations have also been introduced. It is not enough for the audiovisual content alone to be accessible – adverts and websites, booking procedures, entry into and travel around any venue must also be accessible so that the audiovisual content can first be accessed.

At the same time, it is increasingly understood that varied audience groups make use of this access once available. Whilst deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people are the main audience for intralingual subtitles, they are by no means the only audience who use them. Muted television sets often play with subtitles in airports and waiting rooms, on display for anyone who chooses to watch, and there is a body of research into the use of intralingual subtitles in children's programmes (Black, 2020) and for language learning (Vanderplank, 2016). As the use of subtitles changes and evolves, opportunities to engage with the public are vital, and I wanted this audience diversity to be reflected at my own events.

Public engagement in access services

Ties between academia and industry have long been important within research into access services, and many researchers, like myself, are also practitioners. Almost every research question in AVT considers the user or audience of the audiovisual text in some way and what access to content is made available to them by the different approaches used. However, in more recent years, the prominence and agency held by users has gradually increased. In the last decade, during the sociological turn of AVT, users have become and been increasingly recognised as co-creators in the very audiovisual production processes that they use (Chaume, 2018: 47). As Chaume explains, audiences that were 'formerly passive' now participate 'in the creation and translation of audiovisual content, in the development of new ideas and in the complex interplay of collective creativity.' The democratisation that technology has brought has seen a shift in power and responsibility from makers and producers to users and audience members (Chaume, 2018: 47; Greco, 2018) and the way in which users engage with different modalities is a frequent research focus. In the emerging discipline of Accessibility Studies (AS) (Greco, 2018, 2019b), users are seen as having a role that is not only active, but epistemic; the knowledge and expertise that they hold is vital, and they must be consulted for a fuller view to be obtained. As a well-known maxim from Disability Studies states, 'Nothing about us without us.'[2]

User engagement is now seen far earlier in the research process. It is increasingly understood that access is itself a process, and the earlier it is considered, the more likely it is to be integrated within the audiovisual content as a whole. User engagement often takes the form of focus groups, audience reception studies (Romero-Fresco, 2015 and Di Giovanni, 2020) and eye-tracking studies (Perego, 2010), each of which allow individual perspectives and reactions to audiovisual content to be explored.

As I will explain in the next section, my own project began with focus group work with respeakers, venues and audience members so that I could run a larger audience reception study. Where my research differs from some other projects is that I decided to frame the audience reception study within a series of public engagement events.

Academic context of the research

Although excellent access exists in the live event setting, the number of accessible events in any given year is low when compared to the total number that actually take place. In 2018–2019, Stagetext, the national captioning charity, provided access at 373 captioned performances and supported access at an additional 154. Working with MyClearText,[3] they made 206 talks and tours accessible with live subtitles (Stagetext 2019: 9–10). In an effort to achieve a more equitable balance, I wanted to see if respeaking was a viable option for complementing this existing access and increasing the number of accessible events available. The public engagement events I organised allowed respeakers to work in a live event setting and feedback to be sought from the respeakers themselves, the venues that hosted the events and the audience members that attended.

From television to live events

During respeaking, subtitles are created in real time using speech recognition software. In the UK, they are primarily used to provide access to live television programmes including the news, parliamentary debates, sports and chat shows, where subtitles are created as the programme is broadcast. These programmes are often unscripted, though some, like the news, may contain sections that are scripted and others that are fully live. I envisaged that in the live event setting they would be used on similar unscripted or partially scripted content, for example, museum tours, public talks, conferences or Q&A sessions, where it would not be possible for a full set of subtitles to be prepared in advance.

I expected that the general principles of respeaking would be the same in both settings: a human respeaker listens to the original content of what was said and respeaks it, voicing in the required punctuation (i.e. speaking the punctuation out loud) and adding additional information to reflect this soundtrack, for example using either coloured text or name tags to identify who is speaking or labels to indicate applause or laughter. The words that the respeaker says pass through the speech recognition software and the recognised output is displayed on screen. At the same time as voicing in new content, the respeaker lightly monitors the subtitles as they appear and makes essential corrections. Respeakers work independently, but are often paired so that together they can cover longer blocks of content.

I also realised that the respeakers would encounter a number of differences when moving to the live event setting, and I needed to understand the impact these differences might have. I knew, for example, that the respeakers would require a different working set up, that they might work remotely or be located in the main event room, that they would have different choices to make when displaying the subtitles and, perhaps most importantly, that the interaction possible at live events would be very different from what they were used to on television (Figure 16.1).

When working on television, the respeaker would watch, listen and respeak, essentially following and responding to the content that was unfolding before them, yet unable to communicate with anyone in the programme. At live events, however, everyone present would be able to interact with each other and with the respeaker, and these interactions often affected the decisions the respeaker made and the content of the subtitles. At many events, a designated access coordinator or manager (Remael et al, 2019) monitored the subtitles and intervened if an error appeared or some content was missed, perhaps by asking the presenter to repeat something already said. On many occasions, the audience and presenters also responded to the content of the subtitles. Suddenly, rather than being an independent access provider who was isolated from the content on

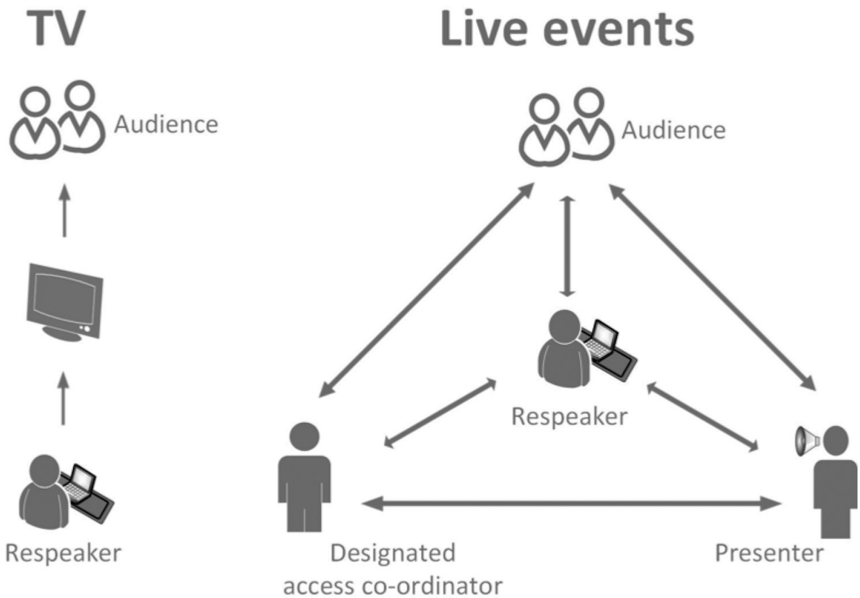

FIGURE 16.1 Interaction on television and at live events (adapted from Moores 2020a).

which they are working (i.e. on television) and the audience they were creating it for, the respeaker and the subtitles they were creating had become an active, living and visible part of the event.

No public engagement? No research!

Today it is easy for me to sit and list these differences in practice across these two settings. However, it was only through running the public engagement events that I was able to fully realise the consequences of these differences as they played out in front of me and the responses to them from those involved. What the events allowed me to do was to try and recreate the dynamism of the experience you have at a public event within a research setting and explore questions such as:

- What is it like for a respeaker to have the audience in such close proximity (rather than on the other side of a television screen)?
- What is it like for the audience to watch live subtitles on different screens and devices in a variety of venues?
- What needs to be in place for good access to be provided using respeaking?
- For a venue, how easy is it to integrate this form of access into wider event planning and organisation?

To answer these questions fully, I needed to engage with those present at the events. I needed to hear the accounts of the respeakers working at the events, and I needed to create an opportunity where the audience could share freely what they felt about the event and the access. Without this opportunity to engage, my research would have been a test on paper; inviting the audience made the research come alive and allowed me to seek vital input on how to improve the service we were trialling and learn how to integrate this access provision more fully whilst the event was still being planned.

Embedding the public engagement activities into the research

Eight public engagement events were organised in total, and they were split into two different rounds. These events were designed to cover a range of content and communicative opportunities so that any findings would be widely applicable; this arrangement seemed to balance the need for diversity, illustrated more fully in Table 16.1, with what I could feasibly manage.

The events included presentations, public speakers, film panels, museum tours and post-screening Q&As, which naturally brought variation in terms of the thematic and audiovisual content that the respeakers would tackle and in the organisational set-up used. The museum tours were mobile, with audience members accessing the subtitles on individual tablets, whilst all the other events were seated, with the subtitles displayed on screens. At some events, the respeakers were located within the main event room, whilst at others, they were located in another room within the venue. The location of the events also varied, making them geographically accessible to a wider audience.

The organisation of these events was a complex process. I needed to build and establish relationships with respeakers, venues and audience members and seek expertise to ensure that the events would be well-run, and it was essential that these engagement activities were embedded into a well-thought out research design; only if both these conditions were met, would I be likely to maximise on the opportunity that the events offered, collect the data I was hoping for and truly be able to offer the platform for 'generating mutual benefit' (NCCPE 2020) that I desired.

Research design

I chose an action research approach to frame the research as it allowed me at once to prioritise interaction and listening within a methodology that is made up of cycles of action and reflection. These cycles allow the researcher to identify a problem (the research question) and take the action required to resolve it. The periods of reflection allow the effectiveness of this action to be assessed and further changes to be made as required. The aim in doing this is to remove the gap between 'knowing' and 'doing' that is often seen in research (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) and to answer new questions that arise as the research unfolds.

TABLE 16.1 Diversity in events.

No.	*Event type*	*Theme*	*Venue*	*Location*	*Audience*	*Respeakers*	*Display*	*Speakers*	*Audiovisual content*
Round One									
1	Presentation	Live arts, amateur dramatics	Riverhouse Barn, Walton on Thames	Tudor hall set up as theatre	Seated	Back of theatre (raised)	Subtitles at top of screen	Multiple (one main)	Live performance, PowerPoint (text and images)
2	Public speaker	Drury Lane	Riverhouse Barn, Walton on Thames	Tudor Hall set up as theatre	Seated	Back of theatre	Subtitles at bottom of screen	Single	PowerPoint (text and images)
3	Film panel	*Blue Pen, Notes on Blindness*	BFI St Stephen St, London	Small screening room	Seated	Separate room in venue	Subtitles at top of screen	Multiple	Films (burnt-in subtitles); some use of PowerPoint (text and images)
4	Museum tour	Medicine Man	Wellcome Collection, London	Gallery	Mobile	Separate room in venue	Subtitles on individual tablets	Single	Realia
Round Two									
No.	*Event type*	*Theme*	*Venue*	*Location*	*Audience*	*Respeakers*	*Display*	*Speakers*	*Audiovisual content*
5	Post-screening discussion	*The Piano*	Watershed, Bristol	Watershed Café	Seated	At the next table	Multiple lines of subtitles, two screens	Multiple	None during discussion

6	Post-screening discussion	*The Piano*	Depot, Lewes	Screening room	Seated	At the side of the screening room	Three lines of subtitles, middle of screen	Multiple	None during discussion
7	Museum tour	Highlights tour	Manchester Art Gallery	Gallery	Mobile	Separate room in venue	Subtitles on individual tablets	Single	Art works
8	Public speaker	Psychology and wellbeing	University of Roehampton, London	Lecture theatre	Seated	Back of lecture room (raised)	Three lines of subtitles, middle of screen	Single	No slides. Some gestures and action to support content.

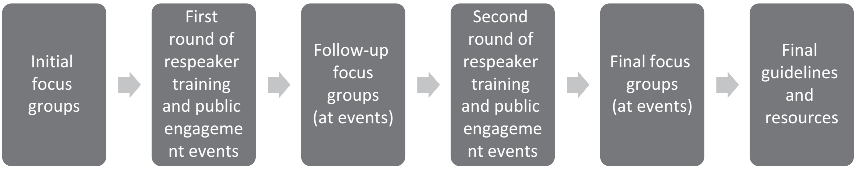

FIGURE 16.2 Research cycles (adapted from Moores 2020b).

Because I valued the voices and input of the respeakers, venues and audience members at each stage in the process, I included three different cycles of data collection in my research design, which interwove two rounds of respeaker training and events, with three rounds of focus group research (Figure 16.2).

The initial focus groups (Cycle One) provided opportunities for me to talk to each party and to determine the core expectations they held for a respeaking service at live events; this marked the start of the two-way process described by the NCCPE above. Having identified these core expectations, I was able to incorporate them into the training I provided for respeakers.

By separating the training and public engagement events into two distinct rounds of events, a natural period of reflection was built into the research design. However, in practice, the reflection was ongoing. Whilst I trained the respeakers, there were many opportunities for discussion and reflection within the session; the respeakers were encouraged to share their own expertise, and it was through this collaborative process that the guidelines to be used at the events were established.

Similarly, as each event took place, everyone present had the opportunity to share their responses to the events, and we – myself, together with the respeakers – naturally made small adaptations to our working practice. For example, more details were added to the guidelines, and a few items were added to the respeaking kit.

The break between the cycles allowed time for larger changes to be implemented (the sound system was upgraded) and then the process was repeated; additional training was offered and four further events followed.

This rolling cycle of learning and reflection meant that that the public engagement activities were at once an opportunity for all who attended to experience the live subtitling in action and shape the way that this service was offered.

Establishing connections

Just as this research depended on public engagement, being able to run the engagement activities depended on building and establishing connections. This was a gradual process. Initial introductions from my supervisory team gave me the support I needed at the start of the project and the confidence to begin establishing new relationships of my own.

Having worked as a respeaker and conducted research in this area, I already had connections with a range of respeaking companies and experts. Lengthy email exchanges with the companies followed, where we discussed what I was hoping to achieve through this research and how the information would be used. All the companies agreed to be involved in the project, although the form this involvement took varied according to internal policies. Nevertheless, I found a team of dedicated respeakers who were willing to commit their own time to taking part in these events. Whilst I was unable to pay them, I did cover food, transport and accommodation expenses – for the respeakers and those involved in organising the events – through my funding allowance.

Another key connection for me was with the captioning charity Stagetext, and this came through an introduction from one of my supervisors. I can't stress enough the importance of getting advice and working with expert organisations. Whilst not partners, Stagetext advised me closely and supported me through the lifetime of the project. Initially, I went to them to learn more about working in a live event setting and to observe how current access was provided. I attended a number of their events and through this, first, began to really understand the variety that exists amongst deaf, deafened and hard of hearing audience members. With their help, I was able to refine the language and terminology I was using and improve my communication with future audience members, which was shared in their newsletters and on their website and social media. Stagetext shared with me the language guide they use (Graeae n.d.) built around the Social Model of Disability, where 'people are disabled by barriers within society, rather than being "victims" of their impairments or conditions.' For this reason, I now write about deaf audience members, rather than 'the deaf audience.' Another example of how Stagetext helped me is when I was organising my first focus group session. Despite the purpose of the research being to explore how live subtitles could improve access, I fell into the trap of – initially – only arranging BSL interpretation for the sessions. In my mind, live subtitles were the project outcome – not something I would be using from the start! Luckily, Stagetext pointed this out, and I was able to arrange live subtitlers for the focus groups, and this became the very first step of the action research process.

This collaboration with Stagetext was extremely important and accordingly I co-ordinated events around Stagetext's calendar: since accessible events were already limited in number, we didn't want any such events to clash. This also meant that they were able to publicise the events and that representatives from Stagetext could attend and advise on the first round of events. In addition, it was Stagetext's own tablets that I used at the museum tours. The partnership with Stagetext functioned on many levels, and this, as with the advice regarding the focus group sessions, is an example of one of the more tangible benefits that it brought.

Co-ordinating the public engagement activities

In order for the project to be successful, it was vital to network in order to organise eight different cultural events, and I took every opportunity to do this. For example, I contacted venues that were partnered with the consortium that funded my research (AHRC TECHNE). These links led to events being hosted at the Wellcome Collection and the BFI St Stephen Street.

In addition to academic conferences, I attended many events relating to the media, access and inclusion and deafness and disability, for example, the Unlimited Festival at the Southbank and events organised by the BFI Film Hub. I went to them all out of personal interest, but my research often came up in conversation. I had a simple set of business cards ready to share if an appropriate moment arose. It was through contacts made in these less formal settings that two further events were arranged at the Depot in Lewes and the Watershed in Bristol. In fact, I first met Carmen Slijpen the founder-director of the Depot back in 2015 when she was still establishing the site. The event took place in 2018. It is never too early to start talking about collaboration, and it is never in vain since any discussion may lead to a future opportunity for research or collaboration.

I also drew on my personal contacts when setting up the events. The Riverhouse Barn in Walton on Thames is my local arthouse, and I knew them well. Two events were hosted there. Similarly, the final event took place at the University of Roehampton. The only event where I had no initial connection was the event at Manchester Art Gallery. I wanted to run at least one event in the North of England, and I began my search for potential venues in two areas I knew, Huddersfield and Manchester. Following a visit to Manchester Deaf Centre, I was given a number of contacts, which led me to the gallery.

Having found the venues, I then needed to arrange the cultural part of the event where the respeaking would be tested. Where possible, I aimed to copy existing events. Regular tour guides gave the tours at the two museum events (four and seven). I invited public speakers to two events (two and eight), who gave their regular talks with only some very slight modifications to fit the research nature of the events. The two Q&A events at the cinemas (five and six) followed a similar structure, and while a colleague led the discussion at the second event, they used the transcript of the first event – which was fully organised by the Watershed – for inspiration. The final two events (one and three) were more complex to organise, as I was co-ordinating the cultural element as well. I drew on personal connections to arrange them both. The very first event was centred on a performance and presentation by a pop-up theatre group, Quick Fix, that I was part of. I used connections I had with the film industry to create a film screening and discussion for the third event.

Confirming these events was very challenging, as for each we needed to find a date that fitted the schedules of the venue, Stagetext, two respeakers who worked shifts, a BSL interpreter and one or more presenters. It did take some juggling, and I had to track everyone's date and availability carefully, but we managed it, and only one event had to be rescheduled after the initial publicity went out.

I also contacted a number of charities and established close links with the National Association for Deafened People (NADP) and Action on Hearing Loss (AOHL), now the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID), who also publicised the events.

Publicising the events

As I explained above, I wanted a diverse audience to attend the events. Whilst my research required that a large proportion of the audience be deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, I also wanted to explore how different audience groups responded to the respeaking at the events. This wider audience included hearing people and speakers of languages other than English.

Since I had worked with Stagetext, NADP and AOHL, I found targeting deaf, deafened and hard of hearing audience members the easiest. I had already shared a questionnaire in the first stage of the project and used it to publicise the events in a general way. Many people who completed the questionnaire had signed up to be sent information about the events, and they were the first people I contacted.

These organisations also shared the announcements I posted on social media. Since I had a small number of followers on Twitter at that point, those retweets were vital, and I knew they meant my announcements might be seen by people interested in attending. On Facebook, I joined many groups including listings and network groups local to the venues and local and national community groups relating to Deafness and hearing support. In each case, before posting anything, I contacted the group admins to check their regulations. Most were happy for me to share details of the events, but a few were not. Some venues also publicised the events. I also had a longer call for volunteers ready which, following ethics guidelines, explained exactly what taking part in the event would involve, and I shared this with everyone who contacted me. This was also available as a BSL video for the events in round two.

Knowing where to advertise the events to gain the attention of the wider audience, was more challenging, as I suddenly lost the focus of a specific community group. I did share the events in local language exchange groups, but I'm not sure that led to anyone attending. In the end, many people attended through word of mouth. Many students attended the event at Roehampton, and some friends attended the events in London and Surrey. The events in Lewes, Bristol and Manchester were advertised locally, and many people dropped in on the day.

Logistics

The precise planning needed for any event will depend greatly on where it is taking place, what is involved in it and who is attending. Nevertheless, some steps are likely to be applicable to all events. Certainly, in the course of the eight events I learned to keep the organisation as simple and as efficient as possible and, despite this, to be ready for the unexpected on the day!

Before the event

I visited every venue at least once before the day of the event. This meant I was familiar with the layout, and I could picture exactly where and how I would set everything up. This visit also meant that I could raise any accessibility requests directly with the venue. I had asked everyone attending to let me know in advance of any access requests that they might have. Those I received related to travel and parking information, access into and around the building, signage to direct audience members, food allergies and for materials to be printed in a larger font.

This visit was also an opportunity for me to talk to the technicians onsite and to ensure the respeaking kit that we would bring would connect easily to the systems in place. More often than not, it connected eventually, but we relied on a complex set-up, and for this reason, the eventual kit I selected ran as an independent system. I ensured that this was carefully organised and colour-coded the different cables and connection points so that we could (dis)assemble everything efficiently and ensure no items were left behind. I added extension cables and adaptors so that we had increased flexibility in where we could position the respeakers and in what we could plug in. Since I needed to record each event from multiple angles, I bought extra batteries, chargers, SD cards and card readers so we could quickly back up the recordings and avoid any loss of footage. The final check was Wi-Fi coverage within the building since this was essential for the museum tours and desirable at all the other events.

Once I had this information to hand, I created briefs for everyone involved. I knew that the day of the event would be busy, so I did this to ensure that everyone had the key information they needed, including key contact details and a schedule for the day. The information I included improved as the events progressed. In addition, the venues and presenters were sent some guidance about respeaking, and the presenters were asked to share details of the audiovisual content of the event with the respeakers, to aid their preparation.

On the day

All of this preparation meant that people understood their roles on the day, and what followed went *more* smoothly than it might otherwise have done, though there were still many challenging moments!

The whole team arrived at the venue a few hours before the audience to allow time to set up the room and equipment and do any final preparation for the event. My role was to ensure that everything was running smoothly, that the technical checks were complete and to set up the audience side of things – the questionnaires and consent forms and the recording equipment. As the events went on, I streamlined the forms and questionnaires as far as I was able, so they became as user-friendly as possible. At many events, I had a colleague with me to help with this organisation, and that made a world of difference. My personal experience was that when I was able to delegate the filming or questionnaires, I was able to engage more fully in the event and respond to what was going on. We also scheduled a break before the event began, so that I could meet the audience as they arrived. I wanted the events to be informal and social, and being able to create this atmosphere relied, in part, on me being relaxed and free enough to talk and interact with everyone present.

However, despite this careful organisation, not everything went to plan, and flexibility was needed to be able to respond in the best way possible to what was actually going on. At the very first event, there was a power cut moments before the audience members were due to arrive. All the equipment needed retesting, and we encountered problems in doing, so that meant the start of the event was delayed. Frustrating anyway, this was a particular problem because one of the presenters had to leave at a specific time to begin a night shift. What was already a challenging event had suddenly become even more complicated. I quickly realised that I would have to simplify part of what we had planned to do and adjust what data I collected. Since I had a very clear picture of what I absolutely needed, it was easy to make this decision with the presenters and quickly communicate it to the respeakers. Having such extreme technical issues in the first event was in no way ideal, but we were able to quickly incorporate them into the action research framework and carry on regardless, gaining very valuable experience in coping with the different eventualities that I had sought!

Collecting data

There are many different ways to collect data and get feedback during public engagement activities, and the method you choose will depend on the feedback and interaction you are seeking. One of the simplest examples I read about was where the organisers gave out a sticker to everyone who spoke to them (NCPPE, 2019). Children and adults alike seemed to love the stickers, so lots of people engaged; and by counting how many stickers had been given out, a simple tally of people who interacted could be recorded in a fun way.

Some of my data collection was done in a more formal way. Venue representatives, respeakers and presenters were given before and after questionnaires to track what their expectations for the event were and how they felt following it. Audience members were given a questionnaire following the event with a series of statements about the events which they had to rank with a Likert-type scale, so that I could gauge their response to certain features of the subtitling provision. I wanted this statistical data, so that I could look back at the end of the research and see how the events, and different aspects of the subtitling, compared.

However, in many ways the most insightful data came from the qualitative responses that people shared with me at the events in a less formal way through the focus group discussions that followed each event – to which all attendees were invited – and through the personal reflections that people were invited to share by email, audio or video, since I did not have time on the day to conduct personal interviews.

Not everyone who attended stayed on for this discussion, or shared a reflection, but many did and that participation allowed the two-way process of the research to come to the fore and for mutual benefit to be gained. Both modes of feedback were an opportunity for the public to direct the conversation to what mattered to them. Some topics did relate specifically to the event, but others broached on subtitling and access provision more generally. On many occasions, this was an opportunity for the public to learn more about how television subtitles, the access they tended to use most, were created and to talk directly to the respeakers and ask them questions about what they had seen on television. This often led to misconceptions and misunderstandings about respeaking being addressed. These discussions also highlighted gaps in my intended outputs; I realised I needed to offer more training and guidance to the presenters, the people being respoken at the events. This was also a perfect example of the process of action research, since a 'solution' was offered to this new 'problem' in the course of the research. Many questions were also raised that I will take with me to explore in future projects.

Sharing expertise

These post-event focus groups provided the space for discussion that I had hoped for and led to engaged conversations. During them, my role frequently shifted from researcher, explaining the project and answering key questions, to facilitator, guiding the discussion and encouraging those present to share their thoughts and knowledge.

There were many occasions when critical comments were made about what we had provided, especially in the earlier events when we were trialling different set-ups. I had to be ready to listen and respond and also take the opportunity to seek advice and suggestions from those present. At other times, if the discussion moved too far off topic, I had to guide it back, simply because we had a limited amount of time.

Some of the challenges that I encountered in these discussions mirror those seen at a disciplinary level. Whilst I had sought to explore audience expectations, on occasion, unrealistic expectations about this potential service were expressed. Many people often say they would like live subtitles to be 100% accurate or verbatim or to appear with no delay. In these instances, I did step in and explain why such requests were not technically possible, and I sought to guide the conversation back to what the audience would like to happen given these constraints – feedback which was more likely to inform future practice.

Another challenge which I frequently encountered was a very natural one: no audience is ever homogenous, and this is especially true when deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people are concerned, since so many different lived experiences exist. There is often much diversity expressed within audience opinions, yet there is a tendency to focus on generalisations within any data shared (Moores, 2021). Within the industry, common practice is for a single set of subtitles to be produced. Alongside this, although we frequently discuss quality, precisely what quality is may be understood differently by different people. Opportunities for a more personalised approach are growing, yet this tension may remain for a while.

One final challenge or tension I will mention is how investigation into one modality may be seen as a challenge to the use of another. I mentioned earlier in this chapter that respeaking is most commonly used on television in the UK. When I began exploring its use at live events in this project, I realised I had to be very careful to stress that I was genuinely interested in whether it could be used to complement and increase existing access and that I was not suggesting it should replace the access already present. Any researcher in access services must be aware of similar tensions and considerations and be ready to handle these transparently and responsibly.

Top tips

I hope this account of public engagement within subtitling and access services has given you some ideas and insights into what this kind of work may involve.

When I began this project, I was searching for a checklist of how to make events accessible through respeaking, a kind of ABC of event organisation that, if followed exactly, would result in a perfect event. Instead, I uncovered a series of questions and prompts that encouraged me to reflect more carefully at each stage on what approach was needed to best tailor what I wanted to do for the audience I was inviting. I have tried to convey these to you, and I close the chapter by drawing them together in a few top tips which I hope will support you as you begin your own work in public engagement.

- *Network, talk about your research and build relationships.* Go along to other events relating to your work and connect with people. You never know where you may meet someone, and it's never too early to start.
- *Be realistic about what you can achieve.* What do you really need to find out? What is the simplest way to do it?
- *Ask for help.* From expert organisations and from colleagues who may help in the run up to the event and on the day.
- *Be tech-savvy – or find someone who is.* Test any equipment – and WiFi signals – you'll be using before the day of the event. If possible, make sure there will be somebody present on the day of the event who can take care of any technical issues that might arise; having a back-up plan in case something doesn't work is always a good idea.

- *Be prepared.* Plan the events carefully, have a supply of anything you might need (spare batteries, leads, chargers, pens, paper, etc.). If you do have people helping you, given them clear written guidance about exactly what you need them to do.
- *Watch your language.* What terms are appropriate? Remember to communicate in a non-academic way on the day.
- *Know your audience.* Take time to find out more about them. Where are the best places to advertise the event?
- *Think access.* As people sign up, ask about specific access requirements and the best way to meet them. Remember that access may take different forms for different people.
- *Get ready to know your audience event better.* Schedule in opportunities to listen to what the people attending have to say. After all, that's why you invited them!
- *Be flexible.* What is essential? If you know this, then you can adapt to what is happening on the day.
- *Finally, relax and enjoy it!* You will have put a lot of hard work into getting everything ready, so try to make sure you can engage in the event as well!

Acknowledgements

This chapter is not complete without expressing my thanks to everyone involved in the public engagement activities I have been describing. To AHRC TECHNE, for the funding which made this project possible; to Stagetext, for the support, guidance, resources and knowledge you have shared; to the teams at the different venues, the respeakers, presenters, interpreters and colleagues involved on the day and to the audience members, thank you all who volunteered your valuable time and expertise – without you these events could not have taken place. And finally, a thank you to my supervisory team, Pablo Romero-Fresco, Lucile Desblache and Annabelle Mooney, and to Kate Dangerfield and Gian Maria Greco – our thoughtful discussions have challenged my thinking and approaches and helped to shape the direction of this research.

Notes

1 In this chapter, I use the term 'subtitle' as a generic term to talk about subtitles on television, and the respoken text created at events, whether it is displayed at the top, middle or bottom of the central screen or on devices such as individual tablets.
2 The exact origin of this maxim is complicated to trace. Charlton published a work under this title in 1998 and relates his own encounter with the slogan (p.3): he heard Michael Masutha and William Roland, two leaders of Disabled People South Africa use it, who in turn had heard it used at an international disability rights conference by a person from Eastern Europe.
3 More information about MyClearText can be found at mycleartext.com.

17

DIALECT COACHING AND LINGUISTICS

Brendan Gunn

Introduction

I am constantly asked, 'How did you get into dialect coaching?'

In this chapter, I will answer the question of how I did, indeed, 'get into dialect coaching' before outlining the ways in which core elements of linguistics form the basis of my work as a coach. As much as possible I will avoid using technical terms and concepts within linguistics to allow a more general understanding of how I approach the job, much as I do on a film set or a theatre stage, keeping in mind that, for me, it is the academic foundation of linguistics which informs the establishment of a character voice in drama. As a dialect coach coming from linguistics teaching and research, my initial process starts with the identification of regional phonetic features and subsequently plotting a trajectory towards the final appropriate dialect, sociolect and idiolect suitable for particular dramatic role. Relevant topics within the subject provide a means of creating a plan for the work, which is then translated into more general, or 'lay,' terms, if you will.

The various sections of the chapter explain how my own journey into film, television and theatre began before describing the links between academic linguistics and the wider world of drama; in my personal experience the process of taking theory and putting it into practice is aimed at getting scripted dialogue to 'suit the action to the word, the word to the action' and 'to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature' (Hamlet: act 3 sc. 2).

Running away to join the circus

As I understand it, most of my colleagues didn't plan to become dialect coaches as a long-term career. Many of them went to drama school and developed an interest

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in voice-centred aspects of their college courses after discovering an aptitude for this area of study. It is interesting to point out that many of them are musicians, especially singers, and have musical training, as I do myself; so, one aspect of coaching is the idea of the voice as music with the coach helping write a vocal score for a piece of drama. I will come back to this notion during the chapter.

Between 1982 and 1986 I was teaching Phonetics and Phonology at the University of Ulster. Before that I had been a fieldworker in University College Cork on the 'Tape Recorded Survey of Hiberno-English,' which led me to an MA. Having roamed the mountains and coast of south-west Ireland with a Fieldworker's 'Uher' reel-to-reel tape recorder, I returned to my native Belfast to work with Jim and Lesley Milroy on their sociolinguistic project, continuing Lesley's classic analysis of the city's speech communities in *Language and Social Networks* (Milroy 1980).

When Lesley went to join her husband Jim at Sheffield University, her teaching position at Ulster was vacant, and on her recommendation, I was brought into the Linguistics Division of the Faculty of Social and Health Sciences as a part-time lecturer to service degrees in Speech Therapy and Human Communication. I began research for my DPhil, a thesis on sociolinguistic phenomena arising from the political situation in Northern Ireland entitled 'The Politic Word.' This research, along with my teaching programme, set me in the direction of an academic career.

During the period from 1982 until 1986, I always had part-time contracts, which meant I had no income outside of term time and so, in the summer of 1986, I had a temporary position correlating figures for the school examinations board of Northern Ireland – waiting, as I thought, for the next term at Ulster University to begin and to have more teaching in my chosen subject. I had been working at the exams board for a month or so when Lesley got in touch and told me she'd been asked if she would be interested in doing some coaching in a Belfast dialect for an upcoming film called *A Prayer for the Dying*, based on a novel by Jack Higgins and starring Mickey Rourke, Hollywood's 'hottest actor' at the time.

Lesley told me she wasn't really interested in the idea, having her own work to do and settling into Sheffield at the same time. She also said the film production company would particularly like a coach from Belfast itself, so, being Scottish, she felt she wouldn't do it. She put my name forward as a candidate and asked me if I fancied going to America for two weeks to work with Mickey Rourke. Since I was engaged in part-time work at the time, I jumped at the chance – I'd never been to America and wanted to see what all the fuss was about, so I agreed to go. The two weeks turned into five months and then extrapolated into 34 years and so, my initial foray into the professional drama world became an endlessly changing journey with a varied collection of personalities.

Through all the variation in projects and people, my background in linguistics has formed the core of my own approach to the position, informing the process within the work and helping actors achieve the voice needed for any role.

Baptism of fire

I have already described how it came to be that I went from lecturing at the University of Ulster to standing on a film set advising Mickey Rourke about Belfast dialect and its accent, which is a good point to begin with since the separation of *dialect* and *accent* by linguists is of no interest whatsoever to non-linguists, unless someone asks a specific question about the subject, usually in relation to current dialogue during a production. As in most occupations not concerned with a subject's theoretical background, the filmmaker doesn't want a lecture on the physiology of phonetic articulation – they just want the actor to sound more or less like the character they're playing and to be able to make the dialogue in a scene do what it is supposed to do. It took a little while to understand this tenet but eventually, by virtue of a sharp learning curve, I devised my own process of translating linguistic theory into more general terms, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. I used International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols to make notes on the script and explain things to myself before commenting on the performance – they became known as 'Brendan's little hieroglyphs' when Mickey Rourke saw them jotted down beside his dialogue. I started using an approximate orthographic rendition of the symbols to get a point across and, in a later development, urged actors to use their own orthographic impression of the target sound; a choice of 'whatever works' in making sense of the dialect, so, sometimes an actor will look at my orthographic version of the target sound and re-write it in a way that makes absolute sense to them.

The variation in orthographic representations is a reminder that we all hear in slightly different ways, reinforcing the idea of the IPA as an indispensable tool providing a context to speech production that I can use for an actor; for example, since I am Irish, I do a lot of Irish dialect work, so I can suggest that /p/, /t/ and /k/ have more air in their articulation than the British or American speaker is used to in their own system. Conversely /p/, /t/ and /k/ have minimal air in many eastern European forms of English. Superscripted 'h' over the letter is one orthograph that works perfectly to describe the feature and is a simple example of how to open a window of understanding from which the rest of the system can be established. If I write *phath*, *thalkh* and *khath* (pat, talk, cat) in this form and then articulate what it means, the idea can be used throughout an actor's dialogue. More complicated usage can then be built up with an agreed reference between a letter, or letters, and what sound we're trying to achieve.

So far then the translation into general terms is clear enough but I also realised early on that a film company's initial idea of a character sound may not be quite what a role requires; in the case of *A Prayer for the Dying*, for example, I arrived in Los Angeles to discover that Mickey Rourke had been given a cassette tape of the Irish actor Barry Fitzgerald to listen to as a sample of Irish dialect. The trouble was that Barry Fitzgerald's fame was as a character actor identified with somewhat stereotyped Irish roles, such as in John Houston's film *The Quiet Man*. Suffice to say that the sample was very far from the voice required for a modern film about the troubles in Northern Ireland, leading Mickey Rourke to comment that the dialect I was assigning to the role 'sounded like a Martian speaking.' Therein lay the beginning of the steep learning curve.

Further observations on adapting linguistic theory to performance

These orthographic representations of linguistic features can be useful as a way of re-thinking practice which has become automatic. During my fieldwork for the Tape Recorded Survey of Hiberno-English, I had become accustomed to automatic IPA transcription of speech, both from the tapes I made and interviews where an informant did not want me to switch on the recorder (for instance, a farmer, suspicious that I might be working for the government, might not allow me to record on tape, though a written transcription was deemed acceptable). Once I started working in drama, I had to concentrate on what I was trying to get across to an actor in terms of pronunciation and prosodics. Take the word *gate*, for example. In most standard pronunciations it has a phonetic form 'gayt' (/geit/). In Northern Ireland the influence of Lowland Scottish dialects produces a vernacular pronunciation 'geeuht' ([giət]). Even in drama college, where there are voice modules, most actors don't have time to get to grips with the link between IPA symbol and actual speech, so this orthographic representation 'geeuht' will get the point across, which, after all, is the object of the exercise. Then the actor might do their own version, as I mentioned above, perhaps writing something like 'gieet.' As long as the target pronunciation is reached, the transcription is valid; i.e. it helps production of the required phonetic/physiological configuration.

The constant review of basic ideas continues at the prosodic level. Dialect coaches are presented with a range of ideas and opinions needing assessment and a measured (sometimes diplomatic) response. The fact that everyone speaks lends itself to the idea that everyone is an expert in speech. It is a lesson in trying to explain clearly how a system works when the actor, or someone else, tells you that the character 'speaks like this,' and then lets you hear their impression of the speech form. Very often it isn't appropriate to the voice style needed for a character, as in the example of Barry Fitzgerald given above. The process becomes more complicated when a line must be drawn between establishing the 'accent' in terms of a basic set of tones and the actor's personal interpretation of a piece of dialogue – the 'line-reading.' It is part of the job to know when to draw this line, unless asked to judge if the line achieves what the scene demands. Famous examples like 'What is this thing called love?' illustrate the point perfectly. If it is being played in a classic Shakespearean RP (Received Pronunciation, aka Standard British English) then the vowels and consonants are described in a straightforward manner: 'wot iz this THING cowled lav?' (as one possible orthographic version). The version played for humour changes the intonation and stressed syllables around: 'wot is this thing COWLED? LAV?'

Once the consonants and vowels are established, these more subtle aspects of speech come into play. It's an area open to wide interpretation, which is part of the interest and necessarily arrived at by consensus. If a production has not hired a Dialect Coach, the actors end up trying to put every aspect of a character voice into their own system at the same time, often leading to confusion. By approaching voice work in a structured, layered way, confusion can be reduced; going from segmental consonants and vowels to prosodic possibilities and existential dialogue builds a dialect in its entirety from sound to meaning. Think of it as individual Lego blocks being put together one by one to build the finished article.

Dialectology to dramatic expression

So, then, construction of any particular dialect for a project starts with the consonants and vowels relevant to the required speech form. As in any project, the process begins with a broad outline gradually refined at each level until a convincing voice has been achieved (hopefully).

Taking a model from speech therapeutics, my own approach is to listen to the actor's native speech style and proceed with the appropriate plan to connect 'current form' to 'target form.' It's a straightforward way of explaining what the process is about and helps construct a clear path towards the target dialect.

A simple example, which is the beginning of the 'Current to Target' model, is if an actor is 'rhotic or non-rhotic' ('r' after the vowel, as in American English or no 'r' after a vowel, as in Standard British English).

In the IPA chart, the most common form of 'r' is classified as a 'dental, alveolar or post-alveolar approximant.' The coach's job is to call it an 'r' and ask the client to place their tongue-tip in those areas, or take it away from those areas, as the case may be. The various types of 'r' can be installed once the basic requirement is in place; for Americans being British, it is the removal of 'r' after the vowel; and for British actors, it is the placing of 'r' after the vowel. Once this is done, more specific Irish, Scottish, Icelandic, Texan or Russian 'r' can be explained, articulated and practised. From basic processes like 'r' or not, increasing levels of complexity can be built up in a clear way with options outlined and applied to dialogue in order to 'bring it off the page,' which, of course, is the essential purpose of the work.

The notion of 'options' works in a number of ways in establishing the desired voice. For a character role based on a first language speaker, then dialect differences are chosen, with the parameters of 'authenticity' and 'clarity' as markers. The following dialogue with a Hollywood producer occurred early on in my career:

Producer:	He sounds very Irish.
Me:	Oh, thanks, good.
Producer:	He sounds too Irish, fix it.
Me:	(*scratches head, ensuing silence*).

It was a lesson in how the primary intention of any drama is the meaning behind the words, not how they are articulated. This balance of authenticity and clarity is something to be kept in mind during the coaching process in general, though there are exceptions; during filming of the Jim Sheridan film *In the Name of the Father* I was asked to 'tone down' the Belfast dialect spoken by the film's stars Daniel Day Lewis and Pete Postlethwaite. When I mentioned this to them, both their response was to make the dialect even more vernacular, causing quite a bit of off-screen dialogue but, 18 months later – when the two actors were nominated for Oscars – the executives exercised by the dialect praised their performances. There is often a conversation of this sort about what the dialect will be, with one element sometimes more prevalent than the other; in the Guy Ritchie film *Snatch*, for instance, its star, Brad Pitt, suggested we go for a highly stylised speech form suitable for his character, Mickey O'Neill. The result was an almost impenetrable idiolect which allowed for much of the humour in the film. In both the films mentioned, the idea of 'strong' dialect emerged from relaxing consonant articulation so that localised dialect rules were used without amelioration to a more general, or 'standardised,' speech form. In Northern Ireland, and Belfast in particular, there is a dialect rule which allows 'th' ([ð]) to be dropped between vowels in words like 'mother,' 'other' etc., giving pronunciations like 'morr,' 'orr' in vernacular sociolects. Authenticity will include this rule, but clarity will insist the consonant is articulated within the word. Once a decision is made on how the elements are balanced, the chosen form for the project can be practised.

When the consonants and vowels are in the right place within a character voice, the features I mentioned above, suprasegmental elements of intonation, stress, voice quality and diadochokinetic rate (speed of syllable production) are then examined. As subjects within linguistics, they can be analysed at several levels, up to and including the physical frequencies of the sound they create. In dialect coaching, they are employed to obtain meaning, and their understanding varies from that within academic study. Again, a Dialect Coach must keep the idea of intention as the paramount goal in working with an actor or cast. I will take two topics in particular and suggest how theory becomes practice:

Intonation

In lay terms dialect is called 'accent.' In dialect coaching it serves no purpose to be pedantic and explain that 'accent' refers to the rise, fall, level or complex variation of frequency during syllable production, which is a subject of discussion in its own right. So, the accent it is.

The first phase of 'singing' the dialect often derives from caricature where the tone changes are exaggerated. Then the idea of a fixed tune has to be examined for two reasons. Firstly, the actor has to be assured that not every line must be delivered with the same intonation so that they are not restricted by an unvarying tonal patter. This leads on to the second aspect of existential intonation, which is involved in the meaning of the words in terms of the overall drama. A constant query is 'how can I interpret the lines if I have to have this tune.' The response to this, keeping the essential idea of 'drama,' is that the main thrust of existential intonation is on an emphasised word carrying the major part of meaning and intention.

It doesn't really help in this context if an actor is told that a tone is occurring over a stressed syllable carrying increased pulmonic release in response to an emotional or conversational stimulus; it's better to say 'it's your choice as to how the meaning gets expressed, so, here are some possibilities to explore.'

There's always an imperative that an actor can feel restricted by adopting a voice other than their native one and, so, it is another aspect of the coach's job to help them 'sing' the lines without getting stuck in fixed rhythms.

Stress

In dramatic dialogue, stress is the key to meaning in its relationship to intonation. Here is where a line occurs between the Dialect Coach's help in obtaining a different voice for an actor and influencing a 'line-reading' which is the reaction of a character to what is happening at that point in the text. The coach must be careful not to create the meaning apart from providing its articulatory basis. It can be a fine line, one that cruises the boundary between Dialect Coach and Director.

The other prosodic elements also contribute to meaning of course. Again, my role as a coach is to advise *how* these are achieved as against *what* they achieve. In the theoretical model, a set of upper tracheal formations result in various voice qualities. Aperiodic vibration of the glottis creates 'creaky voicing.' If an actor asks, 'How can I get threat, or imperiousness, into the line – what do I do?' I can suggest low register creak as a strategy, but I cannot read the text and say, 'I think the character is threatening in this line and here is how you achieve that notion.' This is the point where the director might request a technical analysis rather than an interpretive one, a request which may be offered either politely or impolitely.

Context

It takes time and practice for the various linguistic elements I've indicated to cohere into a convincing character voice. Ideally, the practice can be done over time so that a relaxed competence can be achieved, much like learning a piece of music to the extent that it becomes an instinctive part of the body. To this aim, breathing, body posture and cultural aspects of the character background are considered alongside dialect, integrating non-linguistic features into the process of creating a realistic dramatic character. Over the years, for example, I've noticed that many actors who don't speak one of the RP dialects as their native form raise their chin up when they start practising, especially if working on a Shakespearean role or, indeed, a period piece where RP has been chosen as the vocal milieu. It seems to be an automatic response to RP because most of the time they are unaware of doing it. It's another aspect of the process and could be considered part of the sociolinguistic dimension brought to bear on dramatic voice work.

This particular physical trait became very obvious during the filming of Roland Emmerich's controversial piece *Anonymous*, which explores the idea that Edward De Vere, Earl of Oxford, wrote Shakespeare's plays. When I began *Anonymous*, I was asked if using 'original pronunciation' might be an interesting way of approaching the dialect work, since the Tudors didn't speak modern RP. My own opinion was that film is a modern medium and general audiences would disengage if they couldn't understand a lot of the dialogue, so, in the end we had RP and Estuarine as the 'conceit' for the film's vocal element. The notion of the word 'conceit' is one I use in establishing a character voice, or voices. It's an important element of Coleridge's comment about the willing 'suspension of disbelief' (Coleridge 2001 [1817]: 270) and one I return to particularly if working with an entire cast to create a dialect 'world' for a project. It's not a topic in sociolinguistic study but, for me, it is an amplification of sociolinguistic themes in terms of identifying a speech community and analysing the structure underlying that community.

Those in the cast who were native RP speakers didn't change their physical posture to any degree while those adopting RP tended to do the chin-raising. There were several German actors in the cast (the film was shot in Berlin's Babelsberg studios) and most of them raised their chins and straightened their body line at the same time. The film also had characters with Estuarine dialect features to illustrate class divisions, and these cast members – many of whom were native RP speakers themselves – adopted a relaxed posture for their performances. It's a good example of how coaching a dialect becomes part of an entire character creation. During the production of *Anonymous*, theatre director Tamara Harvey instructed the cast in Tudor etiquette and movement as well as staging Rose Theatre sequences for inclusion in the film. Her work meant that the world of the film was accurate, and, apart from some Shakespearean scholars, audiences generally found it a convincing experience.

If a movement coach is working on the same production, there is a gradual integration of speech and physicality aimed at helping an actor create a believable character. Helping a high-level gymnast who rides horses through the Rocky Mountains become a 19th century Austrian princess, for instance, is an example of how this integrated approach works. Our princess entered a room with studied grace and engaged in conversation using the Austro-German features I placed into an RP base, a dialect the rest of the cast adopted for Neil

Burger's film *The Illusionist.* The conceit in this case was to have a speech form which could be associated with aristocratic and middle-class characters without taking the audience to Victorian England. The Director wanted the voices to be as subtle as possible, so I began with RP, which is often the form for period and classical pieces, before adding elements of Austrian English and intonation.

Whether this was successful or not is a matter of subjective and varied reaction from the film's audience and not something filmmakers have any control over. It's a choice made to get a project underway long before critical judgements are offered and is most successful when a consistent dialect is achieved through the entire project. In some instances, the 'speech community' entails a faux-language construction when a sound unconnected with any existing place is asked for. Roland Emmerich's film *10,000 Years BC* originally had no dialogue, since he surmised that Mammoth-hunting hunter-gatherers would have minimal speech of an unknown type. Subsequently, when it proved difficult to get going without dialogue, he asked me to construct languages for the several groups within the film. The main group, the hunter-gatherers, eventually had to speak English to move the story on its trajectory, so I placed some Arabic sounds into a basis of RP. The other groups involved were a marauding posse of slave raiders, an African tribal community and a set of Pharaonic rulers with possible extra-terrestrial origins. My main objective was consistency within each language so, following linguistic principles I wrote a grammar for each language and laid out a phonology for the cast to use as a basis for making it 'real.' Apart from the fun of making sure the grammatical rules were consistent for each piece of dialogue, the exercise emphasised the importance of going back to basic ideas and allowing for spontaneous new dialogue to be added to a scene on the day of shooting if timing or plot exegesis was called for. 'Klingon' from Star Trek and more recently 'Dothraki' from *Game of Thrones* are well-known examples of how these constructed languages can add to the atmosphere of a film or TV series.

So, then, dialect coaching can have more dimensions than straightforward phonetic adaptations. I include language construction in the sociolinguistic category since it relates to speech communities. It allows informed discussion about the appropriate form dialogue will assume in a project.

The range of topics covered in dialect coaching also includes getting non-native languages and, from time to time, specific forms of a language, onto the screen. In my case, implementation and monitoring of Belgian French, Inuktitut Inuit, Venetian Italian, Village Polish, Old Norse and Old Slavonic are examples of how the experience of IPA fieldwork transcriptions are valuable in the process.

A slightly different angle in deciding the appropriate phonetic pattern for a character concerns a second language speaker. There is a range of flexibility possible in, for instance, character speech for someone who speaks English as a second language: Are they fluent in English? Is their English consistent with English grammar? How much colloquialism do they understand? Making decisions based on such questions allows a clear set of pronunciations to be applied to dialogue as it comes off the script page. So, for example, in languages where /v/ and /w/are opposite to their phonological position in English, changing 'we will' to 've vill' suggests less fluency than a more experienced speaker. Most of the time, production companies decide to use the English form, sometimes saying they don't want the character to be a 'Bond villain,' so the device is to inject a 'flavour' of the first language into the system. These flavours are open to interpretation and discussion and form part of the collaborative endeavour involved in filmmaking and theatre production. If, for example, the first language has a 'rolled 'r,'' and a director hears it as 'too strong,' then the suggestion of a 'flapped 'r'' may sound acceptable as an indication that the dialect is based on a different phonological system. It's all part of the 'conceit.'

Once the dialect is comfortable in an actor's mouth, there is a process of 'letting it go' so that it becomes automatic and is a baseline to the meaning in dialogue. This is when phonetics, syntax and lexicon merge to create character. At this point, the endeavour's success is a subjective opinion given by the project's audience. At the Lyric theatre in Belfast, a version of Chekov's *Three Sisters* transposed to a local setting traced an immigrant's experience in the city. In this case, the dialect work followed the change from original Cantonese English to a strong influence of Belfast English over a period of 30 years. Opinion on the strategy ranged from 'it helped outline the passage of time and reflected the development of a particular dialect amongst the Chinese community in Belfast' (a subject with possibilities for sociolinguistic research) to 'that was racist.' In general, the Chinese audience felt it resonated with them. The difference in opinion highlights the simple fact that racist stereotyping is based on an exaggerated attempt at mimicking a different dialect. That is certainly not something a Dialect Coach would want to do from the simple aspect of being professionally inaccurate, apart from the moral issue involved. Coaches are employed to teach an accurate reflection of a speech system, which is not exaggerated and is part of a convincing character background.

A dialectologist's attempts to remain objective about different speech forms can be challenged outside of academia, and that includes the world of drama. If someone says 'that is a horrible accent,' you might try and mitigate the attitude and suggest an objective approach to the dialect but rarely does the opinion change. If an actor says 'I have to have RP for this role – I hate it, it goes against my politics' there is probably no point in arguing for a more objective viewpoint. It is always the coach's job to remain neutral and try to establish the appropriate dramatic voice.

Summing up

So, my initiation into dialect coaching in drama was different to most of my colleagues, most of whom have drama college backgrounds and have undertaken postgraduate study in voice theory; although I had helped with a production of Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* while a postgraduate research associate in University College Cork. My MA based on the research was through the English Department, and the drama group asked me to sort out some of the Estuarine dialect they had chosen for the piece. It was an interesting step in putting theory into practice and, in a way, the experience presaged what happened a few years later when I first met Mickey Rourke. It was also a lot of fun, it has to be said.

I have found that a grounding in linguistic theory makes the work more accessible and conversely, the practical application of and interpretation of theory into 'lay terms' has helped my own understanding of how pulmonic air release is transformed into layers of meaning through speech. The idea of 'current realisation to target realisation' gleaned from speech therapy has been an invaluable, straightforward method of changing an actor's voice from their native system to that required for a dramatic role. From this 'back to basics' starting point, various features of syntax and existential speech analyses help find meaning and intention in a text, from dialect forms to the effects of stress and intonation on a line of dialogue.

Put simply, the Dialect Coach has the aim of transforming written text into spoken word on the level of phonetics and then, ultimately, at the level of meaning, but, very importantly, not as far as the level of an actor's chosen performance of dialogue.

A certain amount of experience helps the diplomatic process of knowing when to stop linguistic instructions and let the character run with it, unless there is a specific request to offer different readings created by varying the structure of dialogue.

There are, then, various ways in which to start dialect coaching. I came into the profession through the Linguistics division of the Faculty of Social and Health Sciences at the University of Ulster. Many of my colleagues did postgraduate voice courses at their drama school, and quite a few have a background in music. There are also people who came through a different route, possibly in languages, although specific questions of a technical nature can present an obstacle to the process. Understanding the nature of speech is fundamental, having an ear to hear the speech is vital, being open to general opinion is necessary and accepting that clarity rather than total authenticity is paramount, and therefore might involve amelioration of perceived accuracy, is essential. Apart from the practical skills implicit in the work, a sense of humour and an appreciation of the ridiculous can also be very helpful.

18

LANGUAGE CREATION AND ENGAGEMENT

A how-to guide

Christine Schreyer

Introduction

Since 2008, undergraduate university students in my first-year course, *The Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology,* have had as one of their assignments the task of creating a new language. After the students learn about phonology and the International Phonetic Alphabet, they choose sounds for their language. When they learn about word formation processes and sentence structure, they decide how they will build words and sentences in their new languages. They are also required to decide on non-verbal communication, including one gesture or facial expression and its meaning, and a proxemic system for their language. Finally, they are asked to consider language change for their languages, including slang and a borrowed word. The students borrow words from each other's languages and then decide how to modify the new word to meet the linguistic structures of their own language – do the sounds need to be adjusted or the meaning of the word itself? At the end of the semester, students have a miniature constructed language. The final part of their assignment is to reflect on what they've learned about language, as well as the relationship between language and culture. In this portion of the assignment, as well as in the anonymous teaching evaluations of the course, the majority of students describe how much they have enjoyed the process of language creation, which taught them how complex language actually is and allowed them to peek under the cover of their own language and develop more metalinguistic awareness.

Shortly after I began including a language construction assignment in my course, a constructed language gained media attention when the Hollywood film *Avatar* hit theatres in December of 2009. In the film, the aliens on Pandora speak entirely in the fictional language of Na'vi. When I read this news, I brought this real-world example of big screen language creation to my students as a way to

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show them what they were doing might one day have implications in the real-world; but little did I realise that I might one day be making my own languages for Hollywood movies. In this chapter, I describe my role as a language creator for two Hollywood films – *Man of Steel* (2013) and *Alpha* (2018). I discuss the process of language creation for each of the films, as well as challenges and opportunities for public engagement with constructed languages. Finally, I provide some tips to the process of language creation that I have uncovered through my own experiences in this field. First, let's take a closer look at how I travelled to an alien world for *Man of Steel* and travelled back in time for the film *Alpha*, which was set 20,000 years ago in prehistoric Europe.

Travelling to alien worlds

My journey to the alien world of Krypton, Superman's home planet, actually began with a journey to another alien world, Pandora, the planet featured in the film *Avatar*. As I mentioned above, *Avatar* featured a constructed language known as Na'vi, which was created for the film by linguist Paul Frommer. Both *Avatar*, and the language of Na'vi itself, gained many fans, and just after the film came out, media reports indicated that there were thousands of individuals learning Na'vi.[1] Much of my academic research has been working with Indigenous communities to document and revitalise their languages. These communities are often struggling with declining speaker numbers, rather than rising learner numbers, and this ability for fans to learn Na'vi quickly intrigued me. Therefore, in the summer of 2011, I began an online survey directed at Na'vi learners in order to understand who they were, why they were learning the language, how they were learning it, as well as their thoughts on the future of Na'vi as a language. In total, 293 individuals from 38 different countries participated in the survey in seven different languages (English, Na'vi, Hungarian, German, Italian, French and Russian). It also became apparent that the Na'vi learner and speaker community was diverse. However, my results showed that the average Na'vi learner was:

- Between 15 and 24 years of age.
- Male.
- American.
- Attending high school or university.
- Someone with no previous knowledge of linguistics.
- A fan of *Avatar*.
- Someone who had been studying Na'vi for 13 to 18 months (at the time of the survey).
- A self-declared beginner speaker (Schreyer 2015).

When my survey was completed, my university, The University of British Columbia, promoted my research through a media release, and the story was picked up by many different news outlets. CBC news reported the story with the headline '*Avatar's* Na'vi language garners real-life fans' (CBC 2011), while the headline of the Globe & Mail's article from 8 August 2011 read 'From jungles of Pandora to halls of academia: lessons for Earth's endangered languages' (Agrell 2011). This Globe & Mail article was included on both the cover page and inside cover page of the day's edition. Production Designer Alex McDowell was handed a copy of this paper when he boarded a plane in Toronto en route to Vancouver where he was in the midst of developing sets for the Man of Steel's home world of Krypton. He realised immediately that, due to their design plans to include alien writing on almost all surfaces on Krypton, they needed an alien language – the language of Kryptonian. This is how I travelled from the planet of Pandora to the planet of Krypton.

Man of Steel was a reboot of the Superman story and, as Alex McDowell later said, 'The fact that an "alien-being" has a giant "S" on his chest is a huge design problem' (Warner Bros. 2013). In fact, in the film, Lois Lane asks the Man of Steel 'What's the "S" stand for?,' and he replies, 'It's not an "S" – on my world, it means "Hope"' (Man of Steel 2013). Obviously, the idea of an alien language was already floating around the set of *Man of Steel* before I became involved. After Alex McDowell read the article about the Na'vi fans, he had a production assistant reach out to me and soon I was flying to the set and entering the 'Fortress of Solitude' (the production team's name for the set design areas) and beginning to help solve 'a giant design problem' with linguistics and anthropology.

Kryptonian: designing a written language

My work on *Man of Steel* began with the production design team and, specifically, graphic designer Kristen Franson. As should be obvious from the quote above, the film production team had already been associating symbols to words – the 'S' symbol meant 'hope,' and other characters had costumes with similar logographic symbols, such as the character of Zod, whose costume's symbol was associated with discipline and physicality. The team called these symbols 'glyphs' and were originally interested in developing more as the main writing system for Kryptonian. However, I explained that if they had many things to translate this would require developing a large set of symbols, which might not be feasible for the timeline of the production. Franson had already developed a rotating set of symbols to indicate numbers in Kryptonian, which inspired me to suggest that the production team use a rotating syllabic writing system. Using Cree Syllabics as a model, I worked with Kristen Franson to develop the writing system, while at the same time developing an underlying linguistic structure for the language of Kryptonian.

My first step was to review a list of words from the Kryptonian universe, such as character names (Lara Lor-Van and Jor-El) as well as place names (Krypton and Kandor) and other words that are a well-known part of the Superman universe, in order to develop a phonetic system (see Tables 18.1 and 18.2). English-speaking writers had developed these original Kryptonian words for English-speaking

TABLE 18.1 Kryptonian consonants.

	Bilabials	*Labiodentals*	*Interdentals*	*Alveolars*	*Palatals*	*Velars*	*Glottals*
Stops	p, b			t, d		k, g	
Nasals	m			n		ŋ	
Fricatives		f, v	ð	s, z			h, ɦ
Affricates				ʤ			
Central Approximants	w			ɹ	j		
Lateral Approximants				l			

TABLE 18.2 Kryptonian vowels.

	Front	*Back*
High	ɪ	u
Mid	ɛ	
Low	æ	ɑ

audiences, so Kryptonian phonology became, for the most part, based on English sounds. Also, as I was unsure if the language might eventually be spoken by actors, I added only one non-English sound, the voiced velar fricative, and limited the number of English vowels in order to match the previous work, as well as make it easier for English-speaking actors.

Kryptonian also has a diphthong ɑ͡o, as well as allophonic variation:

> /ɑ/ becomes [ɔ] before [ɹ] and /ɑ/ becomes [o] in the coda of the syllable
> /æ/ becomes [a] before [ɹ] and /æ/ becomes [a] in the coda of the syllable

I developed the Kryptonian morphological system as agglutinative with some isolating aspects. For instance, as the production team and I originally discussed incorporating a symbol, rather than a phonetic representation, of future and past verb tense, I decided to make these as independent words, which could be pronounced in spoken Kryptonian, but could be indicated with a symbol in written Kryptonian (although these were not used consistently in the writing). Finally, for the sentence structure I chose Subject-Object-Verb, as this matched my ideas about the storyline of *Man of Steel* as it was originally described to me. The Kryptonian people had been selfish and were not caring for their planet, which was about to explode, so subject (and first-person subjects, in particular) came first, then objects, as the society had a long history with writing on their objects, which is evident from the frequency with which the Kryptonian writing system ended up on set pieces. Last, verbs ended sentences, since in my mind, Kryptonian society had not been concerned with action, which was why their planet was in peril. It should be noted here that linguistic elements based on plot points or design elements can be consciously used as icons of ideological stances in constructed languages as opposed to natural languages (Heller 2017). During my translation work, I provided extensive notes on grammatical features of the language in comments in the documents I was compiling. These were in part for my own reference but could also be used for by the production team if needed. For example, information on how to make a noun plural or how to indicate relative clauses were included in the comments.

Once I had a basic linguistic structure for the language, I was able to work on translations provided by the writers and production team. As supervising Art Director, Helen Jarvis said in the book, *Man of Steel: Krypton by Design*, 'They [myself and Franson] came up with an entire alphabet, a lexicon, definition of words how the script should look and be used. All the ins and outs of how things get tacked together, linked together. It was an amazing process to watch evolve' (2013). The sentences were then put on items like the Kryptonian council chamber chairs, the walls of Jor-El's laboratory, robots, weapons, space ships, etc. Following filming, I was asked to develop more language for the film's marketing. This included promotional materials such as videos, as well as a fan favourite, the Glyph Creator website. This website provided users the chance to answer a series of personality questions. Following this, the users would be matched with their own house symbol (what would have appeared on their Kryptonian clothing, like Superman's 'S' meaning 'hope'), as well as how they would spell their name in the Kryptonian syllabic script. It was actually from this website that fans first discovered that the symbols they were seeing in the Glyph Creator were based in linguistic reality. Therefore, fans began engaging with the language and linguistics. For example, the Kryptonian info website, developed by Darren Doyle, reported the following about the Glyph Creator website:

> But… I noticed something different right off the bat. The pronunciation for your returned results is using IPA, turned 'r' and all! That is definitely 'not' typical for this sort of thing, and, to me, points to at least some involvement by a linguist or at least someone who knows a little more about what they're doing.[2]

Doyle concluded the original post by saying, 'After more playing around, I can say that, long story short, this writing system is a bit clever (and very pretty).' While Kryptonian was developed as a written language, it does have everything needed to be a spoken language. In fact, once the language was developed, some scenes were filmed where the actors were speaking Kryptonian, but these did not make the final cut of the film. Following *Man of Steel*, the Kryptonian writing system was added to Superman's costume for the film *Batman versus Superman* (2016). It has also been featured on Canadian commemorative Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman coins (2016). In the next section, I provide some details on developing a language to be spoken, rather than written, for a Hollywood film.

Beama: designing a spoken language

Following my involvement with the Kryptonian language, I was approached in the fall of 2015 about working on another Hollywood film, *Alpha* (2018). *Alpha* is set 20,000 years ago in prehistoric Europe and focuses on a young hunter who gets separated from his tribe and needs to make his way home. He befriends a wolf along the way, and the movie provides one possible theory about the domestication of dogs. Posters for the movie had the following tagline, 'Experience the incredible story of how mankind discovered man's best friend' (2018). Just as the production team for *Man of Steel* was focused on developing Krypton as an 'authentic' alien world, the production team for *Alpha* was also focused on making an authentic world, but in this case an authentic human prehistoric world. In order to develop this language, I considered linguistic research on the origins of human languages, as well as comments from the director of the film, Albert Hughes. In this case, I worked with the director and producers, as well as actors, since the plan was to have this language spoken throughout the film, as opposed to *Man of Steel* where I worked with the Art Department, as the language was considered to be a piece of art. The language in *Alpha* eventually became known as Beama, pronounced [beama] in the International Phonetic Alphabet. This word literally means, 'we-all-talk.' I used the International Phonetic Alphabet in all script materials because, as this language was imagined as one of the earliest human languages, it predated writing.

To begin developing the linguistic structures of this language, I consulted three proto-languages dated to the time period of the film, and from the geographic region of the film, Ice-Age Europe. These proto-languages were Proto-Nostratic, Proto-Eurasiatic and Proto-Dene-Caucasian (Kaiser and Shevoroshkin 1988; Bengston 2004). I considered the phonetic inventories of all of these proto-languages, as well as the director's desire to have a melodious sounding language, similar to Romance languages, and chose a range of sounds that were in common through all three proto-languages (see Tables 18.3 and 18.4).

As well, I chose syllable structures to meet the director's requirements of a melodic language, including CV-VC-V, CV-VC-VC-V, VC-V, VC-VC (where C is a Consonant, and V is a Vowel), and these also matched the research on the believed syllable structures of Proto-Dene-Caucasian (Bengston 2004). Finally, in regards to stress, as research on Proto-Dené-Caucasian indicates stress is placed on the penultimate syllable of root words I tried to replicate this as well (Bengston 2004). In order for the actors to consistently stress the same syllable I highlighted the stressed syllables in the documents and emphasised the syllable in the audio recordings I shared with them.

While I relied more on information from Proto-Dene-Caucasian for phonological inspiration for Beama, I turned to research on Proto-Nostratic for morphology and syntax inspiration. In particular, I frequently consulted Bomhard's 2014 volume *A Comprehensive Introduction to Nostratic Comparative*

TABLE 18.3 Beama consonants.

	Bilabial	*Alveolar Central*	*Alveolar Lateral*	*Post-Alveolar*	*Palatal*	*Velar*	*Glottals*
Stops:	p’	t’				k’	ʔ
Ejectives	p	t				k	
Voiceless	b	d				g	
Voiced							
Nasals:	m	n				ŋ	
Fricatives:	f	s	ɬ	ʃ		x	h
Voiceless	v	z		ʒ		ɣ	ɦ
Voiced							
Affricates:		ʦ		ʧ			
Voiceless		ʣ		ʤ			
Voiced							
Central Approximants:	w	ɹ			j		
Lateral approximants		l					

TABLE 18.4 Beama vowels.

	front	*centre*	*back*
high	i		u
mid	e		o
low	æ	a	

Linguistics: With Special Reference to Indo-European for ideas on root words and other semantic concepts I needed to convey. I also chose Subject-Object-Verb for the sentence structure and Subject-Object (when no verb is present) as this is the believed sentence structure for Proto-Nostratic (Gell-Mann and Reuhlen 2011). Once I had these linguistic structures in place, I was able to begin translating lines provided to me from the production team, beginning with a series of test lines for the character Keda, played by actor Kodi-Smit McPhee. For example:

Nothing can stop us, nothing will stop us.

[hal.a	et	t’ad.ma,	hal.a	tsa	t’ad.ma]
(nothing)	(can)	(stop-1st pl.incl.)	(nothing)	(will)	(stop-1st pl.incl.)

We are going to make it home.

[mãn.a	tsa	ʤi.ma]
(home)	(will)	(arrive-1st.pl.incl.)

You are my family now.

[mo.æt.a.mi	ilti	nu]
family (1st sing. Poss)	to be-2nd p. sing	now

During the translation process, I also made some choices based on sociolinguistic considerations. For example, in one scene, two tribes meet each other and continue on to hunt bison together. The scene is tense because you do not know if the two groups know each other until the two leaders, including Tau (Keda's father) embrace. However, language is also a key point here; the two leaders speak the same language, but as these two groups winter in different locations, I questioned why they would have the same dialect. Therefore, I made consistent dialectal rules for the two groups. These included phonological variations, such as the fact that 'my son' is [sawami] in the main tribe's dialect and [ʃawami] in the neighbouring tribe's dialect. If you listen closely while watching these scenes, you can hear this difference in the actors' speech.

This dialectal variation was just one of the ways in which I strived to create an authentic language for this film (for more details, see Schreyer and Adger 2021). Once all the dialogue had been created, I trained actors on how to speak Beama over video calls. The actor who played Tau, Johannes Jóhannesson, was the one who had the most intricate lines, as he was often giving long speeches to his son, Keda, and the other hunters. Keda's lines were actually shorter, as he was conversing with Daya, the wolf. Following the film's completion, Jóhannesson had this to say about the language:

> As I was learning, I began to see a pattern and it started to make sense… Then it just jumped out, word by word. Phrase by phrase. You could really feel this was not thrown together in a day. This was built with knowledge and craftsmanship. The grammar was so clear and well thought out, which made it easier to learn. Not to mention the beauty of how it sounds.
>
> *(UBC Media Release 2018)*

Following the film's release, fans have reached out to me about the language, but it has not had the same kind of fan interest as Kryptonian, likely due to the nature of both films. However, this language, which was based in linguistic research about the origins of human language, has provided an interesting case study about how constructed languages might provide a glimpse into deep history and how people might actually have spoken in the past (Schreyer and Adger 2021).

Manner and purpose of language creation

In the previous sections, I have provided details on two different constructed languages I have developed for Hollywood films. However, it is important to realise that people have been inventing languages for many years and for many reasons (Okrent 2009; Adams 2011; Watkins 2017). In general, conlangs are classified in two different ways: 1) their manner of creation and 2) their purpose of creation. In the two examples above, Kryptonian is an example of an *a priori* language, one that was not based on any natural language, but rather was developed 'from scratch,' while Beama is an example of an *a posteriori* language, one that was developed from pre-existing languages (or in this case proto-languages). If you are planning to develop your own language, you should decide how you will develop your language, basing it on other natural languages or taking what you know about linguistic structures to develop something new. In regards to purpose, both Kyrptonian and Beama are examples of artistic languages, also known as artlangs, or languages that were developed for an artistic endeavour – in this case film. However, artlangs are also used in literature, music, video games, television shows etc. Two other common purposes of language creation are 1) to develop International Auxiliary Languages or 2) to develop an Engineered or Philosophical Language. International Auxiliary Languages are also known as auxlangs, and they are generally developed to be used as a *lingua franca*. The language of Esperanto is an excellent example of an *a posteriori* auxlang (Schreyer 2021). Engineered Languages, also known as engelangs, are developed to 'fix' perceived problems with natural languages such as ambiguity (Adams 2011), while Philosophical Languages are developed as a way to categorise the world, such as John Wilkins' attempt to make a 'hierarchical categorization of everything in the universe' (Okrent 2009, 38). However, beyond manner and purpose, when considering how constructed languages are a form of engagement, it is essential to consider the speakers of the language; the imagined speakers, if the language is set in a fictional environment, but also the real speakers. In the example of Kryptonian, the imagined speakers were the people of Krypton, but the real speakers were the actors who were going to be, potentially, speaking the language. The potential speakers have also become the fans of the movie, who have worked to learn the language from the materials available to them online. Therefore, if you are developing a constructed language in order to engage the public, thinking about audience is important as well. Begin by asking yourself questions such as, what will the audience of this language find phonologically pleasing? Who might be learning this language, and what linguistic structures might make learning, and using, this language easier? What opportunities are there to showcase linguistics as a discipline with this language? This leads to the next section on the challenges and opportunities of public engagement with constructed languages.

Challenges and opportunities for engaging the public with language creation

As noted above, my journey to alien and, then, prehistoric worlds began with media stories. First, there was the media story about people learning the Na'vi language from *Avatar* and then, once I had completed my research with Na'vi speakers, there was another media story about my results. Since then I have learned that people truly are fascinated by constructed languages, particularly if they are in popular culture, but also by the process of making a language. After being involved in making Kryptonian, I began working as a producer on the documentary film, 'Conlanging: The Art of Crafting Tongues' (Watkins 2017), which describes both the history of conlangs but also the people involved in the practice, their methods and reasons for making languages. The film has been very well-received; for instance, linguistic anthropologist, Sarah Shulist notes in her review, 'It does a better job articulating what is fascinating, exciting, and fun about linguistics than just about anything I've come across' (Shulist 2017). As Shulist's review suggests, the film illustrates how constructed languages can capture people's attentions, often through fandoms, and lead them to an interest in languages. However, one of the biggest challenges that remains is the skepticism around constructed languages. One of the reasons these languages aren't given the attention they deserve is that some individuals question whether they are 'real' languages. Another critique of conlangs is the concern that focusing on these new languages when so many Indigenous and minority languages in the world are endangered will lead to further language endangerment. In other words, individuals might question why a linguist would want to develop a new language when they could be helping communities 'save' their endangered languages.[3]

However, I think there is much to be learned from constructed languages themselves, as well as constructed language communities.[4] Before I had even begun to conduct research with Na'vi speakers directly, I wrote a paper titled 'Media, information technology and language planning: what can endangered language communities learn from created language communities?' where I argue that learners of endangered languages could model Klingon speakers and Na'vi speakers in their use of media to promote their languages, as well as learning their languages through digital venues, which is even more relevant in today's pandemic times (Schreyer 2011). This research on how fans have learned a second language, one without any native speakers, has contributed to the literature on language revitalisation, as well as second language acquisition. Similarly, through a comparison of how I made Beama with a similar constructed language made by David Adger, we have contributed to the literature on new ways to understand prehistoric languages (Schreyer and Adger 2021). Unfortunately, there is still limited academic research into both constructed languages as well as constructed language communities, and they remain at the margins of academic interest, but this is slowly changing (see Schreyer 2021). Monica Heller's 2017 paper, using Esperanto as an example, advocates for the study of constructed languages as an avenue into studying humans' creativity and their desire for new worlds through their development of new languages made to suit ideological stances.

Finally, one of the most thoroughly investigated areas of constructed languages in academia is the literature on including these languages in linguistics classrooms (see Punkse, Sanders, and Fountain 2020). Some scholars have also documented their success in using language creation activities as tools in public engagement through public primary and secondary schooling (Adger and van Urk 2020) and in community settings (Gillon et al 2020). Anecdotally, I can also add that whenever I am asked to discuss my constructed language work, whether that is in an academic setting or in the media, people are always most curious about *how* I have made a language. Where did I start, and how did I continue on? What words did I choose and why? Did I make a writing system; if so, what is it like? If linguistics is the study of language and its structures then questions like these, which are attempting to pinpoint pieces of language, are exactly the kinds of questions that will spark an interest in linguistics. Language creation, then, is an excellent way to bring interested individuals on a journey – a journey to learn more about language, but also, possibly, a journey to other worlds, where people are speaking a new language.

Top tips for language creation

Beginning to create a language can be an overwhelming task, and you may ask yourself, 'Where do I start?' The first step will be to decide why you are interested in creating a new language. Are you interested in learning more about a particular linguistic structure, are you trying to find a way to engage the public's interest in linguistics, or are you simply wanting to play with language? Each reason for language creation will lead to different choices. Next, imagine the speakers of the language – are they people or other non-human beings and if the latter, how might their physical features impact the sounds they will be able to produce (Sanders and Schreyer 2020)? Will humans need to be able to produce these sounds too? Or is the language signed rather than spoken? As each language context is unique, specific tips on language creation are difficult as imagination is key. Once you have imagined the world, imagine the stories that will be told there and begin to make choices both on the types of sounds but also on the words that will suit the context of the language. For example, if you are creating a language for our earliest human ancestors, what words would they need to communicate, what are their basics needs? Or are there concepts you want to specifically convey? Fiction author and language creator Suzette Haden Elgin is known for developing a language for women, embedding words for women's experiences like menstruation and childbirth into her language of Láadan (Okrent 2009). I have never created a signed language, so my early steps are focused on sound choices, followed by putting sounds together into words, and then, eventually, words into sentences. For this step, I often rely on my knowledge of syntactic trees to sketch out sentences in patterns other than Subject-Verb-Object. Try saying the sentences aloud, even if they aren't being designed to be spoken aloud, as this will provide you with a sense of flow in the language. For example, deciding on stress patterns and intonation provides a sense of authenticity.[5] Finally, no matter what your purpose, you are still playing with language; forget any prescriptive notions of what language is and what it should sound like, so that you are free to create and have fun.

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Notes

1 https://slate.com/human-interest/2010/03/avatar-fans-are-learning-how-to-speak-na-vi.html
2 http://kryptonian.info/about/news-feed.html/2013/05/24/break-down-of-kryptonian-writing-in-the-man-of-steel/
3 Assuming a linguist rather than a community of speakers is the direct line of defence in 'saving' a language is a highly colonial ideology. For more information on 'Expert Rhetorics' see Hill 2002 and on 'Rhetorics in Language Endangerment and Reclamation,' see Davis (2017).
4 For a discussion of whether constructed language communities are speech communities or communities of practice, please see Schreyer (2021).
5 Another great resource is David Peterson's 2015 book, *The Art of Language Creation*, which is also a guide on how to create a language.

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ENGAGING WITH PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

A personal retrospective

David Crystal

Introduction

Public engagement for me always used to start with a phone call – or, these days, an email. I clearly remember the first one. It was in 1962, while I was a research assistant on the Survey of English Usage at University College London. Normally the director, Randolph Quirk, or his secretary answered the phone; but that day I was the only one in the office. It was a journalist wanting to write a piece about the Survey. I spent half an hour doing my best to explain what the Survey was all about, how it was the first one of its kind to examine spoken as well as written English grammar, how it was descriptive rather than prescriptive and so on. The journalist had heard of grammar. 'Split infinitives?' he queried. I said this was indeed one of the many types of construction that we were monitoring in spoken English. He then asked what were the sources of data. I gave him some examples, including BBC recordings, such as *Any Questions*. 'What sort of people?' he asked. I gave him some names. One was Sir Gerald Nabarro, a prominent Conservative politician at the time, who was a regular participant.

The next day there was a story about the Survey, with a howling headline about Gerald Nabarro and split infinitives. The red-hot phone call from Nabarro later that day took Quirk by surprise. I had told him about the journalist, but not mentioned any details, not thinking they were important. Nabarro was furious that his name had been linked in the same sentence to split infinitives. A sheepish research assistant was duly summoned into Quirk's office, and I got my first lessons in public engagement. Never reveal your sources. Also, no matter how carefully you nuance your linguistic explanations, the media will get them wrong. And they will ignore your academic caution in the search for an eye-catching headline. As BBC journalist John Humphrys put it some decades later in an article for the *Spectator* (11 November 2006): 'The basic law of journalism states, "First simplify, then exaggerate."' Everyone needs to remember that. Lesson 1.

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In the event, Quirk managed 'the Nabarro Affair,' as we came to call it, brilliantly. He told Sir Gerald that he was one of a select few to have their fluent command of the English language incorporated into what would one day be seen as a unique archive of 1960s usage – along with the Queen... instant mollification.

Engaging with the media

If I were to quantify the amount of my public engagement over the years, the primary place would go to the media, and especially broadcasting. Language is one of those topics that is always attractive to broadcasters, because they know it is an area in which everyone has a stake. We all – with just a few exceptions – speak and write, and have opinions about the way other people speak and write, and are ready, at the drop of an 'at, to send a letter or email of complaint to a broadcasting company. In the 1980s, I wrote and presented several series about English usage on BBC Radio, such as *Speak Out* and *English Now*, fuelled by the thousands of letters and postcards sent in at the time. The same topics turned up over and over: accents, disputed pronunciation, grammatical shibboleths, vocabulary change, spelling difficulties, apostrophes... They were almost entirely dislikes – what has been called the 'complaint tradition' (Milroy and Milroy, 2012). And they seem unaffected by time. I have just looked through some of them again, and find that the issues being raised in the 1980s are still being raised today. It is as if those programmes had never been. No matter how often one tries to engage by giving a public explanation of a contentious linguistic issue, there will be a solid section of society that takes no notice of it. Lesson 2: don't expect to change the world through an interview or a newspaper article, even if they report you accurately. So, be prepared to say the same thing repeatedly, in as many settings as possible.

The biggest danger these days is to manage the consequences of fallible reporting, for there is a second level of simplification that has to be contended with – reportage in social media, especially in short-messaging services such as Twitter. Fake linguistic news. The space constraint disallows nuanced expression, motivates the use of quotations out of context and – through the inherently anonymous character of the medium – elicits a level of contentiousness and abuse that is unprecedented in traditional debate. People seem very ready to take offence these days. And even if a correction is posted at one point in a timeline, there is no guarantee that it will be seen or recalled even a few hours later, given the number of posts that will have arrived on the platform in the interim.

There are other things to watch out for when engaging with the media. Beware the programme researcher, who can keep you on the line for ages, asking far more questions than could ever possibly be covered by an interviewer or in a programme. Their job is to offer the programme-maker as much choice as possible, and they are quite happy to spend an hour or more milking your brain. Only a tiny fraction of what you say will be used. So it is wise to limit the amount of time you are prepared to give, either by phone or online. And be prepared for what has been called 'dropping the dead donkey,' where your item is cancelled because some other item of greater importance has come up, or a previous item has overrun. I have probably had more dead donkeys than actual radio or television appearances, over the years, though I never kept a count. There's no way of anticipating this, of course, but you have to be prepared for it. You may think your topic for public engagement is important, but it may not receive the level of respect you think it deserves.

Also be prepared to have your natural speaking or writing style altered, to suit the needs of the medium. There is no room in public engagement for being stylistically precious, and I have always deferred to the instincts of producers, when they send back my draft script with comments. I learnt many useful lessons, such as to avoid long or complex sentences, to be aware of topics which create sensitivities, and to note which words cannot be used (before the evening watershed) even as linguistic illustrations. However, acknowledging the expertise of programme-makers does not mean a complete abdication of personal responsibility. There are times, even, when the invitation to contribute to a programme may have to be refused. You may want to avoid channels that play down serious discussion, and where any attempt to make an academic point will be given short shrift. Especially beware the invitation to make a contribution 'at the top of the hour': these are usually from producers who are going to treat language as a lightweight filler, seeing it only as a source of humour – an amuse-bouche before the news, after all the serious interviews have gone. Such items will be very short, rushed (as the hour approaches) and often dropped at the last moment. The dead donkey again. If you have travelled to a studio, there is nothing more dispiriting than when this happens.

One thing you can do in advance is get a sense of the style of the radio channel or programme to which you've been invited, especially if it's live. And when actually taking part, be sensitive to regional, cultural and time differences. A regional example: if you are quite good at accents and are asked to illustrate them, it is unwise to choose the accents of the region you are broadcasting to. Even if you are a very good phonetician, you will get them wrong in the ears of some listeners, you will be criticised for stereotyping or mocking and the engagement will not be positive. A cultural example: when broadcasting to an area where the country is at war or there is a history of conflict with some other country, it is wise to check if there are topics or names that would cause upset. In an extreme case, the bare mention of a name might cause the contribution to be abruptly terminated. And time? I remember my first radio call to ABC (Australia) which was a bouncy mid-morning for me, but the late show in Melbourne. My first energetic sentences were met with a whispered 'quiet' from the producer: 'It's nearly midnight here!'

Special fields: proactive issues

Far more rewarding is engagement with special fields. I do not mean proactively. I have rarely gone out into the world waving a linguistic flag that says 'Can I help you?' And on the few occasions where I have done so, the initiatives have usually ended in failure. Four examples:

- Noting the serious growth in online grooming of children by predators, I devised a linguistically based scheme that would analyse online conversational interactions and identify any that were beginning to sound suspicious: see Crystal (2011) for details. I called it Chatsafe and offered it to various online bodies. None responded. I needed data to test the procedure, and this required a raft of necessary police checks and permissions, so I approached the UK Home Office. Again, no response. I suspect you have to know someone within an organisation if you're going to get anywhere – or a really powerful backer who knows the system.
- Having repeatedly had the experience of being mistaken for other David Crystals on Amazon (and presumably they for me), I wrote offering to adapt a taxonomy I devised for the Cambridge/Penguin encyclopedias and for online advertising to stop this sort of thing happening, or at least to reduce it, by tagging names with relevant categories. Thus, David Crystal$_{\text{linguistics}}$, David Crystal$_{\text{dentistry}}$, David Crystal$_{\text{fashion design}}$ and so on. No response. The problem still exists.
- I was, for a while, President of the Indexer Society, at a time when the Harry Potter books were developing into a series. At a teachers' conference, it was suggested that an annotated index to the books would add interest for the pupils and would especially help those with special needs who were finding it difficult to keep on top of the plots and the many characters. Would I help? I wrote to J. K. Rowling's agent, who promptly rejected the proposal and threatened me with immediate legal action if I dared to take forward such a thing!
- In the mid-1990s, the plight of many of the world's endangered languages was beginning to attract attention, and linguists were prime movers in the drive to gain political and economic support for documentation and, where possible, revitalisation: see Rehg and Campbell (2018) for a retrospective. One of the proposals was to develop a 'house of languages,' analogous to natural history museums, art galleries and other such institutions where a special field is given a creative public presence. In the UK, the initiative was given a warm response by the British Council, and two years were spent developing a project to establish what was to be called a 'World of Language' in a building on London's South Bank, opposite Shakespeare's Globe. It had all been costed when the government suddenly withdrew its support, having decided that a better use of money was to develop something to be called the Millennium Dome. The World of Language never went ahead: see Crystal (2008) for details.

Not all proactive projects are going to be failures, but to make them successes requires a level of commitment that may put them beyond the reach of many. The problem usually comes down to money. The *Shakespeare's Words* project is an example. This began when my actor/director son Ben was working with a cast on a play and found that some of its unfamiliar words were not to be found in the traditionally used glossary, by C. T. Onions, dating from 1911. We therefore began a three-year project that led to the publication of *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion* by Penguin in 2002. This was a huge book, by Penguin standards (676 pages), but even so it contained only a fraction of the usages found in the canon. There are six references to *bootless* (meaning 'unsuccessful'), for instance, but this word turns up 22 times in all the plays and poems. An online incarnation was the solution, and this was eventually launched in 2008, with revisions at intervals, as technology evolved – the latest being in April 2022. All instances of unfamiliar words are now included and searchable, and a raft of additional features, such as a thesaurus, word families and pronunciations, have been added over the years. The website is used, according to Google Analytics, by 3–4000 users a day, which is one way of quantifying public engagement.

But none of this came cheaply. A brilliant team of website designers and programmers, based in Prague, set up the site and have since developed (in response to user requests for new features) and maintained it, which includes all the registration costs that any website has to incur. This required a considerable personal investment, which we hoped to recover through a donations model; and when, after several years, this failed to generate even enough to cover annual maintenance, we switched to a subscription model. Take-up has been good, but we estimate it will take some ten years to recoup the investment. So here is Lesson 3: proactive public engagement can be expensive, especially if technological assistance is required. For any such project, work out if you (or your institution) can afford it – and when you arrive at an estimate, double it, for hidden costs are always going to emerge. At the outset, explore as many cost-covering strategies as you can, bearing in mind that if the project has a commercial outcome, it may place it outside the pale for the usual kind of academic grant applications.

Special fields: reactive issues

Reactive encounters have, on the whole, been very successful. I view applied linguistics as the application of linguistic theories, methods and findings to the elucidation – and hopefully solution – of problems which have arisen in other areas of experience (Crystal 1981; Tomić and Shuy 1987; Crystal and Brumfit, 2004). The important point to note is that linguists are usually not aware of what those problems are until someone explains them. Indeed, they may never have thought of the enquiry as a domain that would benefit from a linguist's services at all. So, it is important to have an open mind, be ready to respond and to be pulled in an unexpected direction. Lesson 4, as Hamlet says: 'the readiness is all.'

Getting to understand the nature of the problem, in order to decide whether you can help, is a crucial but time-consuming part of the process of public engagement. I find a checklist of seven questions helpful:

1. Does linguistics have the answers that will enable the encounter to be successful?
2. Do I have the necessary knowledge of the relevant area of linguistics, or will it involve me in preliminary research?
3. Do I have an interest in and empathy with the subject-matter of the enquiring domain?
4. Do I have the time to get involved?
5. Does my academic environment allow me to get involved?
6. Are there ethical, financial, political, religious, cultural, personal or other factors I need to take into account?
7. Is the involvement likely to feed back into linguistics to develop the subject as a whole?

Three projects are illustrative.

Clinical outreach

I was largely unaware of what the problems were in the field of speech therapy until I was asked (in a phone call to the newly established Department of Linguistic Science at the University of Reading) if linguistics could help in the assessment of a three-year-old language-delayed child being treated in the Audiology Unit of the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The checklist yielded the following results:

1. *All the answers?* Yes. I had asked what sort of information they needed, and 'a norm of child language acquisition' (CLA) was mentioned – an area of linguistics that was establishing itself at the time.
2. *Personal knowledge?* Another yes. I was teaching the course on CLA, and would go on to found the *Journal of Child Language* a few years later.
3. *Interest?* A definite yes, as I had studied the CLA of two of my children, and was the parent of a child with a cleft palate.
4. *Time?* Not really, working in a new department with a small staff, many courses to teach, and quite a heavy load of departmental administration. But it seemed the request would not take up too much time – an afternoon or two perhaps.
5. *Permission?* Yes. The head of department, Frank Palmer, was keen to build relationships with other departments, over and above the undergraduate joint-degree courses, and links had already been established with typography, music and education. The local hospital seemed an obvious next step.
6. *Factors?* None that I could foresee. No fees were involved, and this was before the days when any encounter with children required a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.
7. *Advancing linguistics?* No idea.

In the event, check 4 turned out to be ridiculously wrong. The encounter with the world of speech pathology would take up most of my research time over the next 15 years and lead to the establishment of the first linguistics-based degree in speech therapy, a diploma in remedial language studies, and the founding of a journal, *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*. The research that was needed to relate CLA to issues of diagnosis, assessment, and treatment, for adults as well as children, motivated the devising of a series of linguistic profiles in grammar and other areas, collaborating with new members of the department (Crystal, Fletcher and Garman, 1976; Crystal, 1982). All this then contributed to the emergence of a new branch of applied linguistics, clinical linguistics, easily satisfying check 7. So, Lesson 5: however much time you estimate your public engagement role is going to take up, you are probably going to be wildly wrong. The desire and opportunity to 'make a difference' is likely to be too tempting to deny; you will be sucked in to making commitments that you want to keep; and the friendships that can follow with people from the other domain foster a bond that you will be reluctant to break. Leaving a public engagement project is always much more difficult than starting one.

Business outreach

In case this might be thought to be an isolated experience, here is a second example – this time after I had left the full-time university world to become an 'independent scholar.' I was totally unaware of what the problems were in the field of online advertising until I was asked (in a phone call) whether linguistics could help solve a problem. It seems that inappropriate ads were appearing on websites. The example I was given was of a CNN web page about a street stabbing in Chicago; the ad at the side of the report said 'Buy Your Knives Here'! Embarrassment all round. How could this be stopped?

Applying the checklist once again:

1. *All the answers?* Yes. The problem was clear: the word *knife* had appeared several times in the report; the naive software had assumed that all it had to do was look in an inventory of digital advertisements and find any references to knives – which it did, ignoring the fact that *knife=weapon* is from a totally different semantic field to *knife=cutlery*. Context was being ignored. A contextually based semantic analysis, analysing polysemy and taking whole pages into account, would probably solve the problem. The kinds of ambiguity involved had long been recognised in lexicology and lexicography.
2. *Personal knowledge?* Yes. I had taught courses on semantics at Reading and edited books on the subject, such as Palmer (1976).
3. *Interest?* Yes. I had been a collector of old dictionaries for some years and was a member of the Longman board (Linglex) that was advising the company during its huge expansion period of dictionary publishing.
4. *Time?* Yes. I was general editor of the *Cambridge Encyclopedia* family at the time, but CUP was developing a publishing policy which had led them to sell this family to an internet development firm. The enquiry had come

through that firm, and the classification I had used for the encyclopedias was beginning to be expanded into a broader taxonomy that, I thought, could also be used to solve the 'knife' problem and similar issues. I wasn't expecting it to take too long, as – once pointed in the right direction – I imagined someone in the ad world would implement the more sophisticated semantic approach.

5. *Permission?* The academic context was no longer relevant, but was now replaced by a company context. My line manager considered the task to be a good fit, so I fed back my conclusions to the enquirer.
6. *Factors?* Financial, certainly, but this was being looked after by the new company. However, it raises a general issue for academics when public engagement involves a consultancy: if fees are involved, they need to ensure that there is no conflict between institutional time and personal time; and, if the latter, that the fee-level is appropriate. Lesson 6: get advice and compare the scales used by other professionals with similar qualifications.
7. *Advancing linguistics?* No idea.

It was the clinical story all over again. Check 4 was ridiculously out. It transpired there was nobody in the ad world who knew anything about semantics or lexicography. It would be up to me to come up with a procedure. The task involved working through the whole English dictionary, identifying the cases of polysemy (which meant most of the words) and tagging them for context. So, for example, *depression* was tagged for its economic, physical geographic, climatological and psychiatric senses. It took a team of 30 part-time lexicographers over a year to complete the task. And then a new company was formed to develop the system (eventually called iSense) and to market it. I was chair of that company for a decade. The main difference with the earlier project was that it proved easier to leave it, as in the business world there are well established 'exit strategies.'

Check 7 was not entirely disregarded, notwithstanding the business world in which I was working. I wrote several papers for journals on the approach, which came to be called 'semantic targeting' (Crystal, 2010), and it proved possible to incorporate aspects of the work into my academic writing on language and the internet (Crystal, 2011). But here a different issue arose: the approach had been patented, and there were NDAs to respect – non-disclosure agreements. In a fiercely competitive business world, academics must not be naive, and blithely write up all the details of a product, as if it were a PhD thesis or an article for a peer-reviewed journal. Lesson 7: become aware, before you get involved, of what you will be allowed to publish or even talk about in public.

Also, legal issues can arise. Think again about the need to handle lexical polysemy – in the whole dictionary. That includes the vocabulary of sex, violence, racial hate, drugs, and all the language that appears on the 'dark' side of the Internet. If the aim is to protect websites from ads in these domains, then they have to be analysed – which means downloading them in sufficient quantities to make lexical profiles possible. One has not only to have a thick skin to cope with the unpleasantness but also to be very cautious and inform the authorities of the nature of the project, to avoid an unwanted knock on the door. Lesson 8: explore any possible legal issues when dealing with sensitive areas.

Theatrical outreach

Another phone call: this time from Shakespeare's Globe in London, with a request for help to mount a production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 'original pronunciation' (OP). The Globe had been established to explore Elizabethan original practices, and had been acclaimed for its work in music, costume and movement, within the reconstructed theatrical space, but the possibility of reconstructing period pronunciation had not been addressed – nor had it occurred to me that the Globe might want to do this, notwithstanding the existence of a tradition of exploring Shakespearean OP going back to the mid-19th century, and involving phoneticians, such as Alexander Ellis and Daniel Jones, and theatre directors, such as John Barton and Bernard Miles.

This is how the checklist came out here:

1. *All the answers?* Not entirely. A great deal is now known about the phonology of the Early Modern English period, but there are many gaps and quite a few controversies over the stage that certain sound changes had reached.
2. *Personal knowledge?* I had a general understanding of English historical phonology, and had incorporated summaries of the sound system in its various stages of evolution in my *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, but I had never heard a reconstructed sound system in the mouths of anyone other than phoneticians; and actors were not phoneticians.
3. *Interest?* Yes. I had been involved with the Globe from its earliest days, writing articles for each issue of its magazine, *Around the Globe*, and being a Sam Wanamaker Fellow there in 2003, so I had a reputation as their 'tame linguist,' which is presumably why they called me.
4. *Time?* It seemed like a relatively limited commitment. It was January 2004. I envisaged three stages: to reread the phonological literature and make choices where there were cases of competing views; to provide a transcription of the director's cut of the play; to teach the actors (and their dialect coach) the OP; and to follow their progress through rehearsal into production, which was scheduled for June. It would then be over. The whole story is told in Crystal (2005/2019).
5. *Permission?* Yes. As before, I had to ensure that this did not interfere with my business responsibilities, but these had reduced a little after the first wave of publications.
6. *Factors?* Nothing to be concerned about. They had offered a nominal fee. The only consideration was the practical one of getting to the Globe at regular intervals from my home in North Wales, but as I was often in London

anyway on other business, that was unlikely to be an issue. (Public engagement projects often require visits to the locations where the projects are taking place. It is wise to check if travelling expenses are being catered for.)

7. *Advancing linguistics?* I felt it was unlikely.

Once again, check 4 was ridiculously out. The OP production was a great success, so the Globe followed it up with another, *Troilus and Cressida*, in 2005. In the audiences were theatre people from around the world, interested in hearing what OP had to offer, and they took back the initiative to try it out in their countries. American directors were especially enamoured of the approach, as OP has features (such as a postvocalic /r/) that make it resemble US English, and allows actors to feel more at home in that phonology than they were ever able to be in RP. Since 2006, over 20 of Shakespeare's plays, as well as works by other playwrights of the period, have been given an OP performance in several cities; and one company (the Baltimore Shakespeare Factory) has been mounting an OP production each year. I have been involved as a teacher or consultant on many of them.

This project also illustrates another point: the success of a public engagement initiative varies greatly, depending on factors totally outside the control of those involved. In the case of OP, not all theatre directors responded with enthusiasm; indeed, some were indifferent or dismissive. Although the first artistic director at the Globe, Mark Rylance, was a great supporter of OP, his successor Dominic Dromgoole was not, so that there were no subsequent OP productions at the Globe until its educational wing took an interest in 2014. Similarly, the artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford, Greg Doran, felt that OP was no more than an academic experiment. Lesson 9: be prepared to have your efforts at public engagement rejected – but don't take it personally. When you take into account all the political, economic, historical and (not least) personality factors that lead theatre companies to go their individual ways, it would be most unlikely for any initiative to receive a universal welcome. And I suspect this is going to be true of any attempt at engagement with an artistic domain. Maybe with any domain.

Small-scale projects

I don't want to give the impression that all public engagements are large-scale, long-term endeavours. There are valuable small-scale projects too, just as much appreciated, and sometimes with effects that go well beyond what you might expect. Contributions to individual radio or television programmes are usually clearly time-delimited – unless they inadvertently turn into a series! – and the extent of involvement is known in advance. Most forensic linguistic collaborations are specific, case-related, with a clear beginning and end and usually not lasting more than a few days or weeks – though there are cases that do drag on; and if a case ends up in court, it can involve the linguist sitting around in corridors for some time waiting to be called in as a witness (the issues are discussed in Shuy, 2006, and see also French and Watt, 2018). If the court is an international one (such as at The Hague), the time commitment can be considerable, unless the issues are handled online. (Financial considerations are usually not an issue, in legal settings, as fees, travel expenses, and so on are always part of the planning.)

Exhibitions are another instance of a well-defined time-frame, which will include a period set aside for planning. This was the case with the British Library (BL) exhibition, *Evolving English*, which ran from November 2010 to April 2011. Preparations began two years earlier, with meeting-dates clearly scheduled. An associated book was built into the planning (Crystal, 2011). But once it was over, it was over. And once again, the effect of the public engagement could be monitored in terms of the number of visitors the exhibition received. It turned out that this was the best attended winter exhibition ever at the BL.

Simplification

Finally, I should mention the biggest challenge linguists have to face when engaging with the public, whether general or specialised: the need to simplify – but not, *pace* John Humphrys, to exaggerate. I sometimes feel that applied linguistics is the science of telling half-truths about language. Certainly, when trying to get a message across to an uninformed and often sceptical public, it is essential to be cautious about presenting the terminology, qualifications, diverse viewpoints and subtleties of expression that characterise the subject when linguists address their peers. I do not think it would have been possible to make much progress in the clinical world if I had presented colleagues there with a descriptive framework of the kind I would have used in an article for the *Journal of Linguistics*.

Complexities can of course be introduced gently, as time goes by, but not at the outset. Many teachers have told me how their first encounter with linguistics was off-putting because of the terminology or the complexity of an analysis, or where they were presented with alternative analyses of an issue without having the necessary background to evaluate them. It is quite an art to tell only as much of the linguistic story as is needed to help. However, you may well encounter criticism from theoretically minded linguistic colleagues who do not share your enthusiasm for public engagement, and for whom any hint of simplification is seen as doing the subject a disservice. Lesson 10: be ready for sometimes heated debate in staff meetings. It is wise to attend armed with an explanation of the wider benefits of the exercise to the community – as well as to the university. In these days of targets and impacts, the issue may not be as great as it once was. When it comes to a choice between accepting simplifications or salary cuts, purists are likely to become pragmatic!

Conclusion

For each negative, in my ten lessons, there are positive actions that can lead to a resolution. To recapitulate:

1. Media distortion of views? Send in corrections and clarifications.
2. Being ignored? Repeat views in as many settings as possible.
3. Expensive outlay? Engage in careful financial planning.
4. A steep learning curve? Keep an open mind and be ready to engage.
5. Underestimating time? Overestimate it.
6. Uncertainty about fees? Get advice.
7. Non-disclosure issues? Check in advance.
8. Legal issues? Check in advance.
9. Proposals rejected? Don't take it personally.
10. Simplification unappreciated? Explain the wider benefits.

None of the issues described in this paper should detract from the unquantifiable positives that accompany any effort towards public engagement. Even in the cases of failure, there is the satisfaction of knowing that you have done your best and not turned away, recognising that in some cases of potential public engagement, there are circumstances beyond the control of any linguist, no matter how well-meaning, that will prevent it taking place. But in cases of success – and they are by far the majority – there is an emotional sense of personal fulfilment that is just as strong as the intellectual gratification that accompanies the completion of any 'pure' linguistic analysis or description. Stronger even. I have before me a positive review of one of my linguistics books and a letter from a parent thanking me for helping their language-delayed child to improve. Which pleases me more? No contest.

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