

BAAL Book Prize 2003

The 2003 BAAL Book Prize was awarded to:

Wray, A. (2002)

Formulaic language and the lexicon

Cambridge University Press

The titles shortlisted for the 2003 BAAL Book Prize were:

Cauldwell, R.(2002)

Streaming speech: Speech in Action

Chambers, J.K., Trudgill, P. and Schilling Estes, N. (2002)

The handbook of language variation and change

Blackwell Publishing Ltd

Finnegan, R. (2002)

Communicating : the multiple modes of interconnection

Routledge, Taylor and Francis Ltd

Reviewer's Comments

Wray, A. (2002) *Formulaic language and the lexicon*. Cambridge University Press.

The importance of "Formulaic Language and the Lexicon" to the field is hard to over-estimate. In selecting the topic of formulaic sequences / chunks / multiword units for close examination, Wray has tackled a difficult area that is probably more central to language development than linguists have so far acknowledged.

The book reviews a huge range of theoretical positions and empirical studies linked to the phenomenon of formulaic sequences. Wray make sense of this vast and sometimes confusing assortment, and offers coherent models of storage and use. The work challenges assumptions of both Chomskyan and more recent corpus linguistics, and opens up new agendas to explore the role of formulaic sequences in language learning and development.

This book establishes the importance of formulaic use of language - it can no longer be brushed under the carpet as an inconvenience to a false economy of theory. As a result, applied linguists need to examine the consequences for many areas of our work, including language testing, corpus investigations, second language development.

The book is extremely well-written. A lively style combines with careful argumentation and a wide range of intriguing examples to produce a readable text.

Cauldwell, R.(2002) *Streaming speech. Speech in Action*

The material is highly innovative; it uses real live spoken data from people the reader could relate to. (The reader is most likely to be an advanced learner of English.) The structure of each of the first 8 'chapters' (or sets of spoken discourse) is consistent and practical; the repetition is not a disadvantage, but a help. The reader/learner knows what to expect and how to proceed. The final two chapters contains a general review and also instruction on transcribing intonation units ("speech units"). The material covers a great amount of the kind of detail that features in ordinary rapid colloquial spoken English, so in terms of the product's coherence and coverage, I highly commend it. The product provides a practical introduction to David Brazil's theory of Discourse Intonation; although I do not agree with the whole of the theory, this is a brilliant introduction to it. It is an extremely good way into understanding Discourse Intonation, with direct access

to real discourse. I do not know of any other such material, and I suspect it will set a standard for any rivals from either Discourse Intonation or any other school of intonation theory. It is very well organized; it is practical; it is very usable and do-able. A novice like me in electronic materials had no difficulty in handling the material. It is well designed, and attractively presented; it was a pleasure to use. Its originality is why I commend it highly for shortlisting.

I hope the BAAL Book Prize Committee will not frown on a product that is technically not a book, but will recognize the value of such CD material for EFL learners and award the prize this year to a brilliant piece of innovative non-book publication in applied linguistics.

Chambers, J.K., Trudgill, P. and Schilling Estes, N. (2002) *The handbook of language variation and change*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd

This is an addition to the invaluable 'handbook' series from Blackwell and will be an essential purchase for anyone wishing to inform themselves about language variation and change. It collects 29 specially written chapters by major names working in the Labovian tradition of variationist sociolinguistics. There are five sections, two of which have subsections, and each of these eight groupings has a brief introduction by one of the editors. There is also a general introduction by Chambers, which is a concise history of sociolinguistics.

As in all the handbook series, the core readers are advanced students of linguistics upwards. It is therefore written for those who already have a grounding in linguistics. The topics are impeccably selected to cover the major conceptual and theoretical areas, and also, in line with the 'handbook' model, deal with practicalities (Crawford Feagin's excellent and realistic chapter on fieldwork opens the collection). Each chapter presents the state of the art in an area, and includes a critical review of major publications. But the chapters read as more than just 'reviews of the literature' -- the authors present cogent stances on their areas and direct readers to a theorised and critical view of each area. Each chapter is an interesting read in its own right, and it really can be read from cover to cover.

It's impossible to mention every chapter in this review. Part I has seven chapters which deal with methodologies, including the clearest explanations you will ever see of VARBRUL (Robert Bayley) and of implicational scales (John R Rickford). Part II consists of four chapters which engage with the relationship between variationist sociolinguistics and linguistic structure. Part III is another longer section (12 chapters) concerned with the social factors that are considered in the field (including time, age, style, social class, gender, ethnicity). Part IV concerns contact, with two chapters on contact between dialects (David Britain, Paul Kerswill) and one on contact between languages (Gillian Sankoff). In the three papers in Part V Peter Trudgill discusses linguistic and social typology, and Sali Tagliamonte addresses the way in which quantitative methods can be used to compare speakers from different communities. Aptly, Walt Wolfram's chapter on language death is the final one, and one of two papers in the book which directly address multilingualism.

Most examples are drawn from English, mostly of the US and UK. This is representative of the scholarship in variationist sociolinguistics. Some examples are drawn from other languages (including Finnish, Walmatjari, and Hindi).

The 'originality' stipulation is not very relevant for a book of this nature, as it follows an established series design, and is concerned with the presentation of a coherent and comprehensive view of a subdiscipline.

It's a real achievement to maintain this level of excellence in a collection. It is inevitable that many chapters deal with central concepts (such as VARBRUL, or gender, or New York), but this is useful overlap which allows the reader to understand concepts in alternative contexts, and to develop a wider understanding. I strongly recommend shortlisting for this book which will be a guide to language variation and change for some years.

Finnegan, R. (2002) *Communicating : the multiple modes of interconnection.* Routledge, Taylor and Francis Ltd

As far as a brief description of the book is concerned I would say the following: In the context of a prize awarded by an Applied Linguistics Association, the book's major and in that sense profound contribution is to 'relocate' language. In its emphasis and wonderfully detailed documentation on the plethora of forms of communication it insists that language, spoken or written, is one and often not the major form through which humans make and receive meaning. This ranges from the use of scents and fragrances - whether as the clichéd example of the smell of freshly brewed coffee in the house when potential buyers are being shown through, or the use of incense in religious ceremonial "which binds the worshippers into a jointly-communicating nexus" (p 189), to the increasing "primacy of sight, and the order of representation in space" (p 172). She draws attention to the fact that "different cultures have developed sensitivities to differing communicative forms", thereby challenging the notion that the "particular mix of communicative resources with which we are familiar is either universal or ipso facto superior" (p173). Behind that of course then stands the challenge to the notion that 'language', that grand abstraction, particularly in a specific form (ie English, Mandarin, Spanish, etc) is either of those.

In this the book issues a deep challenge to accepted, and still dominant notions of language: but it is a challenge not to the actual significance of language, but to the mis-recognitions of language, a challenge which, if accepted in the spirit that it is offered will give us a new, more useable, more plausible sense of what language is, what it does, what it can do well, and what its place is in that wide spectrum of human communicational forms.

With that comes, equally, a challenge to notions of meaning, to the marginalization of affect and emotion, to the sensuousness of humans, the bodilyness and materiality of communication. All these together will in time make us see language newly, and provide precisely the account of language that will be essential for our approach in the age of the digital technologies.

The book's examples range so widely, draw from such different cultural and theoretical resources that, never mind its contribution to a revolution in thinking about representation and communication, it deserves to be in every household; it is beautifully written, and well enough produced to have its place there.

In all these ways the book makes the strongest possible contribution to a now essential understanding of language, irrespective of where precisely our interests in language are located - writing and literacy, language teaching, stylistics, social / political / ideological uses of language, translation studies, and so on.