



British Association  
for Applied Linguistics

BAAL / Cambridge University Press Seminar Programme 2012

## **Discourse and Technology: Tools, Methods and Applications**

Centre for English Language Studies  
and Centre for Corpus Research,  
University of Birmingham, UK

17 – 18 May 2012

### *Objectives of the seminar*

1. To share knowledge and develop ideas about new and existing tools and methods in computational linguistics and natural language processing which may be relevant and useful to scholars carrying out empirical research in discourse analysis;
2. To demonstrate the practical and theoretical value of using such tools and methods in discourse research in applied linguistics;
3. To act as the starting point for a new informal network of researchers working in this area;
4. To generate a series of thematically-related papers that will form the basis for a book proposal or journal special issue (also provisionally entitled *Discourse and Technology*).

### *Rationale*

It is now becoming increasingly common for applied linguists to make use of the tools and methods of corpus linguistics to carry out work of a broadly discourse analytic nature. Much of this work has been made possible by the advent of user-friendly corpus analysis software packages which can either be installed on a laptop or desktop computer or accessed via a standard web browser. The functionality of these packages and interfaces is somewhat limited, however, and has tended to restrict discourse researchers to what might be called a lexical level of analysis, i.e. to the qualitative analysis of concordance data obtained for words and phrases which have

been pre-selected by the researcher, or generated automatically by word list, keyword list or n-gram algorithms. More recently, a growing number of discourse analysts have started to investigate the research possibilities afforded by other techniques, such as shallow parsing, anaphora resolution and named entity recognition, which have been developed within the neighbouring disciplines of computational linguistics and natural language processing. At the same time, some discourse researchers have begun to work with (or in some cases to develop their own) discourse-level corpus annotation tools and techniques of analysis. The advantage of using computational resources such as these in discourse analysis is that they open up the possibility of automatically or semi-automatically analysing very large sets of data, thereby massively improving both the efficiency and the generalizability of empirical research studies. This seminar will provide an opportunity for discourse researchers who are already using these new technologies to present and share their work and ideas, and for researchers who are new to this area to gain an understanding of the full range of exciting research possibilities that these cutting-edge tools and techniques are now beginning to open up.

### ***Organisation***

#### ***Numbers:***

The seminar will be restricted to a maximum of 25 participants, including the four invited speakers mentioned above. This is in order to allow for longer papers with more time for discussion, and to allow the seminar to include a mixture of hands-on and more traditional presentation formats.

#### ***Participants:***

Four of the participants will be invited keynote speakers, as follows:

- **Rachele De Felice** (School of English Studies, University of Nottingham, UK);
- **Gregory Garretson** (Department of English, Uppsala University, Sweden);
- **Oliver Mason** (Department of English, University of Birmingham, UK);
- **Paul Rayson** (School of Computing and Communications, Lancaster University, UK).

The seminar is primarily aimed at discourse analysts working within a broad applied linguistics framework, but it will also be open to participants from other academic backgrounds (e.g. theoretical linguistics, computational linguistics, cognitive science and psychology) who are doing work that is of direct relevance and interest to applied linguistics, and who are interested in engaging positively and constructively with the applied linguistics research community.

Presentations at this event are mainly by invitation. However, we have left a small number of presentation slots open, so if you are interested in presenting a paper at this event, please send an abstract of 200 - 300 words together with your application form (see below).

***Schedule:***

The seminar will take place over two full days, as follows:

***Day 1: Thursday 17 May***

09:00-10:00 Registration and welcome

10:00-11:00 First keynote speaker (45 min + 15 min discussion)

11:00-11:30 Coffee break

11:30-13:00 2 papers, each 30 min + 15 min

13:00-14:30 Lunch

14:30-16:00 2 papers, each 30 min + 15 min

16:00-16:30 Coffee break

16:30-17:30 Second keynote speaker (45 + 15 min)

17:30-18:30 Informal discussion and networking event

19:00-21:00 Dinner at Lahore Buffet, Sparkbrook (<http://lahorebuffet.co.uk/>)

***Day 2: Friday 18 May***

10:00-11:00 Third keynote speaker (45 min + 15 min discussion)

11:00-11:30 Coffee break

11:30-13:00 2 papers, each 30 min + 15 min

13:00-14:30 Lunch

14:30-16:00 2 papers, each 30 min + 15 min

16:00-16:30 Coffee break

16:30-17:30 Fourth keynote speaker (45 + 15 min)

17:30-18:00 Final round-up

Notes on this schedule:

1. Although the generic term 'papers' is used above, the seminar will feature a mixture of different presentation formats. Specifically, it is anticipated that presentations will be divided into three types: 'hands-on' workshop sessions, software demonstrations, and traditional conference paper presentations. The exact scheduling of these different types of presentation will be decided when the list of participants has been finalized.
2. All papers will be presented in plenum. There will be 12 papers altogether, meaning that roughly half the participants will present.
3. In order to facilitate discussion and exploration of ideas, non-keynote papers will be allocated 30 minutes as opposed to the more customary 20, with 15 minutes rather than the customary 10 for discussion.

***Costs:***

The cost of the seminar is **£40** for BAAL members, students and the unwaged, and **£50** for non-BAAL members. (Please feel free to forward this message to any non-BAAL members whom you think might be interested in attending.) This fee includes lunches and refreshments. The optional seminar dinner on the evening of 17th May will cost an additional £10.

Please note that participants coming from outside the West Midlands area will need to make their own accommodation arrangements. If you wish to be based on campus, we recommend Lucas House, the University's own bed-and-breakfast accommodation, which can be booked online at: <http://www.venuebirmingham.com/sleep>

***Registration and payment:***

Registration is now open, and is on a first-pay-first-served basis. To register for this event, please fill in the form below, and return it by email to the seminar organiser, Nicholas Groom [n.w.groom@bham.ac.uk](mailto:n.w.groom@bham.ac.uk).

The closing date for registrations is **30 April 2012**, but please note that participant numbers are strictly limited to a maximum of 25, so you are strongly advised to register early in order to guarantee your place.

If you wish to present a paper at the seminar, please remember to send an abstract of 200 - 300 words together with your registration form.

We are pleased to be able to offer one scholarship place for a postgraduate student presenter. The recipient of the scholarship will have their seminar fee waived. Please indicate in your application whether you wish to be considered for this scholarship award.

**There are two ways to register: by post, or electronically.**

Postal registrations:

Please print out and fill in the application form, and send it together with a cheque for £40 or £50 to the following address:

Dr Nicholas Groom  
Centre for English Language Studies  
Westmere House  
University of Birmingham  
Birmingham B15 2TT  
UK

Cheques should be made payable to 'BAAL Corpus Linguistics SIG'. We cannot guarantee places until both application form and cheque have been received.

Electronic registrations:

We are able to accept payments by bank transfer. (Bank transfer is strongly advised as it is much faster.) We cannot process credit or debit card payments, however.

Bank details for domestic and international transfers and payments are as follows:

Bank Account Details:

Account Name: BAAL Corpus Linguistics SIG.

Account Number: 60018139

Bank Sort Code: 40-18-62

Bank Name: HSBC Bank Plc

Bank Address: HSBC Coventry, University of Warwick Branch

For International Transfers, you will also need:

International Account Number: GB07MIDL40186260018139

Branch Identifier Code (IBAN): MIDLGB2174Z

Please send your completed electronic application form to <n.w.groom@bham.ac.uk> together with proof of payment (e.g. pdf scan of bank transfer receipt). We cannot guarantee places until both application and proof-of-payment documents have been received.

***Contact:***

For further information, please contact:

Nicholas Groom

Seminar Organiser and Convenor of BAAL Corpus Linguistics Special Interest Group

<n.w.groom@bham.ac.uk>.

**PLEASE SEE OTHER DOCUMENT FOR APPLICATION FORM**