



**Notes on the History of the
British Association for Applied Linguistics
1967-1997**

**Produced on the Occasion of the 30th BAAL Annual Meeting
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1. Introduction

This short historical pamphlet has been produced on behalf of the Executive Committee to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL). Our aim was to document key steps and events in the development of the Association, and the major issues which have preoccupied it over three decades. We felt this would be helpful to the membership both in maintaining a collective memory, in promoting a positive understanding of BAAL's achievements to date, and in evaluating possible future directions for the Association.

The production of the pamphlet was complicated by the fact that BAAL records are somewhat incomplete, particularly for the early years. An Archive is held at Exeter University, but this includes material mainly from the mid 1970s onwards. Fortunately an almost-complete set of EC minutes from 1967 onwards has been preserved, though this became available to the present writer only at a very late stage. The founding of the *BAAL Newsletter* in 1976 meant that the activities of the Association began to be more regularly documented, and the *NL* has been an increasingly important formal and informal record of BAAL activities and preoccupations. In particular, at the 10th Annual Meeting in 1977, a "Chairman's Forum" was held at which the first three Chairmen of the Association (Pit Corder, Peter Strevens, Walter Grauberg) presented their reflections on the origins and prospects of the Association; these were published in *BAAL Newsletter* 4, in March 1978. Similarly at the 20th Annual Meeting, the then Chairperson John Trim gave an extended account of the founding of the Association, which was published in *British Studies in Applied Linguistics* 3, in 1988. Obviously these authoritative accounts are central to any account of BAAL's early development. The Newsletter has also published informative obituary notices for three early Chairmen (Pit Corder, Peter Strevens, Sam Spicer), which are included within this pamphlet as Appendix 3; later Chairpersons have willingly given extended interviews as a contribution to the preparation of this document, and these will eventually be deposited in the Archive. Finally, for later years, papers from Annual Meetings and Annual General Meetings have been consulted.

I am aware that the document still contains some gaps, and of course it may also contain inaccuracies. I would be grateful for any corrections and amplifications which readers can supply. The EC would also be grateful to hear from any member who holds early records, which may be useful in enhancing/ completing the Archive collection.

Rosamond Mitchell
BAAL Chairperson 1994-97

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2. Founding of BAAL

The first formal proposal for the creation of a “British Applied Linguistics Association” was made in 1965 by Peter Strevens, then recently appointed to a new Chair in Applied Linguistics at Essex, and also Secretary of the newly-formed Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée. John Trim provides an account of the general background to the formation of AILA itself, in advance of any individual national Association of applied linguistics, and shows how its roots lay in postwar moves towards reconstruction and unification in (Western) Europe:

“Following the signature of the European Convention for Cultural Cooperation, meetings were held in Strasbourg and in Stockholm to consider a programme for the promotion of language learning in the states signatory to the Convention. It was clear even at that time, that the ever closer cultural cooperation among European countries to be expected with the development of increasingly close social, economic and political links intended by the Council of Europe and the Treaty of Rome, would require a great increase in the quantity and quality of language teaching in all member countries and at all levels. It was at first hoped that a European Language Institute could be established, but this project foundered owing to the non-availability of finances and, at that early stage, the absence of the necessary political will...

“...It was decided instead to launch a 10-year major Project under the aegis of the Council of Europe, with the objectives of establishing good working relations among institutions in different member countries concerned with language teaching, promoting the adoption of the (at that time) new audio-visual methodology and, more generally, encouraging the close cooperation between academic linguists and practising language teachers. To this end AILA was founded, and throughout the 60s a series of *stages* were organised in different member countries, in which a European policy on language teaching was gradually evolved, culminating in Recommendation (69)2 of the Committee of Ministers, which had a powerful influence on the language policies of the member states of the Council of Europe. It was customary to hold meetings of the AILA committee in connection with the Council of Europe *stages* and to use the occasion to encourage the foundation of national affiliates or to strengthen those already in existence... In 1964, a first small-scale International Colloquy on Applied Linguistics was organised by the Association Française de Linguistique Appliquée in Nancy. The second was to be held in Britain...” (Trim 1988, pp 7-8).

Within Britain, of course, there were other substantial impulses towards the development of applied linguistics, which had already led to the creation of several university departments, starting with the University of Edinburgh in 1957. As Trim explains, these were partly to do with policy needs relating to English as a second/foreign language, partly to do with the postwar need to promote foreign language learning within the UK itself:

“Starting with the School of Applied Linguistics in Edinburgh, a number of universities had set up departments of applied linguistics, largely to provide the professionalisation of the teaching of English as a foreign language which the British Council considered to be necessary in the national interest, especially at a time when the common use of

English was seen to be an important factor in the survival of the Commonwealth as an effective political and economic partnership. The first attempts to join the Common Market had encountered resistance, and led the British Government to stimulate increased proficiency in foreign languages. The Committee on Research and Development in Modern Languages was set up and commissioned research in that field on a substantial scale... Language Centres were established in universities and polytechnics. Language laboratories were set up in schools, involving substantial investment, and the Nuffield Foundation (later Schools Council) projects for the development of audio-visual language courses were generously funded, with the intention of stiffening the modern languages provision in comprehensive secondary schools and in primary schools... It was at this time (1966) that the Centre for Information on Language Teaching was instituted. As a result there was a great swell of interest on the part of teachers in the help they might receive from linguists in the difficult yet promising situation they were facing..." (Trim 1988 p8).

In response to these growing demands, a language teaching section was set up within the Linguistics Association of Great Britain (LAGB), but this was felt to be an inadequate forum for the development of a new interdisciplinary area, in a consistent and principled way.

In July 1965, therefore, a preliminary meeting of interested parties was convened by Peter Strevens at Birkbeck College, and a working party was set up to formulate the aims of the proposed British Applied Linguistics Association. The invited working party membership reflected interests in theoretical linguistics, in the teaching of English as a mother tongue, and in bilingualism, as well as English as a foreign language, and the teaching of foreign languages within the UK; it included James Britton, Michael Halliday, Glyn Lewis, Donald Ridy, Frank Palmer, George Perren, David Stern, Peter Strevens, John Trim, and Jean Ure. The founding meeting for the British Association for Applied Linguistics followed at Reading, in 1967, and elected a first Executive Committee, whose members were: Pit Corder (Chairman), David Wilkins (Secretary), John Trim (Treasurer), Norman Denison, Eric Hawkins, Brian Gomes da Costa, George Perren, and Peter Strevens.

There was some initial debate over the scope of the Association's objectives, and in particular, whether it should concern itself primarily/ exclusively with matters to do with language teaching, and machine translation (then the stated objectives of AILA, which were to be imitated). At the Reading meeting, however, a wider brief was agreed, accepting that the Association could legitimately concern itself with applications of linguistics much more broadly. In the 1974 version of the Constitution (formalised at that time to meet Charity Commissioners' requirements), the aims of BAAL were finalised to read:

"The Objects of the Association are the advancement of education by fostering and promoting, by any lawful charitable means, the study of language use, language acquisition and language teaching, and the fostering of interdisciplinary collaboration in this study..."

(Brumfit 1996 provides a recent overview of background debates in the 1960s and 1970s on the nature of applied linguistics: pp 3-11.)

3. BAAL membership

The founders of BAAL saw themselves as creating “a professional association of specialists in applied linguistics” (minutes of preliminary meeting, 5.7.65). They were concerned to establish the academic credentials of the Association, and to ensure that it maintained a distinct character as a learned society rather than becoming yet another language teachers’ organisation. At the beginning, therefore, individual membership was restricted to those who could “demonstrate either by formal qualification, published work or research in train a tangible connection with linguistics” (EC minutes, 26.9.68). In practice, the usual formal qualification expected was one of the new diplomas/ masters degrees in applied linguistics, which from the 1960s onwards were producing dozens of graduates each year. Applicants had to be sponsored by existing members of the Association; a Membership Subcommittee scrutinised applications, and brought debatable cases to the EC.

By 1971 membership was reported to the EC as “running about 160” (EC mins 25.1.71), and in the following year the Association had over 200 individual members. Steady growth continued, and by 1976, a total of 369 members was reported, including 44 overseas members (EC mins 14.9.76). Numbers then fell back a little, but in the 1980s the 400+ mark was passed, and in the 1990s, the 500+ mark. (The June 1997 List of Members includes 655 names.)

By 1973, the “narrowness of recruitment” was already being commented on, and the membership subcommittee asked to report to the AGM on admissions policy (EC mins 9.2.73). Important founder members were concerned to maintain academic controls on entry to membership (e.g. EC mins 13.9.74); however the criteria were evidently operated fairly flexibly, with the EC accepting at an early stage that absence of formal qualifications was not necessarily a bar to membership (EC mins 7.2.75). By 1985, with the membership already standing at 453 people, there was a clear feeling that the character of the Association as a learned society was now secure, and the formal controls on membership were dropped from the constitution.

The issue of corporate/ institutional membership was under discussion by 1970, and even before this had been formally approved by an AGM, the EC agreed to offer “a unique Corporate Associate Membership” to CILT (EC mins 1.4.70). In 1971 the EC agreed to formally recommend establishment of a category of Associate Membership. By 1972, there were several “corporate members”, mostly publishers, who dominated this category for many years. (In 1997, there are 23 Associate Members, including a number of academic institutions and organisations alongside publishers, CILT, and the British Council.)

4. BAAL publications

The first major publication arising from a BAAL-sponsored activity was the three-volume Proceedings of the 1969 AILA Congress held at Cambridge, published by Cambridge University Press in 1971; the volume titled *Applications of Linguistics* was edited by John Trim and George Perren.

The seminar programme which has been such a lasting feature of BAAL activity over the years naturally also gave rise to publishable material, which individual seminar organisers wanted to see in print. In 1972 the EC “noted with satisfaction” that “some BAAL seminar papers had been published” (EC mins 21.1.72). The notion of publication by BAAL of an occasional series was explored with various publishers during the 1970s, with negative results however; seminar organisers had to be left free to make their own publication arrangements (e.g. EC mins 7.5.73).

A Publications Subcommittee was established in the mid 1970s however, and exceptionally, it undertook to sponsor fully the publication of one particular set of seminar papers. This was the volume “English for Academic Purposes”, the outcome of a joint BAAL/SELMOUS seminar organised in 1975 at Birmingham, by J Heaton and A Cowie. Keith Morrow undertook to manage publication and distribution through Reading University, and the venture proved successful, with good sales and a number of reprints through the late 1970s. In addition, the Publications Subcommittee provided small subsidies for publications of suitable quality produced by others (e.g. some volumes in the “Exeter Linguistics Studies” series edited by Reinhard Hartmann).

Publication of Annual Meetings proceedings followed more slowly. The first to appear formally was a selection of papers from the 1982 Annual Meeting (Newcastle), edited by Christopher Brumfit under the title *Learning and Teaching Languages for Communication*. This was published by CILT on BAAL’s behalf, in 1983. This was the forerunner of the regular series *British Studies in Applied Linguistics*, which has appeared annually since 1986, with a selection of papers from the previous year’s Annual Meeting, usually edited by the local conference organisers. The first 6 volumes of the series were produced by CILT, but from Volume 7 onwards, the series has been produced in association with Multilingual Matters.

The idea of associating BAAL in some way with the publication of a journal of applied linguistics was evidently under discussion from early on, though the EC minutes recorded in 1973 that the time was “not yet ripe for regular journal publication” (EC mins 21.9.73). In 1975 however, Oxford University Press produced a “Statement of Intent” to publish an applied linguistics journal, in association with BAAL and a suitable North American body, perhaps the Center for Applied Linguistics. (There was as yet no Association in the United States.) The aims of the proposed journal were to “publish papers in the general area of applied linguistics...; to publish serious and critical reviews of recent publications in the field...; to promote transatlantic awareness and cross-thinking in the field...” (Draft Statement of Intent). After some delay, and tentative discussions with another publisher (Pergamon), it was confirmed in 1978 that Oxford University Press were going ahead with the proposed journal, with the first volume to appear in 1980. The sponsoring bodies would now be BAAL and the newly-formed American Association for Applied Linguistics (founded 1977). The proposed Editors were Patrick Allen (Canada),

Bernard Spolsky (USA) and Henry Widdowson (UK); John Trim was nominated by the EC as the first BAAL representative on the Editorial Board.

The first volume of the journal *Applied Linguistics* duly appeared in 1980, and it has been published regularly and successfully ever since, with only slight changes to its management. (The number of editors was reduced from three to two, with BAAL and AAAL being consulted on the appointment of successive editors based in the UK and the USA respectively; a Reviews Editor was appointed, in consultation with AILA.) BAAL has normally been represented on the Editorial Board by the current Chairperson, and a reduced rate individual subscription has been available to BAAL members.

A longstanding, vital part of BAAL's internal communication with its membership has been the *BAAL Newsletter*, which first appeared in gestetnered form, in March 1976. This has continued as a regular series with 2-3 issues per year ever since, with No. 56 appearing in Summer 1997. The first issue contained two brief literature surveys (on clinical linguistics and on discourse analysis); one book review; and a list of other recent books. The contents have expanded over the years to include reports on a wide range of BAAL's internal and external activities, as well as debates on policy matters, and the *Newsletter* has become an important document of record for the Association. Finally, a BAAL website was recently launched, and can be reached at: <http://www.swan.ac.uk/cals/baal.htm>

In addition to working directly to promote the various kinds of publication detailed above, BAAL established a Book Prize scheme in the mid 1980s, to give recognition to high quality publications across the applied linguistic field. The scheme has attracted strong support from publishers, and one or more Book Prizes have been awarded annually since 1986.

5. BAAL administration

The first BAAL Constitution, drafted in 1967, was officially adopted at the 1968 Annual General Meeting in Edinburgh. This provided for the elected offices of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Assistant Secretary. In 1972 the EC agreed to formalise the election and rotation of officers through constitutional amendments brought to the AGM. These defined the officers' period of tenure as 3 years, with eligibility for re-election (but continuous tenure of a maximum of 6 years); while the number of officers has increased, these basic rules have stood unchanged since. The remainder of the EC has comprised a slightly varying number of ordinary members (currently five), elected annually. Cooption was also used quite extensively in the early years, ensuring continuing involvement of former Chairmen and key individuals such as the CILT director, George Perren. More recently this has been used more sparingly, e.g. to ensure research student representation and continuing AILA links.

The role of the Assistant Secretary was clarified in 1975 as undertaking prime responsibility for organising the Annual Meeting and the Seminar programme - as well as continuing to record the EC minutes! This led in due course (1984) to the re-naming of this officer as the Meetings Secretary. Other offices created due to the expanding administrative business of the Association

were those of Membership Secretary (1980), and Publications Secretary (1989). The Newsletter Editor was also made an elected Officer of the Association in 1992.

The idea of a “mass mailing” to the membership (then 198 people) is first mentioned in the EC minutes in 1972. With the growth in membership, the administration of mailings and subscriptions became an increasingly substantial task. By 1977, it was agreed that the Secretary needed regular administrative support in running mailings, initially through payment to a university department. In 1985, the maintenance and administration of both mailings and subscriptions was contracted out to CILT, and since 1988 this work has been undertaken on the Association’s behalf by Multilingual Matters. (Since the mid 1990s, the distribution of mailings to members has received financial sponsorship from Oxford University Press.) In 1997, the Executive Committee is actively considering further proposals to contract out administrative aspects of running the Annual Meeting, so as to leave the conference organisers freer to concentrate on academic and policy matters.

6. Main strands in BAAL activity

6.1 Meetings and seminars

Since its foundation, BAAL has held an Annual Meeting each September (except in 1969, when this was combined with the 2nd AILA Congress at Cambridge). A list of these Meetings is given as Appendix 1. As the list shows, AMs have been located at a fairly wide group of institutions, with relatively few “repeat visits” (Edinburgh and Essex have however hosted the AM three times each, Reading, Leeds, Exeter and Swansea have done so twice.) At early meetings, there was a unified programme, with a fairly small number of papers (six were given at the 1968 AM in Edinburgh, for example). The Executive Committee took a close interest in the planning of early Annual Meetings, for which two or three themes were typically proposed. As the business of the Association grew, this work was increasingly delegated to the Assistant (then Meetings) Secretary and the Local Organisers; from the early 1980s onwards, a single theme was identified, and one or more relevant keynote speakers invited, often from overseas. By the late 1970s, it was sometimes necessary to have a branching programme to accommodate growing numbers of papers; this has become regular practice in recent years. Formal advance vetting of abstracts was instituted in the early 1980s, and is now conducted anonymously in the interests of equal opportunity. While numbers attending Annual Meetings have fluctuated, there has been a detectable rising trend, in line with rising membership; numbers exceeded 200 for the first time in 1995 (Southampton). Over many years the Association has encouraged research student attendance through a scholarship scheme, first funded in 1981 through sponsorship from the Bell Educational Trust, and later (1988) receiving support from the Centre for British Teachers.

From the beginning also, BAAL has been extremely active in promoting smaller seminars on more focussed and specialist topics. In 1983, a list of all seminars held between 1969 and 1982 was compiled by John Roberts and published in *BAAL Newsletter* 17; these totalled 30, or an average of 2.3 per annum. No comparable list has been compiled recently, but the records make it clear that this strand of BAAL activity has continued vigorously up to the present day, with

four seminars held during 1996, for example. BAAL has consistently supported the seminar programme with small financial subsidies, and in recent years this has been supplemented with sponsorship from Cambridge University Press.

6.2 BAAL and AILA

Once established, the early efforts of the British Association were substantially devoted to planning and running the 1969 AILA Congress in Cambridge, under the direction of John Trim. This was the first really large scale AILA venture, though technically the 2nd Congress (Nancy 1964 being counted the first). It attracted over 700 participants, with papers being given in 14 sections. (It also incidentally provided BAAL with a very healthy early bank balance.) The Cambridge Congress was a great stimulus to the formation of further national applied linguistics associations worldwide; as AILA outgrew its European origins, it passed from the sphere of the Council of Europe to that of UNESCO, with whom it currently holds Category B status.

Throughout its history BAAL has remained one of the largest AILA affiliates, and a number of its officers and ex-officers have held AILA responsibilities, while members have participated in a range of AILA Scientific Commissions. Joint seminars have been held with other AILA affiliates (“Formal and Informal Contexts of Language Learning”, jointly with IRAAL in Dublin, summer 1984; “Communicative Competence Revisited”, jointly with AAAL at Warwick, summer 1988); exchanges of speakers and visitors have also frequently taken place with other individual Associations. While many BAAL members have consistently supported later AILA Congresses around the world, however, only one subsequent AILA meeting has been held in the UK (a meeting of the Executive Board/ International Committee at Essex in 1977). The forthcoming EB/ IC meeting at Manchester in 1998 is a positive renewal of our face to face links.

6.3 BAAL and British educational policy

From the beginning, BAAL has taken a close interest in the development of educational policies on language within the UK educational system. There were early and continuing links with bodies promoting innovation in foreign language teaching, especially CILT, whose first two directors George Perren and John Trim were closely involved in the work of the Association. From its creation in 1972, BAAL has been represented on the National Council for Modern Languages, and it had early links with the Committee on Research and Development in Modern Languages, the Joint Council of Language Associations, the Modern Languages Association, and the Audio-Visual Language Association.

BAAL has also tried consistently to participate in national policy making on the teaching of English, and especially on the issue of the place of language study in the English curriculum. Thus over the years BAAL has contributed submissions to the Bullock Committee (1973), the Kingman Committee on the Teaching of English Language (1987), and consultations on various versions on the National Curriculum for English. Comments were produced on *English 5-16*, and on the Report of the Swann Committee on the Education of Ethnic Minorities (1985). The final reports produced by all these bodies have also been extensively debated at Annual Meetings and Seminars, and in the columns of the *Newsletter*. The 1988-91 BAAL Chairperson,

Michael Stubbs, was a member of the Cox Committee which produced the first NC proposals for English, in an individual capacity. Another BAAL member, Ronald Carter, was Director of the Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) Project, the national inservice teacher training project intended to improve teachers' language knowledge and language pedagogy skills (1989-92). When the materials produced by LINC were suppressed by government ministers on grounds of their overly sociolinguistic orientation, BAAL participated in the public protests (*Newsletter* 40, 42).

From very early days, BAAL was taking an interest in the developing teaching of linguistics in Colleges of Education; one of the very first BAAL seminars was on this topic (Reading 1969). In 1972, the Annual Meeting was held at the West Midlands College of Education, the only occasion to date when it has NOT been held at a university or polytechnic (apart from the very first Meeting, in a Reading hotel!).

In 1978, a further seminar was organised by John Rudd at North Worcestershire College of Higher Education (Bromsgrove) on "Linguistics and the Teaching of Language in Schools", jointly on behalf of BAAL and LAGB. As a result, a proposal emerged for a "joint BAAL/LAGB steering committee", to liaise on matters of joint concern regarding linguistics in education. Initially the committee membership comprised two representatives from each Association, plus representatives of NATE and the DES. This "language steering committee" was the forerunner of the joint Committee for Linguistics in Education (CLIE), which has continued in existence ever since, with its own programme of seminars and Working Papers, and contributions to consultations on curriculum policy. (CLIE's activities are well documented in recent issues of the *Newsletter*; in addition, the first five CLIE Working Papers were reprinted as *BAAL Newsletter* 23, and updated listings have appeared in later *Newsletters*, eg *NL* 32, 39, 43.)

Like other bodies, BAAL has been very conscious of the fragmentation of language education in the UK into a range of constituencies, and the difficulty of promoting consistent policies for language study across different curriculum subjects and levels. It therefore supported the 1970s initiative of CILT, in promoting the National Congress on Languages in Education, as an umbrella body which sought to bring the various constituencies together, and promote broader policy discussions. BAAL was represented at the NCLE Assemblies held in Durham (1978, 1980), and BAAL members participated actively in various NCLE working parties and other activities. In the 1980s however, it became clear that any centrally-directed government impetus for cross-curricular work on language was slackening (despite the development among professionals of the "language awareness" movement, and grassroots interests in language diversity, bilingualism and community language teaching). The early 1990s saw the reimposition of extremely strong subject boundaries through the mechanism of the National Curriculum, which once more carved up the language domain into its discrete elements. BAAL and CLIE, like other professional bodies, felt themselves at this point to be commentators without significant policy influence, though the growth in popularity of English Language as an A Level subject was an encouraging breakthrough by language studies into the post-16 curriculum.

6.4 BAAL and TEFL/ELT

As we have seen, one major impulse behind the formation of BAAL was

“the need of members of Departments of Applied Linguistics and colleagues in language centres to create a forum for the discussion of their common problems in professionalising language teaching (especially EFL) and agreeing its theoretical basis” (Trim 1988 p9).

Throughout its history, a substantial proportion of individual BAAL members have been EFL professionals, and papers on academic aspects of EFL/ESOL/ESL have been a regular part of Annual Meetings programmes (though e.g. Rampton detects some shift away from these interests in the last decade, towards a more sociolinguistic/ ‘ideological’ orientation: 1995, p 234). However, its role in ELT has been the provision of an academic forum, and it has intervened only rarely on policy issues in this field.

Confirmation of BAAL’s primarily academic role was seen clearly when, in the mid 1970s, a group of BAAL members called on the Association to express concern at the changing climate in ELT consultancy, including perceived commercialisation of British Council work abroad. An independent conference on professional standards in ELT consultancy held at Lancaster in February 1976 called for the establishment of a body which would defend these standards, negotiate collective conditions of service, and accredit individual professionals. Papers deriving from this conference were discussed at length by the BAAL EC, which eventually concluded that while BAAL was interested in the maintenance of academic standards in ELT, and would support the creation of a suitable body, it was not the function of BAAL itself to take on such responsibilities. (As we know, even in 1997 discussions involving BAAL among other bodies are still continuing around the possible establishment of a “British Institute for English Language Teaching”.)

In the late 1970s, however, BAAL joined in public protests at substantial cuts in British Council funding, and at increases in overseas student fees, which were seen as detrimental to the development of English language teaching and the teaching of applied linguistics.

6.5 Representing and promoting a research community

Through its early membership policy, and plans for the academic programmes of Meetings and Seminars, BAAL tried to make plain its commitment to research and theorising in a range of applied linguistic domains, and to establish effectively its credentials as a learned society. National recognition of this standing came first in 1976, through an invitation to participate alongside LAGB and the Philological Society in the newly established British National Committee on Linguistics (a project of the British Academy). This proved practically useful mainly as an intermittent source of information on research funding and activity, but was the precursor to later involvement with other national bodies with responsibilities for research, notably HEFCE and ESRC.

During the 1980s, all branches of the social sciences felt on the defensive in an increasingly right wing political climate. The Association of Learned Societies in the Social Sciences was

established in the early 1980s to promote the value of social science research in a positive way, and in 1985, BAAL became an ALSISS affiliate. The activity of ALSISS has waxed and waned subsequently; currently, however, ALSISS is considering proposals for the formation of an Academy of the Social Sciences with individual as well as institutional membership, and similar aims to those of the Royal Society and British Academy. If these proposals go ahead, it is clear that BAAL will need to remain involved.

In the later 1980s and through the 1990s, British academic life has been increasingly dominated by perceived needs to hold academics accountable for their effectiveness and productivity, in respect of research as well as teaching. Like other Associations, BAAL has been ambivalent about the value of successive Research Selectivity Exercises, organised from 1988 onwards by the Higher Education Funding Council. Applied linguistics has been strangely “invisible” during these exercises, as an enterprise conducted by interdisciplinary researchers based across a wide spectrum of academic departments; their work is therefore judged by a wide range of different assessment panels, for few of which they form a really significant group. Nonetheless, BAAL has participated like other Associations in proposing names to join various panels in the peer review process, and to this extent is an accomplice in the exercise. Pressure to demonstrate research productivity has undoubtedly led to an increase in offerings of papers to BAAL events, and to applied linguistics publications more generally. Whether this increase in research activity has led to an increase in quality is much more difficult to judge.

The management of research training and funding has also become increasingly centralised at national level in recent years, through the mechanism of Research Councils. The Councils in turn have promoted increasingly formalised consultations with relevant learned societies, in order to retain credibility among their academic constituencies. In BAAL’s case this has led in the 1990s to a variety of consultations with the Economic and Social Research Council, and involvement in its executive panels (e.g. to draft research training guidelines, to select candidates for research studentships etc).

So far, however, there has been limited positive impact on mainstream research policy as a result of these contacts, and concerted lobbying is clearly necessary to ensure that language-related research is more central to ESRC concerns (for example) in the next few years. Following discussions at the Salford Annual Meeting (1993) on raising the profile of applied linguistics research, a BAAL Seminar was convened in July 1994 at the University of Southampton to discuss “A Research Strategy for Applied Linguistics in the UK” (Brumfit 1994 comprises the resulting Report). This Seminar proposed a number of specific steps to promote research, including a full audit of current empirical applied linguistic work, the development of BAAL-sponsored summer schools to share specialist research expertise, and more concerted efforts to promote language-focussed Research Programme proposals with ESRC. It will be necessary to pursue such ideas actively in future, if BAAL is to sustain and promote research excellence among applied linguists long term. Hopefully the proposed Academy for the Social Sciences will also provide a more open and influential forum for discussion of research policy at national level, and promotion of language-related concerns.

6.6 *Politics, equality and ethics*

While BAAL has seen its prime purpose to be the promotion of academic study and research, this has never been in a vacuum, but with a concern to solve language-related problems of real life and social practice. Members have been ready to grapple with live political issues of the day, despite the usual difficulties this presents for any learned society. In the 1980s, for example, there was a long running dispute within the Association over the proper attitude towards links with South African academics and institutions; in 1982 it was agreed (in line with AILA/ UNESCO policy) that while individuals from South Africa might participate in BAAL activities, there would be no formal institutional contacts. In 1987, BAAL funds were removed from Barclays Bank, because of its then South African connections. Both these decisions were controversial however, as *Newsletter* correspondence documented.

In its own practice, BAAL has become increasingly conscious of equality issues. There has been a longstanding commitment to promoting the involvement of young scholars and research students in the Association, first evidenced in the establishment of student scholarships to support attendance at the Annual Meeting (1981). In the 1990s, there has routinely been a research student member of the Executive Committee, with increasing responsibilities for promoting liaison and dedicated activities for the research student constituency. (Currently, a research students' forum is held at Annual Meetings, and the BAALPG email list provides an active communication network.)

In the mid 1980s, once the formal controls on membership were cleared away, it was possible for issues of equal opportunity to be discussed more openly within the Association. At that point, BAAL's own official documentation and administrative procedures were revised, to eliminate gender-biased language (the "Chairman" became the "Chairperson" etc); the existence of gender and ethnic imbalances within the Association itself was publicly discussed (*Newsletter* 24). A formal Equal Opportunities statement was adopted ten years later in 1995, leading to an EC audit of its own practices as a follow-up (*Newsletter* 48, 49, 54). In the 1990s, positive efforts were also made to involve academic members of the deaf community in BAAL's activity, and through sponsorship from the Hilden Charitable Fund, British Sign Language interpreting was provided at Annual Meetings from 1994 onwards.

Meanwhile, the Association has developed and adopted a detailed set of "Recommendations on Good Practice in Applied Linguistics" (1994), which provide guidance for the membership on relations with the wider community, and the ethical conduct of their own applied linguistics research.

7. Conclusion

This short account of BAAL's development since 1967 provides evidence of continuing development, and real achievement. The Association is established on a secure footing, with a substantial (and rising) academic membership, and very active programmes of events and publications. True to its founders' intentions, BAAL continues to bring together diverse constituencies concerned with ELT, with English as a mother tongue, with foreign language teaching, and with bilingualism/ multilingualism, from within the world of education, as well as diverse groups concerned with the study of "language in use" in non-educational settings. It

provides an arena where those engaged in the theoretical and empirical study of language can interact with those whose interest is in the practical implications of such work. It provides a continuing commentary on language policy matters, and represents the interests of applied linguistics research in a range of forums.

BAAL nonetheless continues to face a range of academic, political and administrative challenges. Despite years of effort and argument, and some major reports and projects, a principled approach to language study in British schools and colleges eludes us, and applied linguists have made relatively little headway within the key domain of English as a mother tongue. Issues of standards and quality in ELT remain contentious, and unresolved, in a market-oriented climate. Major research funders remain relatively insensitive to the domain of language (literacy apart); and the conditions of work of too many academic applied linguists make continuity and coherence in the development of applied linguistics research programmes extremely difficult to achieve. Despite its active profile, perhaps BAAL is simply too small to make a significant impact alone, and needs to work even more closely with other groupings with cognate interests in the next decade, if it is to have a real impact on research policy. But whether alone or linked to other groups, there is a long agenda of unfinished business for BAAL, and a decade ahead just as full of interest as the three we are commemorating in this pamphlet.

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Appendix 1: BAAL Annual Meetings

Year	Location	No. participants	Theme
1967	University of Reading	?	*
1968	University of Edinburgh	?	*
1969	University of Cambridge	c700	(2nd AILA Congress)
1970	(?)		
1971	University of Essex	?	*
1972	West Midlands College of Education?		*
1973	University of Nottingham	79**	*
1974	University of Edinburgh	112	*
1975	University of York	84	*
1976	University of Exeter	90	*
1977	University of Essex	120	(10th Anniversary meeting)
1978	University of Wales Cardiff	79	“Bilingualism”
1979	Manchester Polytechnic	65	“Applied Linguistics vs Linguistics Applied”
1980	University of Leeds	69	“Grammar in Applied Linguistics”
1981	University of Sussex	97	“Linguistic Variation & the death of Language Teaching”
1982	University of Newcastle	93	“Learning & Teaching Languages for Communication”
1983	Leicester Polytechnic	119	“Success and Failure in Language Acquisition”
1984	University of Wales Bangor	93	“Language Description, Language Contact & Language Acquisition”
1985	University of Edinburgh	154	“Spoken Language”
1986	University of Reading	126	“Written Language”
1987	University of Nottingham	140	“Applied Linguistics in Society” (20th Anniversary Meeting)
1988	University of Exeter	150	“Words”(overlap with LAGB)
1989	University of Lancaster	139	“Language and Power”
1990	University of Wales Swansea	141	“Language and Nation”
1991	University of Durham	136	“Language and Culture”
1992	University of Essex	c160	“Evaluating Theory and Practice in Applied Linguistics”
1993	University of Salford	c120	“Language in a Changing Europe”
1994	University of Leeds	198	“Change and Language”
1995	University of Southampton	235	“Language and Education”
1996	University of Wales Swansea	130	“Evolving Models of Language”
1997	University of Birmingham	?	“Language at Work”

* Early Annual Meetings did not have any single theme

** In most cases numbers cited are taken from pre-printed lists of participants, and may be underestimates of actual attendance.

Appendix 2: BAAL Officers, 1967-97

Chair

1967-70	Stephen Pit Corder, University of Edinburgh, d. 27.1.90 (see obituaries in <i>BAAL Newsletter</i> 36, <i>Applied Linguistics</i> 11/4, and Notes in <i>BAAL Newsletter</i> 20)
1970-73	Peter Strevens, University of Essex (1922-89: see obituaries in <i>BAAL Newsletter</i> 35, <i>Applied Linguistics</i> 11/2)
1973-76	Walter Grauberg, University of Nottingham
1976-79	Alan Davies, University of Edinburgh
1979-82	Arthur (Sam) Spicer, University of Essex, d 16.3.1988 (see obituary in <i>BAAL Newsletter</i> 30)
1982-85	Christopher Brumfit, London University Institute of Education
1985-88	John Trim, CILT
1988-91	Michael Stubbs, London University Institute of Education
1991-94	Paul Meara, University of Wales Swansea
1994-97	Rosamond Mitchell, University of Southampton

Secretary

1967-71	David Wilkins, University of Reading
1971-74	William Bennett, University of Cambridge
1974-78	Mary Willes, West Midlands College of Education
1978-80	Keith Morrow, University of Reading
1980-83	John Roberts, University of Essex
1983-86	Euan Reid, London University Institute of Education
1986-89	Rosamond Mitchell, University of Southampton
1989-92	Jill Bourne, University College Swansea
1992-95	Ulrike Meinhof, University of Manchester
1995-98	Ulrike Meinhof, University of Bradford

Treasurer

1967-73	John Trim, University of Cambridge
1973-76	Veronica Du Feu, University of East Anglia
1976-78	David Bruce, University of Cambridge
1978-81	Pamela Grunwell, Leicester Polytechnic
1981-84	Pamela Grunwell, Leicester Polytechnic
1984-87	Peter Hill, London University Institute of Education
1987-90	Peter Hill, London University Institute of Education
1990-91	Pamela Grunwell, Leicester Polytechnic
1991-94	Romy Clark, University of Lancaster
1994-97	Paul Meara, University of Wales Swansea

Assistant/ Meetings Secretary

1968(?)-73	B Gomes da Costa
1973-74	Mary Willes, West Midlands College of Education
1974-76	Reinhard Hartmann, University of Exeter
1976-77	Christopher Brumfit, London University Institute of Education
1977-78	John Mountford, LSU College of Education
1978-80	John Roberts, University of Essex
1980-83	Euan Reid, London University Institute of Education
1983-86	Rosamond Mitchell, University of Stirling
1986-89	Keith Johnson, University of Reading
1989-92	Martin Bygate, University of Reading
1992-95	Martin Bygate, University of Reading
1995-97	Meriel Bloor, University of Warwick

Membership Secretary

1980-83	Janet Price, Friends Centre Brighton
1983-86	Janet Price, Friends Centre Brighton
1986-89	Jill Bourne, NFER
1989-92	Michael Byram, University of Durham
1992-95	Kay Richardson, University of Liverpool
1995-98	Kay Richardson, University of Liverpool

Publications Secretary

1989-91	Paul Meara, Birkbeck College, University of London
1991-94	David Graddol, Open University
1994-97	David Graddol, Open University

Newsletter Editor

1976-81	Christopher Brumfit, London University Institute of Education
1981-84	John Mountford, LSU College of Education
1984	Rosamond Mitchell, University of Stirling
1985-89	John Norrish, London University Institute of Education
1989-96	Ben Rampton, College of Ripon & York St John
1996-97	Celia Roberts (Thames Valley University), Theo van Leuwen (London School of Printing), Simon Pardoe (University of Lancaster)

Appendix 3: Obituary Notices

(In this appendix we reproduce obituaries for three former Chairs of BAAL, originally printed in the BAAL Newsletter. They are included in the order in which the Chairs held office, rather than in order of publication. Some minor errors of fact have been corrected.)

OBITUARY 1: Stephen Pit Corder (BAAL Chairman 1967-70; d. 27 January 1990)

Stephen Pit Corder (known as Pit), Emeritus Professor of Applied Linguistics in the University of Edinburgh, died suddenly on 27 January 1990. His death comes very soon after that of his close colleague of many years, Peter Strevens. Together they pioneered the development of academic Applied Linguistics in Britain. Corder's special contributions were, first, that between 1965 and 1975, he established with his Edinburgh team a coherent discipline which was neither Applied Linguistics for language teachers nor English language teaching. The view he always presented of Applied Linguistics was eclectic; the encouragement to his colleagues was generous; the inspiration he provided was that of insatiable curiosity. Pit Corder's direction made Edinburgh the leading department of Applied Linguistics, certainly in Britain and probably internationally, during that ten year period.

His second achievement was that in his later work on the language of the second or foreign language learner (*Interlanguage*), he was largely responsible for the creation of a model of second language acquisition. This model, based on speculation, has a stronger claim than most to be called a theory and if there now does exist a theory of *Interlanguage* and of Second Language Acquisition then it is because of Corder's thinking and writing about the issues.

Pit Corder, born in 1918 in a York Quaker family, had his Oxford modern language studies interrupted during the Second World War by service in Europe and North Africa with the Friends Ambulance Unit. After a brief period in school teaching he joined the British Council and spent the next 15 years in the Council's service overseas. He found the academic side of the work of most interest and left the Council in 1961 for university teaching, first in Leeds University and then, for the last 20 years of his career, in Edinburgh. In 1983 he retired and took up permanent residence in the family house in the Lake District which, during all their foreign postings and continuing through (some would say including) Leeds and Edinburgh, the Corders had always considered home.

Corder's Chair in Edinburgh, his prominence in professional associations of Applied Linguistics including two terms as President of the International Association, and his publications gave him international leadership in the field. His publications reflect the range of his interests and their development over time, from early interests in pedagogy (*An Intermediate English Practice Book* 1960, *English Language Teaching and Television* 1961, and *The Visual Element in Language teaching* 1966), to the more theoretical, *Introducing Applied Linguistics* (1973), and the *Edinburgh Course in Applied Linguistics* (1973-75). His book *Error Analysis and Interlanguage* (1981) made the direct link between pedagogy and theory.

Corder's career started as was normal in the British tradition of *Applied-Linguistics* with the hands-on practical work of the British Council's English teaching operations in non-English speaking countries where he worked for a number of years on the practicalities of classroom teaching, materials preparation and syllabus design. Out of that period came his early publications on language teaching. That first part of his career was similar to many of the better known British applied linguists who worked for years in the field and, in some cases, wrote up their detailed experiences in textbooks and practical books for teachers. It is a tradition that continues very strongly today. In the second phase of his career Corder worked in the Universities of Leeds and Edinburgh editing and writing the *Edinburgh Course in Applied Linguistics* (1973-77) and his own *Introducing Applied Linguistics* (1973), both representing at the time the acme of this British *Applied-Linguistics* tradition, practice distilled and systematised and, when possible, informed by theoretical insights from the language sciences.

Corder's uniqueness is that in the last ten years or so of his career he proceeded to a third stage in which he developed his ideas of the systematicity of learner's errors, the notion of the built-in syllabus and of the surrender value of part learning, into the theoretical model of *interlanguage* which has been so influential. In doing so he

broke away from the British *Applied-Linguistics* tradition, recognising the need it had for a sounder theoretical base. He thereby brought together in his own work the British *Applied-Linguistics* and the American *Linguistics-Applied* traditions. In a larger sense this move away from the British tradition showed that a tradition built only on practical language teaching was inadequate to develop new insights into a new paradigm.

Corder found himself isolated in the UK in his interlanguage work, gaining the support and understanding for what he was trying to do in the North American tradition of *Linguistics-Applied*. Unlike his American colleagues, however, Corder never engaged in empirical research. For him the direct link between practice and theory was always adequate and did not need the support of empirical findings. I have argued that Corder belonged for most of his career very much to the British tradition of *Applied-Linguistics*. This approach may be contrasted with the North American tradition of *Linguistics-Applied* in the following ways. The North American tradition grew out of the search by linguists (for example Bloomfield, Fries) for applications for their theoretical and descriptive interests. These applications they found in language teaching, especially during the Second World War.

This American *Linguistics-Applied* tradition also holds in Britain in the work, for example, of JR Firth (also very much involved during the Second World War in intensive language teaching courses) and of Michael Halliday. But it is not the mainstream British and Commonwealth tradition which comes, I have suggested, from quite a different source, that of teaching English as a Foreign (often Second) Language in the former colonies, in Latin America, Japan, and in Europe. This tradition was associated with the work of Henry Sweet, Michael West and Harold Palmer among others. The work that the British Council took on in the 1950s and 1960s under Arthur King and developed widely around the world, was in this tradition, professionalising language teaching to such an extent that British 'Teaching English as a foreign Language' became one of the wonders of the language teaching world. It was very much a bottom up approach and it led of course to a search for input of a theoretical kind. The School of Applied Linguistics at Edinburgh university was established in 1957 precisely to provide that theoretical backing and support. Applied linguistics in Britain was therefor never just *linguistics for language teachers*. It was always a more problem oriented approach; and it was Corder above all who gave it order and authenticity. It was also Corder, I have argued, who found it finally wanting in that the attempt to marry bits of theory to practical issues was ultimately incoherent. Corder's recognition of the need for a true marriage between practice and theory does not yet appear to have made any important headway in British applied linguistics.

As with all such dichotomies, of course, what is needed for progress and development is a combination of both approaches. Problems need theory for their understanding and their resolution; theory becomes arid without reality to relate to. Renewal of our connection with the data is as important as an understanding of what counts as data. It is to be hoped that Applied Linguistics will, as we move into the 21st century, make use more and more of both traditions together in harmony.

What Corder's own case indicates is that a reliance on one or other of the two traditions (*Applied-Linguistics* and *Linguistics-Applied*) is ultimately inadequate: in his case a career which was so much in the mainstream of British applied linguistics, and so successful in directing it, needed to break with that tradition in order to make its major contribution in the concept of *Interlanguage*. Corder's career thus makes clear the need that theory and practice have for one another. Applied linguistics must necessarily look both ways. His career also shows by its absence the need for an empirical component in applied linguistics.

Corder's contribution can therefore be used as an icon of the development of British applied linguistics, of its strengths and of its weaknesses. Its main weakness, his neglect of empirical research, is now shown to be less important when set against its major strength, his insistence on the need for theory to explain the practical (and of course the empirical). That insistence has still not made itself adequately felt or understood in British applied linguistics.

Corder belonged to a very British tradition of speculative curiosity. His hobbies showed that just as much as his intellectual interests. His craftsmanship, his music, his home-making and family were as important to him as his career. He was a man of conviction with a clearness as to his place in the world. That is why he could move from one phase of his career to another with finality. In later years ill health and perhaps a sense of intellectual isolation made applied linguistics less exciting. He moved on once again, this time to retirement in the Lake district,

characteristically leaving all his academic books to his department in Edinburgh. To Britain he left as his legacy the firmly established and now confident discipline of applied linguistics.

Alan Davies

(Reproduced from *BAAL Newsletter* 36, Summer 1990)

OBITUARY 2 : Peter Strevens (BAAL Chairman 1970-73; d. November 1989)

Friends of Peter Strevens will have affectionately felt that there was something appropriate, whilst greatly distressing, in his sudden death in November attending a conference in Tokyo on the teaching of Japanese as a second language. He was at an age where most of his contemporaries might have settled back into a comfortable retirement. He, typically, was still on the go. Peter was indeed an indefatigable traveller, not only because he regarded travel as one of his recreations, but also because it served the cause to which he devoted his life, the promotion of Applied Linguistics, particularly, though not exclusively, in language teaching. There was more than a grain of truth in the wry suggestion that if you wished to have a word with Peter you had only to wait a short time in the departure lounge at Heathrow.

Peter was in at the very beginning of Applied Linguistics in Britain: Edinburgh 1957. In a sense he became involved by accident of place and time. After teaching phonetics in the then University College of the Gold Coast, he had been appointed Lecturer in the Phonetics Department in Edinburgh and was seconded by David Abercrombie to do the phonetics teaching in the newly established School of Applied Linguistics. This proved to be a congenial task. His natural internationalism deriving from his Quaker pacifist background and wartime service with the Friends Ambulance Unit led him to become readily involved with EFL as he met it amongst his students in the School, who were all mature teachers of English from every part of the world. This was a concern which inspired and guided his activities for the rest of his life.

Whilst the School of Applied Linguistics had been established to provide advanced training for *experienced* teachers, Peter realised that the demand for qualified ELT teachers was going to develop rapidly and that there existed at that time no provision for *initial* training in TEFL and nothing that could be called a professional career structure in that field. It was this concern that led to the development of the PGCE Diploma courses in TEFL in the School of English in Leeds, where Peter became Professor of Contemporary English in 1961. It was always one of his principal objectives to see a recognised career for ELT teachers established.

The founding of the University of Essex in 1964 under a Vice Chancellor from the Modern Languages field in this country, Albert Sloman, coupled with a failure of the powers in Leeds to give Peter the opportunity to develop his work in the way he had been led to believe was possible, resulted in his appointment to the Chair in Essex bearing for the first time anywhere the title of 'Applied Linguistics'. Peter's concern that English teachers should have the opportunity to learn something of the relevance of linguistic studies to their professional work was now extended to teachers of Modern Languages whose academic preparation was then wholly, as I fear, still is largely, literature oriented. Circumstances however defeated him here, and Essex became very soon another 'centre of excellence' in Applied Linguistics for English teachers.

Peter's move, after ten years in Essex, to the 'independent' sector as Director General of the Bell Educational Trust may have surprised many, but was a logical step. By 1974 the academic world had more or less come to terms with the phenomenon of Applied Linguistics, including the name. Peter's election to a Fellowship in Wolfson College in 1976 is evidence for that. The demand for postgraduate training for EFL teachers had by now increased enormously and provision to meet this demand had become widespread. The private language schools on the other hand had been something of a jungle, though attempts were being made by government to regulate them and by ARELS to establish standards and a career structure for teachers within the system. It was all part of Peter's concern to participate in this process. This new position gave him the freedom to pursue this concern on a worldwide scale, an opportunity which he exploited to the full.

What may not be so well known was his early involvement with international movements in Applied Linguistics. A project to establish an international association was initiated by the French in the mid-sixties. Peter was one of the few British participants in the first meeting of the Association in Besançon in 1966. He found himself Secretary of the newly-founded Association with an undertaking from the British side to be responsible for the organisation of the next congress. It was realised that, if matters were to go forward, a national association would have to be formed to take over the organisation. Peter found himself thus the moving figure in calling the founding meeting of BAAL in Reading in 1967. BAAL did organise and play host to the second AILA congress in Cambridge in 1969. It was typical of Peter that he did not put himself forward to be first Chairman, though he would have been the most obvious choice, but only allowed himself to be elected in later years. It is certainly no exaggeration to say that, had it not been for Peter's initiative, neither BAAL nor AILA would have come into existence at the time and in the form they did.

Peter Strevens was an impresario rather than a scholar. Though he always made it his business to be well informed about theoretical developments and who was doing what and where, he was not particularly interested in theoretical matters or in conducting research himself. He was essentially a facilitator and for this he had great administrative and negotiating talents. He was eclectic in his models and, lacking classroom experience of language teaching, had not himself become committed to any particular method or philosophy. One had the feeling that he was more concerned with the teacher than the subject. He enjoyed arranging things, putting people in touch with each other, proposing suitable people for jobs and helping forward students and colleagues alike in their careers. The present writer was a beneficiary in several ways of this benign activity.

A new discipline needs a champion, a promoter, a salesman, in short an impresario. If we can now feel secure in the final and full acceptance of Applied Linguistics there is no one who has a better claim to be responsible than Peter Strevens.

Pit Corder

(Reproduced from *BAAL Newsletter* 35, Spring 1990)

OBITUARY 3: Sam Spicer (BAAL Chairman 1979-82; d. 16 March 1988)

Arthur Spicer was not a personage with whom most BAAL members would have been familiar; but Sam Spicer, as Arthur Spicer was rechristened by his school mates at an early age, and who died on 16 March 1988 in his sixty-ninth year, will certainly be remembered with affection by his colleagues in BAAL and his friends in applied linguistics circles more generally.

Sam Spicer enjoyed a university career spanning nearly 40 years. As an academic he was the first to admit that he was not really a “publishing man”, though his organisational skills and investigative abilities had considerable influence in the field of language teaching. He was the driving force behind the Nuffield Modern Languages Project which produced *En Avant* and *Vorwärts*, and these, as their names imply, represented in their time notable advances in school language teaching materials. He also co-authored, with Professor Donald Riddy, a major report on the training of language teachers in colleges of education and on applied linguistics and language teaching methodology.

However, it was more as a teacher and as a forceful conference speaker that Sam Spicer shone, and in these roles he steadily promoted the principles in which he believed. He bemoaned what he saw as the meagre and often dilettante standards of foreign language teaching and learning in this country, and at each stage of his career he insisted that these activities be pursued to the highest standards of professionalism. As Chairman of BAAL from 1979 to 1982, Sam used his position to disseminate the same message to a wider audience within Britain, but during the same period he also represented the British view of applied linguistics at the AILA Executive Committee.

Undoubtedly, Sam’s most significant contribution to teaching was made in his capacity as Professor in the Department of language and Linguistics at Essex, where for several years he directed the MA course in Applied Linguistics. Many alumni of his, and no small number who will be reading this notice, went on to occupy leading positions in the language teaching and applied linguistics world and indeed became known, not least at the instigation of Sam’s old friend Peter Strevens, as the “Essex mafia”.

Sam Spicer’s students quickly became aware of the topics about which he felt most passionately: teacher training, foreign languages in the primary school, syllabus design, and “reasoned eclecticism” in language teaching methods. The last was perhaps closest to his heart. Given the state of flux in linguistics and psychology, and the complexity of the human mind, he simply did not accept that “one best language teaching method” could emerge in our day, but that nevertheless, through examination of the theoretical and practical issues, it was possible to arrive at a set of language teaching techniques, drawn from sundry quarters, which seemed most plausible in the circumstances. This pragmatic but perhaps unexciting position once led him to be accused, at a Georgetown Round Table, of “mental obscenity”. The jibe cut him to the quick; but most British applied linguists how have monitored flashier developments elsewhere would no doubt continue to agree with him today, and likewise deplore the “mental obscenity” of polemicising inconclusive research results in order to hype and sell the cellophane-wrapped package.

Sam Spicer believed in reason and justice. He was never unwilling to listen to counterarguments, and as a teacher did not expect his students simply to agree with him; but he quickly took exception to speciousness and any departure from good faith. His conviction and resolve, once his mind was made up, earned him some enemies. Among these was a would-be student to whom he refused a place on his jealously-guarded MA course. A year or so after this student’s return to his homeland, Sam received a copy of a grammar of English, published in that country, in which virtually every example included reference to a Professor Spicer: “Some people say ‘Between you and I’, but Professor Spicer says, correctly, ‘Between you and me’”. Sam may have laughed on this occasion, but as a general rule anyone who did not play the game with him and who did not realise that the only successful approach to him was through reasoned argument, had little idea of the wrath that could explode forth.

Sam’s students and colleagues will remember him as fair, and above all, kind. He was not usually a demonstrative man, but in his daily life he cared deeply for others, and one of the emotional wounds he bore came from loss of contact with the “son” he had adopted during his days in Ghana. An honest judgement of him would be that he was an autocrat, but a benign one, who was always ready to use his considerable authority to assist others, and not least

to help students and younger colleagues to climb on to the first rung of the career ladder. But he never once sacrificed his integrity in any of the high offices he held and always pursued the ideas in which he believed with the tenacity of a bull terrier. To this extent, he typified all that the English like to believe is best about themselves.

It was at a time when applied linguistics was only just beginning to establish itself as a serious discipline in Britain that Sam acceded to one of the very few chairs in the subject here. Publishing man or not, his tireless work, much of it behind the scenes, made a valuable and lasting contribution to the development of the field, and he must be counted among the pioneers on these shores.

John Roberts

(Reproduced from *BAAL Newsletter* 30, Summer 1988)