

Teaching in Linguistics
Monday the 7th of September

Postgraduate session organised by the LAGB Student Committee and funded by the
LLAS Subject Centre

9-9.20

Patrick Honeybone (University of Edinburgh)

Putting the fun into phonology? Practical and resource-based phonetics and phonology in intro-level courses

When they are first introduced to them, students often find it difficult to get to grips with fundamental phonetic and phonological concepts such as place of articulation, airstream mechanisms, contrast, distribution and underlying-to-surface derivation. Based on my experience of teaching at the University of Edinburgh and elsewhere, I present a number of ways in which these things can be introduced to students which try both to make the notions concrete and to avoid being boring. The aim is either to get students to demonstrate a concept to themselves (the practical part), or to observe a phonological or phonetic phenomenon in video or audio clips which can then be used as the basis for discussion (the resource-based part).

patrick.honeybone@ed.ac.uk

9.20-9.45

Kersti Börjars (University of Manchester)

The importance of questions in linguistics teaching

In this brief presentation, I want to highlight the use of questions — as opposed to answers — as a tool for teaching and maybe even assessing linguistics. I give some examples of how questions can be used at different levels. I argue that questions can be judged for quality and that it is important to train students to distinguish between good and bad questions.

kersti.borjars@man.ac.uk

9.45-10.05

Klaus Abels (University College London)

How to use e-learning to focus teaching

There are a number of separate goals that an introductory course in syntax needs to address. In no particular order of importance students need (i) to be introduced to the big background issues and debates, (ii) to acquire a mode of thinking about syntactic puzzles and ways to approach them, (iii) to learn about generalizations that have

driven the field and the theories that these generalizations have given rise to, and (iv) to become literate in formalism and jargon. In my opinion, the least interesting aspect to teach is (iv). But it has to be taught and it has to be taught in such a way that students do not walk away with the misguided idea that knowledge of terminology and of bits of theory constitutes knowledge of syntax. E-learning environments provide an opportunity for removing literacy in jargon and formalism out of the classroom and out of the spotlight. This frees up time in the classroom for the more interesting and more creative aspects mentioned in (i)-(iii).

k.abels@ucl.ac.uk

10.05-10.35

Willem Hollmann (Lancaster University)

Making abstract grammar real

Grammar is very much part of the core of Linguistics as well as English Language degrees, see e.g. the (2007) QAA subject benchmarks. However, grammar teaching has had a checkered past in the British educational system, including at university level. It continues to suffer from a serious 'image problem', with both students and lecturers often finding it relatively difficult to engage with what they tend to see as an 'abstract' topic.

After a brief sketch of the history of grammar teaching and some thoughts on the question as to how this may help explain the image problem, this talk will move on to ways in which grammar teaching can be made less abstract, more real. Based on my personal experience at Lancaster University, I will focus on three main aspects of grammar teaching: choice of data, selection of theory, and modes of assessment. I will illustrate my suggestions with examples from actual lectures and seminars, and will support my points with evidence from student evaluations and exam results.

w.hollmann@lancaster.ac.uk

10.35-11.00

Question and answer session with contributors.