



# Swansea University Prifysgol Abertawe

## PhD Applied Linguistics (Lexical Studies) Summer 2020 Newsletter

Coronavirus: What you need to do

Stay at home      Stay apart      Wash your hands

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Dear students, friends and colleagues,

Welcome to the Summer newsletter for the Applied Linguistics (Lexical Studies) group. We hope that you are all still well.

We recognise what a challenging time this is for so many friends and colleagues. Members of our research network, no matter where in the world they are located, report the same pressures of remote teaching and scenario planning that we are encountering here in Swansea. On a more positive note, students on our distance learning programme suddenly find themselves on equal footing with campus-based research students – the supervision experience differs very little at the moment, whether the student is sitting in downtown Fukuoka or in Brynmill, Swansea.

You'll remember that Swansea hosted the Language Testing Forum (the annual conference of UKALTA – UK Association for Language Testing and Assessment) in November. The LTF website now includes presentation slides, posters and pictures from that 2019 conference; you can catch up on them [here](#). If you would like to stay in touch with UKALTA activities via their mailing list, you might consider joining the Association (membership is free).

This newsletter includes congratulations, publication news, conference and seminar updates, calls for contributions, web-sites and study skills pointers, and a text that one of our PhD graduates wrote about life after her PhD. We hope you enjoy it. Please continue to send *Cornelia* your contributions and ideas for submissions to future newsletters.

Best wishes, and take care,

*Tess and Cornelia*

## News from the Network

Big congratulations to Stephen Cutler, who last week successfully defended his PhD thesis at Cardiff University. Stephen's examiners were Florence Myles (University of Essex) and Katy Jones (Cardiff University). His supervisor was Alison Wray, and the title of his thesis is "Developing formulaicity: memorisation and production of formulaic expressions in L2 speakers of English". Well done and well deserved, Dr Cutler!

Congratulations to Kimi Klassen on the publication of her replication study of Erten and Razi (2009) in the field of reading comprehension. You can find it [here](#) as a free pre-print.

We were delighted to see that Lucy Davies' paper *What are English for Academic Purposes raters looking for in a written task?* has been published in *Cambridge Assessment Research Notes*. Lucy works in the English Language Training Service here at Swansea, and won the Best Poster prize at the 2019 Language Testing Forum.

Tess Fitzpatrick and Peter Thwaites are pleased to announce the publication, in *Language Teaching*, of their State of the Art paper on [Word Association Research and the L2 Lexicon](#). At 37 pages, and covering around 180 pieces of published work, this was quite an undertaking. In putting it together we uncovered some wonderful new, and old, research papers that we had not known about before, and we found new frameworks and perspectives to help our own understanding of this research area. We hope the paper will be a useful reference for colleagues interested, as we are, in the tricky, compelling, frustrating and fascinating field of word association.

Thanks to Stuart McLean for letting us know about a newly published paper which reviews the accuracy and fitness-for-purpose of vocabulary tests: Stoeckel, T., McLean, S., & Nation, P. (2020) Limitations of size and levels tests of written receptive vocabulary knowledge. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 1-23.

## Publication opportunities

Our colleague Chris Shei has edited or co-edited a series of Routledge Handbooks in recent years, including

- [The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Translation \(2018\)](#) (with Zhao-ming Gao)
- [The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Discourse Analysis \(2019\)](#)
- [The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Language Teaching \(2020\)](#) (with Monica E McLellan Zikpi and Der-Lin Chao)
- [The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Studies \(forthcoming 2021\)](#)

On behalf of the editorial team, he is looking for contributors to his next handbook **The Routledge Handbook of Asian Linguistics** designed to be released in summer 2022. The handbook will consist of 40-50 chapters covering a wide range of Asian languages and topics such as historical, theoretical, discursal, psychological and applied linguistics. Each chapter is approximately 8000 words in length and the deadline for submitting first draft is 1 June, 2021. He invites researchers in aspects of Asian linguistics to submit chapter proposals. A typical chapter would be a general introduction to the phonology, morphology, syntax or discursal, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, or applied linguistic aspect(s) of an Asian language (this will cover both historical and state-of-the-art research with in-depth explanation of theory and illustrative examples), an optional touch upon research methodologies plus a case study investigating a specific issue of the linguistic aspect(s) in question, or a

comparison with those of other Asian languages. If you or any of your contacts would like to know more about this, please contact Chris at [c-c.shei@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:c-c.shei@swansea.ac.uk).

Continuing this Asian theme, there is also a call for papers on the effect of the pandemic: The *Asian EFL Journal* has a special edition planned for September 2021 on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on EFL learning/teaching and is guest edited by Dr. Xiuping Li and Dr. Nonie Chiang. All abstract submissions and inquiries to <https://www.asian-efl-journal.com/special-issue-call-for-papers/>.

Don't forget the Language Teaching Christopher Brumfit essay prize. The competition is open to current PhD students, and early career researchers within 5 years of their PhD award. The prize includes £500 for book purchase, the opportunity to be published in LT, and a year's membership of the Language Teaching Editorial Board. The task is "Write an essay which addresses critically an aspect or aspects of applied linguistics or second language acquisition which you are interested in." Please consider entering the competition, and do spread the word to eligible students/colleagues. More information [here](#).

## Quotes of the month

We liked this quote from the British Medical Journal, in a short article written by a consultant in geriatrics and acute general medicine:

"Language frames the way we see and treat people. Getting the language wrong can cause hurt and resentment. So, why not make the effort to get it right?"

David Oliver (2020) Caring about language doesn't mean we can't care *BMJ* 2020;370:m2524

And this, from the OED blog page on *Corpus analysis of the language of Covid-19*, reflects what readers of this newsletter know well:

"The changing contexts in which a word is used can give insight into shifting perceptions and concerns."

The page includes some graphs on the rise of the use of *corona* and *Covid*. And you can see that the compound *banana bread* now boasts its own entry in the OED.

## Dates for your diary and conference updates

- You may already be aware of the Abralín ao Vivo extended online lecture and discussion event. Abralín, the Brazilian Linguistics Association, in collaboration with ten other national linguistics associations, is offering free access to a daily schedule of lectures and panel series – see the full programme [here](#). Tess is looking forward to give a talk on words as part of the series on Tuesday 28 July at 12:00 UK time - - all welcome!
- EuroCALL 2020, planned for 19-22 August at the University of Copenhagen, has now been changed to an online version consisting of workshops and symposia only on 20-21 August. Cornelia will be chairing one of these workshops, i.e. one aimed at helping young researchers get published. You can attend the virtual gathering for the reduced membership fee of €65 this year.
- Language Testing Forum 2020 will be an online event on Friday 27th November. This will mark the start of a year of 40th anniversary celebrations, culminating with LTF 2021 in Lancaster. The UKALTA executive committee are currently collecting ideas and thoughts from UKALTA members as to the exact shape of this event.
- BAAL and EUOSLA have both postponed their annual conference by a year.

## Person profile: Yixin Wang-Taylor

Yixin Wang-Taylor graduated from the Applied Linguistics (Lexical Studies) PhD programme at Swansea in 2017. Her supervisors were Jim Milton, Michael Daller and Cornelia Tschichold, and the examiners at her viva were Guoxing Yu and Maria Fernandez Parra. Yixin contributed very valuably to the academic community in applied linguistics at Swansea – and indeed to the vocabulary community more widely. She was a founding member of the BAAL Vocabulary SIG committee, taking on the role of Secretary on the committee between 2014 and 2018. She was a key member of the team who hosted the inaugural BAAL Vocab SIG meeting, in Swansea in 2015. We asked Yixin to update us on what she has been doing since her PhD award.



My students and I in China

After finishing my PhD in 2017 at Swansea University, I moved to Tokyo with my husband, a change of location after seven years in Swansea, contributing to a change of perspective on research in Applied Linguistics.

I remember how excited I was when I started working as an English instructor at Tamagawa University in Tokyo. Finally, I felt I could contribute to broader society, rather than merely to academia. I felt content after helping English learners to solve their problems with English and receiving positive feedback. I felt that my previous research was very academic and not as valuable to society as, for example, science and technology.

However, while teaching, I came to realise that my research was highly applicable and of great benefit to my students. The theories and research findings I read about before kept backing up my suggestions given to students; the questions coming up from the classrooms motivated me to read more research papers; and more importantly, the interaction with students helped me to come up with many research ideas that I wanted to put into action. It was the moment I knew that the subject, Applied Linguistics, I chose at the beginning had always been the subject I liked to do, and it probably would be for the rest of my life. So, when I was offered an assistant professorship by Nankai University in China, I took it and moved back to China. Now I have worked here for 2 years.

My research interest is on vocabulary-related second language acquisition and language testing. The most recent publications are with Professor Jim Milton *'Predicting international students' academic success with vocabulary and intercultural communicative competence'* (2019) and with Associate Professor Michael Daller and Senior Lecturer Amanda Müller *'The C-test as predictor of the academic success of international students'* (2020). Currently I'm working on a paper investigating the contribution of academic vocabulary to students' academic success in the Chinese context.

The past few years of teaching in an Asian context helped me to have a better understanding of language learners' difficulties with studying English in their mother tongue country. By learning words from Chinese or Japanese translations, learners lack an English understanding of the words. The majority treat English words as 'objects' but not something carrying feelings as words in their mother tongue would. As a result, they may know many 'names' of these words, but they have limited knowledge in knowing how to arrange them. This issue becomes prominent for words that are not in

the first 2000 frequency list. I therefore started my current project investigating the importance of words beyond the first 2000 frequent words, including academic vocabulary, for students' academic success.

During the recent lockdown period, I had this opportunity to develop an online vocabulary learning channel (YouTube: [Beyond the Dictionary](#); Bilibili app for mainland China: Yi辞Xin说). In this channel, a 3-dimensional method (dictionary meaning, the meaning in the context and an example with audio-visual support) is introduced to encourage learners to learn words from their English definition and to learn how they are used in authentic English contexts. The channel is available and free for all English learners, language practitioners and researchers who are interested in vocabulary learning, teaching and research.

Thus far is my updates and the change of my view of research in Applied Linguistics since graduating from Swansea University. I hope to meet you at my channel in the near future.

## Study tips and resources

If you are struggling with your writing, have a look at this [phrasebank](#) (with thanks to Vivienne Rogers and Tesni Galvin).

Thanks to Andrew Wimhurst for recommending the free online Excel course *Introduction to data analysis using Excel*.

## Task for this month

OASIS summaries have been circulated for peer review. Please comment on each other's drafts, then look again at your own and revise if you think you can improve your summary further, then send your final version to Cornelia at [c.tschichold@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:c.tschichold@swansea.ac.uk) by 31 July 2020 if possible.

## This month's webpages

How about something a bit more light-hearted on Corona and the language of emojis? [Here](#) is a piece from the Guardian. And [here](#) is the latest edition of SpecGram, with more COVID-related texts that make you smile.

Try this new [text visualizer](#) (beta) from the OED. It packs information on frequency, first attested use, and language origin into a colour-coded bubble chart.

And for a view on vocabulary and Coronavirus, see [this piece](#) in *The Conversation*.