Scaffolding Academic Reading in Higher Education: Communicating Expectations and Modelling Engagement

Rachel Burke, University of Newcastle, Australia

In recent decades, efforts to increase higher education participation for students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds have resulted in greater linguistic and sociocultural diversification of Australian universities. While the success of targeted scholarship, admission, and bridging programs for facilitating more equitable entry to higher education is well documented, widening participation initiatives must also involve the provision of focused language and literacies support as students move beyond university entry to participate in ‘mainstream’ higher education. A growing body of research indicates that, once completing bridging courses or enabling pathways into university, many students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds struggle with the tacit assumptions and hidden cultural values associated with academic literacy practices. Reading is identified as a particularly challenging aspect of engagement for students unfamiliar with the expectations and assumptions surrounding literate practices in the academy. This presentation reports on research undertaken at a large, regional university in Australia, characterised by higher than average numbers of learners from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. Taking an academic literacies approach, the study focused on academics’ perceptions of specialist language and discursive practices in their discipline, their opinions regarding the linguistic needs and strengths of learners, and their expectations regarding students’ academic reading practices. This presentation will discuss the practical strategies and approaches employed by discipline specialists when seeking to scaffold academic reading and critical engagement with text within content-area teaching. The discussion will also provide the opportunity to consider larger questions of institutional responsibility and the role of academics in the linguistically diversified university.

Development in children’s written grammar from Key Stages one to four

Philip Durrant, University of Exeter, UK

This presentation will discuss a corpus linguistic study of linguistic development in children's written language through the course of their compulsory education. Our team has collected a corpus of approximately 3,000 educationally-authentic texts from approximately 1,000 children in schools across England from key stages one to four, with the aim of understanding what distinguishes texts written at different ages and in different genres in terms of their use of syntax, vocabulary and phraseology.

The presentation will introduce the corpus and describe methods and key findings related to syntax. This analysis is based on a hand-annotated subset of 240 texts from the corpus and addresses three main questions:

1) How does the frequency of use and internal complexity of structures involved in subordination and noun phrase expansion develop across the course of children’s schooling?
2) How does such development interact with the genres in which children are writing?

3) What do these quantitative patterns of language use tell us about changes in the range of meanings which children create in their writing as they progress through school?

**Developing Disciplinary Reading Literacies in Secondary Education**

_Yvonne Hallesson, Uppsala University, Sweden_

_Pia Visén, Stockholm University, Sweden_

Literacy is a crucial aspect of disciplinary and vocational competence (Karlsson 2012; Janks 2010). However, literacy emerges in specific contexts for specific, context-dependent requirements (Barton et al. 2000). As school progresses texts become more specialized and require students’ developing new reading literacies (Schleppegrell 2004). This becomes especially apparent in upper secondary school where students enrol in programmes preparing for work or further education in specialized disciplines. Therefore subject-specific reading literacy is required for students to actively take part in the knowledge practices of the different subjects (Shanahan & Shanahan 2012).

This presentation deals with how disciplinary reading literacy develops in vocational programmes in upper secondary school in Sweden. The material is taken from two larger studies investigating disciplinary literacies in nine programmes in six schools. In the presentation two examples are analysed. The analyses show how students grapple with content and specialized vocabulary in subject-specific texts. Theoretical perspectives and analytical tools are retrieved from New Literacy Studies (Barton 2000), Systemic-functional Linguistics (Halliday 2014), as well as Reception Theory (Langer 2011). Focusing on how students move between everyday and specialized language, we aim to show how content and specialized vocabulary are explored and used in subject-specific ways, and how students thereby develop disciplinary reading literacy.

**References:**


What is the quality of evidence for reading intervention studies? A systematic review of small-group reading support programmes

Wai Tung Leung, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
Suzy J, Styles, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Systematic and explicit phonics instruction is essential in effective reading instruction. However, there has been ongoing disparity between published research findings and current classroom practices. We wanted to know how much evidence supporting phonics is available to educators planning term-length school-based reading interventions for struggling early readers. To find out, we conducted a systematic review of the quality and availability of evidence for phonics versus non-phonics interventions. We pre-registered a PRISMA pathway prior to systematic review of peer reviewed journal articles (2008-2017) reporting group-based interventions for 5 – 9 year old children with reading difficulties, in English-speaking populations (mono- and bilingual). Interventions were classified as including, or not including phonics. Quality indicators adapted from Bishop (2013) were used to evaluate studies. Five essential quality indicators tell us whether a study’s design can yield meaningful results: participant selection criteria; sample size (power); clarity of intervention description; and control group. If a paper passed these 5 essential quality indicators, 13 additional indicators evaluated different aspects of the study, including randomization, blinding, data collection, analysis, and open science practices. We screened 1417 articles. 32 articles met the criteria for this review, of which 27 interventions included phonics. However, only 14 studies had ‘sufficient evidence’ (all five essential indicators), of which 11 included phonics (the remainder assessed reading fluency in older children). Phonics interventions scored 4 – 9 secondary quality indicators, non-phonics interventions, 8. None of the articles, data sets or interventions were open (freely accessible). In sum, there is limited information about group interventions targeting reading difficulties from the past decade of research. While there is more evidence supporting phonics-based reading intervention than non-phonics based, the pool of available evidence is small. The lack of open access to the articles, data and intervention materials presents a substantial barrier, as educators do not have access to relevant information. In particular, pay-walled and low-quality studies make it difficult for educators to draw evidence-based conclusions from the existing literature. We reiterate recent calls for higher quality research designs in educational research, and highlight that opening up the scientific process will be critical for engaging educators with relevant evidence.

Enhancing English vocabulary in L2 learners attending English medium preschools

Kathy Sylva, University of Oxford, UK
Arjette Karemaker, University of Oxford, UK
Fiona Jelley, University of Oxford, UK
Victoria Murphy, University of Oxford, UK
Background
Many studies show that high quality early education supports developing emergent literacy skill (Sylva et al, 2014) including the early decoding skills that underpin later success in reading. There are several effective interventions that consist of direct instruction of young children (Dockrell et al, 2010; Fricke & Millard, 2016). This study reports on a different approach to enhancing early literacy skills: continuing professional development (CPD) sessions aimed at improving practice in Early Years teachers. The intervention was delivered over four 2-hour sessions over the course of 4 weeks and focused on supporting the teachers of 3 and 4 year olds (both native speakers and those learning English as an additional language) to develop knowledge and skills required in effective emergent literacy activities.

Research questions
Does CPD for preschool teachers lead to improvements in emergent literacy skills of native speaking children?
Does CPD lead to improvements in emergent literacy skills of children who speak English as an additional language?

Methods
A quasi-experimental, pre- and post-test design was adopted. Four childcare centres received the staff training (intervention group) and four centres were the comparison group receiving training at a later date. The performance of seventy-one children (n = 42 intervention group; n = 29 comparison group), aged 3-4 years (mean = 3.5 years) was measured before and after the intervention on the following tests: Naming Vocabulary (BAS; Elliot, Smith, & McCulloch, 1996), Verbal Comprehension (BAS; Elliot et al., 1996), Phonological Awareness (Bryant & Bradley, 1985), and Concepts about Print (adapted from Clay, 1989).

Results
Native speaking children in the intervention group showed significantly better performance at post-test on the Naming Vocabulary measure compared to similar children in the comparison group. There were no other differences in outcomes for NS children. The EAL children in the intervention nurseries made no more progress than their peers in the Comparison nurseries. Thus the CPD programme was effective for NS but not EAL children. Suggestions are made for ways to support vocabulary in the EAL children, including assessment of the language profiles of the EAL children, followed by 1:1 targeted teaching.

Leisure Reading (But Not Any Kind) and Reading Comprehension Support Each Other—A Longitudinal Study Across Grades 1 and 9

Minna Torppa, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

This study examines associations between leisure reading and reading skills in a data of 2,525 students followed from age 7 to 16. As a step further from traditional cross-lagged analysis, a random intercept cross-lagged panel model (RI-CLPM) was used to identify within-person associations of leisure reading (books, magazines, newspapers, and digital reading), reading fluency, and reading comprehension. The modeling strategy chosen follows from the concern that the traditional cross-lagged model does not yield interpretable estimates due to the mixing of between-person variance (stable differences between individuals across time) and within-person variance (fluctuations around the stable level at each time-point; e.g., Berry & Willoughby, 2017; Curran et al., 2014; Hamaker et al., 2015). In this study we applied RI-CLPM models based on as suggested by Hamaker et al. (2015). We make, however, an
important addition to the model by using latent factors in order to handle measurement error in line with a model recently utilized by Seppälä et al. (2015). Results showed significant between-level correlations but also many significant within-level cross-lagged associations. In Grades 1 to 3 poorer comprehension and fluency predicted less leisure reading suggesting that the direction of effects is from skills to leisure reading. However, in the later grades also the more frequent leisure reading, particularly of books, predicted better reading comprehension. Negative associations were found between digital reading and reading skills. The findings specify earlier findings of correlations between individuals by showing that reading comprehension improvement, in particular, is predicted by within-individual increases in book reading.

**Incidental word learning from print: the role of semantic diversity and contextual familiarity**

*Matthew He Mak, University of Oxford, UK*

*Yaling Hsiao, University of Oxford, UK*

*Kate Nation, University of Oxford, UK*

**Background:**
Johns, Dye, and Jones (2016) showed that novel words learnt incidentally in different-themed text passages establish stronger lexical representations than those learnt in same-themed passages, suggesting that words encountered in changing contexts are weighted more strongly in memory. Notably, the themes of the text passages in Johns et al. (2016) were quite obscure (e.g., tuberculosis, an Indian author). In the current study, we adopted a similar approach to investigate the effect of semantic diversity on incidental word learning but used passages with more familiar themes.

**Method:**
Forty-five adult participants took part in the study. They read 36 short text passages and answered some comprehension questions. Half of the passages were single-themed (low semantic diversity) while the other half were different-themed (high semantic diversity). Importantly, the themes of all passages were highly familiar to the readers (e.g., Donald Trump, Brexit). After reading the passages, the participants completed a series of surprise tests that measure the quality of the mental representations of the pseudo-words that they encountered in the passages.

**Results:**
Contrary to Johns et al., novel words learnt in same-themed passages established more accurate and word-like orthographic and semantic representations, as revealed by differences in word-superiority effect, recognition accuracy, and semantic judgement.

**Interpretations:**
Our study suggests that low semantic diversity benefits incidental word learning when the context is familiar. We propose that novel words encountered in such passages can form stronger and more reliable connections with pre-existing nodes in semantic memory, thereby securing their representations. Network analyses provided support to our interpretations.
Knowledge and processing components at lexical and sublexical levels as predictors of EFL silent reading rate – A longitudinal study

Junko Yamashita, Nagoya University, Japan

Toshihiko Shiotsu, Kurume University, Japan

Reading rate is an aspect of reading competence indispensable for achieving fluent comprehension in reading. However, it is a neglected area of study (e.g., Hiebert & Reutzel, 2010). This study contributes to our understanding of the development of L2 (second language) silent reading rate by examining its development and underlying components longitudinally from Grade 9 to 11. The participants were secondary-school students learning English as a foreign language in Japan. They participated in data collection for three consecutive years, at the end of each school year. We measured the silent reading rate and four components (vocabulary, word recognition, orthographic processing, and phonological processing) and analyzed how these components account for variance in silent reading rates through path analyses by observing both direct and indirect effects. We are planning to report on four models: the best model in each grade separately and the one that accounts for G11 reading rate by concurrent (G11) and longitudinal (G9 and 10) variables. In separate models, the patterns of contribution by phonological and orthographic processing were very common across grades; phonological processing contributed to reading rate both directly and indirectly (via word recognition), but orthographic processing made only an indirect contribution. In contrast, the effect of vocabulary was markedly different across grades. In G9, vocabulary contributed to reading rate both directly and indirectly (via word recognition); in G10, it made only a direct contribution; in G11, rather surprisingly, its hypothesized paths were all insignificant, and therefore vocabulary was dropped from the final model. In the last model where both concurrent and longitudinal variables were considered, apart from autoregressive effects (effects of the reading rate in previous years), G9 phonological processing made the largest total contribution, followed by G9 vocabulary and G9 word recognition. Variables in G10 and G11 were also significant, but the magnitude of path weights was smaller and decreased from G10 to 11. We will discuss the findings from several points of view, including the relative importance between phonological and orthographic processing, the change of the role of vocabulary, and the importance of considering longitudinal effects in explaining the reading rate.