Society of Applied Linguistics and
Discourse Studies (ALDS)

# 8ᵗʰ Annual ALDS Graduate Symposium

*Recent Research Trends in ALDS:
Discourse, Genre, and Pedagogy*

November 9, 2012

11:30 am – 1:30 pm

FASS lounge, Room 2017, Dunton Tower

# Event Schedule

*Opening Address*

**Dr. Graham Smart, SLaLS**

11:30 AM - 11:35 AM

*Keynote Address*

**Dr. Natasha Artemeva
&
Dr. Janna Fox
(SLaLS)**

11:35 AM - 12:20 PM

*Interactive Poster Session*

**Featuring ALDS Student Research**

12:20 PM – 1:30 PM

*Light refreshments will be served*

## Maggie Addison (MA)

*Discourse of depression: Discursive patterns in those at risk for suicide*

Although Discourse Studies has contributed to the understanding of the social perception and construction of depression, few researchers focus on the discursive patterns of those currently suffering depression. One exception is Jonathan Fine who identified specific patterns in multiple mental illnesses as a way of assisting clinicians in assessment and diagnosis. Identifying patterns in depression is difficult however, because of the variance across severity and symptoms. This variance can be problematic for clinicians, especially when suicidal ideation is present. Drawing from theories in Discursive Psychology, the present study compares the talk-in-interaction of depressed individuals who have previously attempted suicide to those who have not. Discourse analysis revealed two identifiable patterns 1) Differences in how these individuals refer to their depression and/or suicide, and 2) in the design of their recounts of events. Not only do the present results contribute to an understanding of discourse patterns in those with mental illness, they may also assist counselors and clinicians in detecting suicide risk.

## Norah Alkahrashi (MA)

*A genre analysis of Twitter as an academic discourse*

Microblogging as a form of communication has gained a lot of attention in research recently. A widely popular version of microblogging is Twitter, which began by one person asking another, "What are you doing?" While many posts responding to this question lead to ephemeral chats, microblogging nevertheless calls for research. Working from this assumption, this paper reports on a genre analysis of the Twitter texts produced by a group of academics, viewed as a discourse community. The data for the study comprise the Twitter homepage and the tweets of the academics. Arguing that Twitter texts constitute a genre, the findings of the study explore the communicative functions achieved through these texts.

## Anika Cloutier (4th Year Undergrad)

*Navigating genres of psychology: Undergraduate students'*
*acculturation into discipline-specific genres*

To understand the ways in which undergraduate psychology students learn to identify and write in discipline specific types of writing (i.e., genres), I explore how an instructor integrates common types of writing specific to the discipline of psychology into the course syllabus, and how students use prior knowledge to effectively write in presumably novel genres. I investigate the process of acculturation into 'writing psychology' by examining the writing of third year psychology students in a seminar course designed to introduce students to applied genres in the discipline of psychology, and by looking at peer and instructor feedback. I adopt a Rhetorical Genre Theory (Miller, 1988) perspective and draw on concepts such as antecedent genre knowledge (Artemeva & Fox, 2010; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011) and discourse communities (Swales, 1987) to interpret my findings. This research study could provide an insight into where and why students struggle or strive in discipline-specific genres and generate pedagogical awareness of the influence that instructor feedback has on student writing.

## Sara Doody (4th Year Undergrad)

*Writing as tool of enculturation within Biology*

In this project, I will examine how graduate students in Biology acquire discipline specific genre knowledge through the process of situated learning and how this process enculturates students into accepted practices and epistemologies of the field. I will present how genre theory (Miller, 1984) and situated learning (Blakeslee, 1997) provide a framework through which this process can be examined. Results of this study could support the implementation of technical writing courses for Biology students.

## Christina (Nina) Doré (MA)

*Teaching to hear with your eyes and talk with your hands*

American Sign Language (ASL) offers non-deaf (hearing) learners a unique linguistic perspective that redefines traditional approaches to language learning. ASL teachers therefore face multiple challenges: to guide students in the transition from "vocal-auditory" to "manual-visual" language (Sandler, 2006), to raise awareness of the exceptionality of signed communication, and of course promote ASL proficiency. The proposed research explores the personal practical classroom experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986) of hearing and deaf ASL teachers who have increased the hearing community's critical awareness and understanding of signed language. Questions guiding the research include: How do teachers' backgrounds influence their perspectives and beliefs about their role teaching ASL to hearing students? Are there sufficient resources and supports for ASL teachers, deaf and hearing alike? This poster presentation will focus on the beginning steps of this research, namely, an exploration of the literature surrounding ASL teaching of hearing adult learners and the methodology for undertaking the study.

## Matthew Falconer (MA)

*Tutor notes in Carleton University's Writing Tutorial Service:*
*Activity theory in a writing centre*

Little attention has been given to the types of writing that tutors in an academic writing centre use in order to fulfill the responsibilities related to their work (Clark, 1999; Walker, 1998). This study examines the use of tutor notes in Carleton University's Writing Tutorial Service (WTS) from a genre-mediated activity theory perspective (Engeström, 1987; Russell, 1997) as they relate to the roles of both tutors and the coordinator. A rhetorical genre analysis of a small corpus of seventeen tutor notes from one students file reveals the ways in which tutors and tutor notes build organizational knowledge within WTS-specific activity systems. Findings demonstrate how tutor notes contribute to (re)constructing the organizational knowledge of tutor practices in the WTS. Implications of the study extend to tutor-training in the WTS as well as, more generally, demonstrating how tutors and tutor notes (or similar genres) may contribute to the development of the organizational practices in other writing centres.

## Chloe Grace Fogarty-Bourget (MA)

*Moving out of her "bubble" and away from the periphery: A case study of workplace advancement through written genres and self-initiated development*

This case study traces a 5 year career of a department store cash lead in order to investigate how a neophyte employee moves from the periphery of a workplace community of practice into a position of value and involvement. By employing a unified theoretical framework (Artemeva, 2008) this study analyzes interview data and a timeline, collaboratively constructed by the researcher and the participant, which details the rapidly advancing career of the study participant. The results of this analysis suggest that newcomers can competently use genres of workplace writing as a vehicle for situating themselves in a valued and involved position in a workplace community of practice (Smith, 2009; Wardle, 2004; Wenger, 2005), which seems to be only possible with the use of supportive scaffolding (Paz Dennen, 2007) as a guide and personal initiative as fuel to drive the newcomers forward.

## Viviane Grandpierre (MA)

*Deceptive information: Investigating the effect of written language bias on second language learning*

Written language has served as a basis for grammatical description, resulting in the written form being perceived as the norm for correct or 'standard' language. Such perceptions have been referred to as the written language bias (Linell, 2005). Using a qualitative approach, my research will investigate current perspectives on the written language bias by interviewing graduate students who have English as a second language. Their feedback will provide insight on whether the written language bias has hindered or strengthened the acquisition of their second language.

## Janet Hempstead (PhD)

*Communities of practice*

When people meet regularly to participate in an activity, they become a "community of practice". Central to this practice is learning through the sharing of experience related to this activity. The question guiding this in-progress research asks how Applied Discourse Studies can be used as a lens to explore the dynamics of communities of practice. Étienne Wenger's (1998) book, *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity* is used as a framework for understanding the function of professional communities of practice related to academic teaching and librarianship.

## Don Myles (MA)

*A genre analysis of university admission letters:*
*An ESP-based rhetorical move analysis*

Genre analysis serves to identify and describe various genres in order to create better models for a genre-based pedagogy of professional and academic writing. This study investigates university admission letters to determine if acceptance and rejection letters represent one or two distinct genres. Using an ESP-based rhetorical move analysis, six acceptance and five rejection letters showed a difference in which moves and steps were obligatory in the two groups. Readability statistics demonstrated that the shorter rejection letters were more difficult to read. Further, an analysis of the writer's use of personal pronouns showed that rejection letters more commonly used *we*, while the acceptance letters used *I*. The findings suggest that acceptance and rejection letters represent two distinct genres, the implications of which may serve as a useful heuristic for producing these genres.

## Mimie Neacappo (MA)

*How do you orient yourself in Iiyiyiuyimuwin (Eastern James Bay Cree)?*

By exploring the three linguistic frames of reference (FoR) (*absolute*, *relative*, *intrinsic*) used in spatial description as defined by Levinson (1996), evidence shows that Iiyiyiuyimuwin encodes for all three FoR with strong preference for an "absolute" orientation system. Certain terminology used in description (e.g. demonstratives and location particles) indicates that the "intrinsic" and "relative" FoR are also used, but only to supplement and reinforce primary description. Data collected for this project include: interviews with a Cree elder, arrangement tests, and field notes from travelling with one Iiyiyiu elder on his hunting territory. The research approach was based on my observations as an Iiyiyiuyimuwin speaker that Iiyiyiuch still have an intimate connection with their natural landscape, where Iiyiyiuyimuwin contains the inherent "instructions" of how to approach the land. Implications of this study suggest that Iiyiyiu land orientation and navigation preference also reflect the intricate relationship Iiyiyiuch have with the natural world, in practice and in philosophy.

## Claire Owen (MA, Alumna)

*Perceptions of the role of language in the construction of Aboriginal identities*

This qualitative study was undertaken as an ALDS Master's thesis in 2011 and focuses on individual perceptions of the link (or lack thereof) between Indigenous languages and cultural identities. Five semi-structured interviews constitute the primary source of data, supported by a focus group discussion and participatory observation. Discourse analysis (DA) is employed to identify major emergent themes and specific discursive features revealing participants' language attitudes. Key themes include social mobility and cultural continuity, pride and shame, names and naming practices, and land.

## Meghan Steenhoek (MA)

*You are what you know: The role of religious knowledge in the
four stages of communication accommodation*

*Little Mosque on the Prairie* was the first Muslim sit-com that made it into mainstream Canadian television. This short study looks at the interactions between the characters of the show in terms of how their religious affiliations affect the way in which their communication is adapted to those of the same or different religious groups. Following the Communication Accommodation Theory framework put forward by Gallois, Ogay and Giles (2005), the characters' interactions are analysed through four stages: socio-historical context, initial orientation, immediate interaction situation, evaluation. The results show that one's knowledge of a particular religion was influential in shaping their perceived religious affiliations which in turn shaped the way in which they communicated with other members of the community. Although the communication itself is scripted, this study has much wider implications in terms of the way in which interreligious communication is modeled in the media as a means of encouraging more positive and understanding communication in its audience in the real world.

## Jinjun Wang (PhD)

*Questions and the exercise of power*

This paper argues that 'ideal dialogue', which is free from power is unattainable and unrealistic, and power is inherent in all dialogues. It focuses on the exploration of questions as a possible means to exercise power in both casual conversation and institutional dialogue. Comparatively speaking, power tends to be overt in institutional dialogue and covert in casual conversation and questions exercise power in different ways in both forms of verbal interaction respectively. On the basis of data analysis, it is pointed out that the immediate allocation of turn-taking and the temporary topic control result in the latency of questions as a powerful means in casual conversation. The prominence of questions as a powerful means centers on three factors, that is, notably unequal distribution of questions producing the unequal allocation of turn-taking, dominant questions controlling both local and global topics, and Yes/No questions and Wh-questions exercising power in different degrees.

# Notes

# Notes

# Organizing Committee

Matthew Falconer
Maggie Addison
Christina (Nina) Doré
Julie Lesage
Monther Albeqdadi
Oxana Timchenko

## Special thanks to

Dr. Graham Smart, Dr. Natasha Artemeva,
Dr. Janna Fox, Joan Grant, Connie Wall,
Mike Barker, Chloe Grace Fogarty-Bourget,
& all the poster presenters

## Symposium is funded by

The School of Linguistics and Language Studies
and the Graduate Student Association