



# Masterclasses in English Language & Linguistics

## 1. Introduction

The masterclasses in the following section can be tailored in length and difficulty to suit the audience, but are most suited to AS/A2 students. Most masterclasses in English language and linguistics are available throughout the academic year but some are only available for limited periods owing to staff commitments. Please note also that masterclasses might be delivered by different members of the English language and linguistics team at the University of Salford than the ones listed below.

## 2. Masterclasses

Masterclasses are listed in alphabetical order.

### **Corpus Linguistics: What is it, and How can it Help us to Study Language?**

Dr. Nick Smith ([n.smith@salford.ac.uk](mailto:n.smith@salford.ac.uk))

A computer corpus (plural: corpora) is a collection of texts sampled to represent one or more varieties of a language. Because it is stored in electronic form, a corpus allows us to investigate authentic language use in unique ways, for example by searching and counting linguistic features used by different ages of speaker or in different genres. In this talk I will introduce some of the applications of corpora in current language research and teaching, taking the following as examples: (a) differences between British and American English (e.g. *Have you eaten yet?* versus *Did you eat yet?*), (b) recent change in English (e.g. growing use of contractions such as *don't* in writing, or a decline in use of the passive), and (c) the compilation of dictionaries and language reference materials.

## **English as a Global Language: Where it's Come from and where it's Going**

Mrs. Charlotte Hoffmann ([c.hoffmann@salford.ac.uk](mailto:c.hoffmann@salford.ac.uk)) or Dr. Nick Smith ([n.smith@salford.ac.uk](mailto:n.smith@salford.ac.uk))

The current status of English as a global language is undeniable, but this has not always been the case. English became an important language around the world very gradually, and through a combination of complex social and historical events and circumstances. This part-lecture, part-workshop session explores the diverse processes by which English has spread beyond Britain. It considers its functions as a first, second and international language, and looks at some of the linguistic outcomes in terms of multilingualism and less familiar varieties of English that can be found in different countries and regions around the world.

## **Exploring the Dictionary – 'Authority' and the English Language**

Dr. Maggie Scott ([m.r.scott@salford.ac.uk](mailto:m.r.scott@salford.ac.uk))

How do lexicographers make dictionaries? When we look up a word in a dictionary, we often want to know 'the truth' about its spelling, meaning(s), pronunciation or origins. We sometimes trust dictionaries unquestioningly, using them to settle arguments and determine who gets the triple word score in Scrabble. Yet modern dictionaries are intended to represent our language as it is used, describing 'what is', rather than prescribing 'what is correct'. In this short workshop, we will explore some of the challenges that modern lexicographers face when describing English words, and the ways in which dictionaries have evolved in their approach to language.

## **How do Children Learn Language?**

Dr. Iván García Álvarez ([i.garciaalvarez@salford.ac.uk](mailto:i.garciaalvarez@salford.ac.uk))

Most children start producing words some time between the ages of eight and twelve months or so, and many children have ten words in their vocabulary by the age of fifteen months. Things gradually pick up speed from that point on. How does this happen? Adults don't pause between words when they speak, so how do children figure out where one word ends and another begins? With the help of a series of practical tasks, my presentation looks at how small children identify and learn the words of their language.

## **The Structure of Words**

Prof. Janet Watson ([j.c.e.watson@salford.ac.uk](mailto:j.c.e.watson@salford.ac.uk))

To what extent can a dictionary help us understand a language? If we take the dictionary forms of the words *student*, *use*, *computer*, *yesterday*, what do we need to know about the English language before we can form a meaningful, grammatical sentence? Take the words *fatherhood* and *motherhood*. What do they mean, and how do these words help us to understand the meaning of *nationhood* and *babyhood*? This masterclass will look at the importance of morphology (word structure) in enabling us to understand our own language and in learning a second language.

## **What do You Mean?**

Prof. Diane Blakemore ([d.blakemore@salford.ac.uk](mailto:d.blakemore@salford.ac.uk))

How do we understand what speakers mean when they communicate? Obviously, knowing the meanings of the words and sentences they utter is essential. Consider the confusion that arises when teenagers give old words new meanings in conversations with parents. However, in this class we will examine examples of actual language use - jokes, advertisements, newspaper headlines, short dialogues, excerpts from radio, television and newspapers - which show that word meanings only provide hearers with clues as to what speakers mean, and sometimes very skeletal clues at that. We must work out what people mean on the basis of this clue together with information in the context.

## **What Makes a Good Language Learner?**

Dr. Siân Etherington ([s.etherington@salford.ac.uk](mailto:s.etherington@salford.ac.uk))

Can anyone learn a second language? What skills, qualities, aptitudes and attitudes help in learning a second language? This masterclass investigates these questions, focussing on what it takes to become a good language learner. Discussion tasks and interactive activities will introduce participants to ideas concerning aptitude, motivation and strategies for language learning.