

Editorial: Grammar in the face of diversity

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The river one dips one's toes into from one editorial to the next is never the same, as Heraclitus might have observed. Part 1 of this double issue (December, 2005) consisted of eight articles from contributors based in five countries: the United States, England, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. Part 2 contains six articles and two teacher narratives from the United States (two), Scotland, the Netherlands, Australia (2), Indonesia and Denmark. The inclusion of contributors from European countries outside of the United Kingdom is a reminder that debates over the "grammar" question are not confined to the Anglophonic world. I am grateful to Amos van Gelderen and Anette Wulff for finding time to contribute to a journal, which hitherto has addressed itself to readers in a relatively small range of (officially) English-speaking constituencies. I am also grateful to Handoyo Widodo for his contribution, written in the context of English-language teaching in Indonesia.

My own take on the topic of this double issue has been affected by attendance at two recent conferences, one on "Language, Culture and Technologies" at the Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania) and the other entitled "eLearning Africa", an inaugural event held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). While the first of these had paper clusters where the language was Russian, German and French, it was clear that English was the lingua franca – the language of plenaries and of guided tours of the old towns of Kaunas and Vilnius. One of the plenary speakers, David Marsh, reminded delegates that the global trend for English language acquisition was old news and that the future lay in the acquisition by erstwhile monolingual speakers of additional languages. I pass this on as opinion, not fact, but also as a reminder of wider, contextual matters that need addressing in relation to micro-level questions of the place of knowledge about language in the English/literacy classroom. At the micro-level, I can add, the Kaunas conference was a reminder of the increasingly widespread uptake of Hallidayan perspectives on grammar.

The Addis Ababa conference was on a grander scale and less intimate than the Kaunas affair – almost hermetically sealed off from its immediate, physical milieu, a forum that lent itself to political posturing, the showcasing of (mostly ICT-based) solutions to Africa's dire educational problems, and a certain amount of hard-sell from global players in the field of educational software. There were also opportunities for the 800 delegates from around 80 countries to meet, talk, network and attend to presenters concerned to report on practical, exploratory projects which precipitated searching questions. Some of these, inevitably, revolved around language policy. It was an eye-opener for me to see speakers from countries with multiple linguistic heritages taken to task for instituting programmes aimed at introducing mother-tongue instruction in early years of schooling in one or more indigenous languages. There are clearly powerful voices on the African continent (and globally) who advocate a language policy that would accept as a given the hegemony of English as the language of instruction at all levels of schooling, even in the early years, and even in countries with rich and varied, indigenous, linguistic traditions. This is a political debate that is

still to be played out and has a bearing on questions of knowledge about language in the English/literacy classroom.

Apropos to questions of multilingualism and language policy, Hilary Janks, a contributor to Part 1 of this double issue (see Janks, 2005), had her Masters students read and critique Volume 4, Number 3. Her students, responding out of the South African context, believed that this issue paid insufficient heed to increasingly multicultural and multilingual classrooms as a context within which to frame the questions which have prompted these two issues of *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*. This critique prompted Hilary, in conversation, to suggest that pedagogical approaches developed under the umbrella title of “Language Awareness” might be worth revisiting as having a place in such classrooms¹.

Prompted by this critique, I decided to place an article by Rebecca Wheeler in “pole position” for Part 2. Wheeler and her collaborating teacher, Rachel Swords, have recently published a book entitled *Code-switching: Teaching Standard English in urban classrooms* (Wheeler and Swords, 2006), and Wheeler’s article draws extensively on the material in this book. Her article here is entitled: “‘What do we do about student grammar – all those missing *-ed*’s and *-s*’s?’ Using comparison and contrast to teach Standard English in dialectally diverse classrooms”. The author argue a case for and models approaches using techniques of Contrastive Analysis and Code-switching (using Swords’ second and third-grade students as an illustrative case). A number of assumptions underpin this article. The first is that the prestige of Standard English derives from its use by a nation’s powerful elites (Wheeler & Swords, 2006, p. 12). The second is that “while languages are all linguistically equal, they differ in social status and also in place and breadth of use (Wheeler & Swords, 2006, p. 13). African American English (to use just one term used to denote this language variety or dialect), as the home language of many students in urban American classrooms, is therefore accorded the same status as a prestigious “standard” variety. Thirdly, according the language of the home equal status is viewed as a powerfully affirming and motivating strategy for teaching such students Standard English. Finally, Contrastive Analysis makes use of explicit grammar teaching in its pedagogy, particularly in the use of tables comparing and contrasting Standard and home usages across a range of grammatical features. In this regard, it might be thought of as adopting a “Language Awareness” approach with an emphasis on grammar. It is an approach justified by Wheeler on the basis of enhanced student mastery of Standard English forms.

Needless to say, there is a concomitant politics in the approach taken by Wheeler, which is made explicit in her article. It is a politics with a pronounced rhetorical dimension, extending as it does to the way the approach is delivered (even marketed) to differing audiences, sensitive for a range of reasons to the politics of “naming” (of,

¹ Hudson and Walmsley, discussing “Language Awareness”, write: “What children need to know about language goes well beyond grammar to include a much more general understanding of how language works, including pronunciation (phonetics), foreign languages, social and regional variation, language learning, its relation to animal communication, its history, and so on” (Hudson, R., & Walmsley, J. {200}. The English patient: English grammar and teaching in the Twentieth Century, *Journal of Linguistics*, 41(3), pp. 612-3). As Hudson and Walmsley note, the case for teaching “Language Awareness” in a crowded curriculum is ironically weakened by a belief in and emphasis on the teaching of grammar (narrowly focused on syntax) as enhancing student’s writing.

for example, language varieties themselves). The United States, as an educational setting, is historically rich in its range of dialects and the linguistic variety of its immigrant groups. Currently, one might say, the famous “melting pot” is showing increased reluctance to melt.

In one sense, Scotland, the setting for Graeme Trousdale’s article, has something in common with the United States in that there are strong, dialectical varieties of Scottish English. Although the Scots can hardly be described as a minority group, it would be fair to say that Scottish English has also had to struggle with issues of prestige though, as Trousdale points out, there is at least lip-service paid to its emphasis in Scottish curriculum documents. (The issue of Gaelic acquisition and maintenance is not touched on here.) Trousdale’s advocacy for and support of knowledge about language in the English classroom in Scotland rests, at least in part, in a belief that it has an important part in pedagogies (and identity formation, perhaps) in multi-dialectical and bilingual settings. The major concern in his article is twofold. On the one hand, his critical analysis of various Scottish curriculum documents suggests a lack of conceptual sharpness and resultant confusion in their use of terms such as “knowledge about language”. On the other hand, he argues that as long as the prescribed emphasis on knowledge about language is not reflected in assessment procedures, it is unlikely to take widespread root in classroom practice. Trousdale’s emphasis on assessment takes up a theme addressed by David Slomp in Part 1 (Slomp, 2005). Whereas the latter details ways in which high-stakes, summative assessment processes circumscribe ways in which knowledge about language (however defined) is likely to be integrated into classroom practice, the former argues that *absence* from an assessment regime also has an impact on such practice.

Both Wheeler and Trousdale, favour approaches to the integration of knowledge about language in English classrooms which utilise the explicit use of linguistic terminology within approaches that one could argue fit under a broad “Language Awareness” umbrella. The title of Amos Van Gelderen’s article, “What we know without knowing it: Sense and nonsense in respect of linguistic reflection for students in elementary and secondary education” – written out of a Netherlands context – focuses on the debate between “explicit” and “implicit” linguistic knowledge. He starts by noting aspects of the Dutch context that resonate with aspects of settings where the L1 is English. For instance, he notes teachers’ antipathy to grammar as fuelled by their sense of it as tantamount to the traditional, decontextualised teaching of parsing and parts of speech. He also notes a *lack* of emphasis on the formal teaching of grammar in curriculum documentation that is *not* reflected either in the content of textbooks (which still contain a large emphasis on traditional approaches to grammar) or specific classroom practices where these are influenced by the nature of such textbooks.

Van Gelderen’s primary emphasis is instrumental, that is, what works? To this end, he provides a very useful structure for considering the various debates related to the “grammar” question. One of these debates revolves around the question whether the teaching of *explicit* linguistic rules (for producing linguistic structures) or meta-linguistic terminology (for talking about them) actually enhances students’ language abilities (as reflected, for example, in their writing). Van Gelderen’s conclusion, which resonates with findings from the two systematic review carried out by the English Review Team at the University of York (Andrews R., Torgerson C., Beverton

S., Locke T., Low G., Robinson A., and Zhu D., 2004a; 2004b), is that much empirical research suggests that teaching explicit knowledge of linguistic rules is not as beneficial for students as is often assumed, particularly in respect of composition. Van Gelderen also examines the case for the explicit teaching of linguistic rules in additional-language (L2) instruction and finds that while there is a stronger case for its effectiveness, there are a significant number of studies which indicate that such teaching makes little difference (when compared, for instance, with control groups). In many cases, van Gelderen argues, “implicit grammar teaching” – understood as not using explicit rules and terminology – is just as effective, even in short, experimental interventions with relatively few occasions for repetitive practice.

It should be noted that “grammar” teaching, in the studies alluded to by van Gelderen, is rather narrowly defined as knowledge about word and sentence structure. In his discussion, van Gelderen suggests a range of classroom practices that challenge traditional “grammar” teaching and the explicit teaching of rules. He notes that “unfamiliar or complex grammatical structures can be learned by the reading of texts containing these structures and undertaking follow-up writing assignments intended to evoke the same structures” but that the successful learning of structures will occur only when they are put to use in situations that are meaningful to the student (p. 51). He argues strongly for knowledge about language (however defined) to be rooted in what we know about the effective teaching of writing. In respect of L2 teaching, he concedes the importance of an initial mastery of correct structures. However, he argues that, at best, explicit grammar teaching has but “a complementary role in addition to sufficient practice and implicit learning” (p. 52). Finally, he returns to the place of “linguistic reflection” *per se*, and what this might mean. His tentative conclusion is for a return for something much broader than reflection on word and sentence structure (that is, grammar at the word and sentence level). In fact, he suggests that linguistic reflection might usefully be redefined in ways which bring it much closer to “Language Awareness” (as already discussed) with its emphasis on such aspects of language as pragmatics.

With Len Unsworth’s article, “Towards a metalanguage for multiliteracies education: Describing the meaning-making resources of language-image interaction”, we move to another set of issues. Underpinning the article is a view of literacy as multiple and as affected by changing technologies which are leading to increased multimodality in texts. Print texts are becoming more “visual”; digital texts have affordances for varieties of oral, verbal and visual (still and moving) language combinations within texts which are better described as layered rather than sequenced. Consequently, “logocentric” grammars are inadequate in providing a metalanguage for discussing the features of such texts and their effects. Unsworth’s article seeks to augment the genre, grammar and discourse descriptions of verbal texts so as to include a description of the “meaning-making resources” of images. Unsworth draws on Hallidayan systemic function grammar and the work on reading images pioneered by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). However, he argues a need to go beyond these accounts in order to explain meaning-making “at the intersection of language and image”. Implicit in Unsworth’s article is a belief in the usefulness of the resultant metalanguage in enabling explicit discussion by teachers and students of what he terms the “meaning-making resources” at work in the comprehension and composition of such texts (p. 56). The term “meaning-making resources” is itself an

interesting one, by virtue of the way it potentially constructs knowledge about language on a particularly large, socio-cognitive canvas.²

Connie Weaver, Professor Emerita of English at Western Michigan University, has spent a lifetime engaged with aspects of the grammar question. In relation to the current research environment in the United States, she describes herself humorously in an email as a “government-uncertified author”. Certainly, a web-search readily allows one to access texts which lambast Weaver for her stance on such issues as the teaching of phonics. It is a reminder, as if one needed one, of the politics which often go hand-in-hand with advocacy for the explicit teaching of decontextualised language knowledge (of whatever kind).³ Weaver’s contribution to Part 2 is co-authored with Jonathan Bush and includes contributions from Jeff Anderson and Patricia Bills. Central to the article’s argument is an emphasis on the context of actual writing. In this respect, the article is in line with the conclusions of Amos van Gelderen discussed earlier. While the grammar emphasis in this article is predominantly sentence-level, it is noteworthy that the authors talk about key grammatical *options* as well as skills. That is, central to their pedagogy is the empowering of writers to enhance their option-taking. The article is characterised by its high degree of practicability, and offers readers research-based planning frameworks for the integration of *carefully selected* (less is more) grammatical skills into classroom practice. Of particular interest are suggestions for introducing a focus on grammar skills into the study and composition of literary texts.

In her article entitled “Knowledge through ‘know how’: Systemic functional grammatics and the symbolic reading”, Mary Macken-Horarik also makes use of systemic functional grammar as a metalinguistic resource, drawing upon Halliday’s (2002) distinction between grammatics and grammar. (If linguistics provides a metalanguage for talking about the phenomenon language, then grammatics can be thought of as a meta-term in a similar relation to the phenomenon grammar.) Macken-Horarik’s article sets out to determine through textual analysis the features that characterise successful examination narratives which interpret literary texts. Her analysis identifies “a preference in successful scripts for relational transitivity of a synoptic kind, an ability to reformulate story significance through elaboration and

² For a recent discussion of this concept, see Kress, G., & Burn, A. (2004). Pictures from a rocket: English and the semiotic take. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 49(1), 95-105. Retrieved May 31, 2006 from <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/journal/view.php?article=true&id=83&p=1>.

³ Readers are referred to an article by Paul Moreno in an online newspaper *MassNews: A Conservative Voice* (<http://www.massnews.com/index.shtml>), entitled “Are they teaching phonics to *your* child? It’s a political issue” (October, 10, 2000), where Weaver is clearly situated in the camp of “they” and, therefore, a threat to the generality of parents represented by the italicised “your”. Moreno refers to previous questionings of Weaver’s credibility by Lynne Cheney, the Vice-President’s wife, and Chairman of the National endowment of the Humanities under Presidents Reagan and Bush. A typical paragraph reads: Constance Weaver, who now helps pedagogues continue the use of “whole language” despite the clamour for phonics, engaged in the same sort of sabotage against grammar in the 1970s. In 1979, when parents and school boards began to demand a return to the instruction of grammar that progressive educators had abandoned, Weaver wrote, ‘Teachers are faced with an apparent contradiction. On the one hand, a considerable body of research and the testimony of innumerable students suggest that studying grammar doesn’t help people read or write better. On the other hand, the public in general and many English and language arts teachers in particular seem convinced that studying grammar does help, or at least it should’” (“The pattern of escaping accountability”, paragraph 2).

rhetorical ‘spans’ between material semiosis (in *Theme*) and abstract significance (in *New*)” (p. 102). As with other contributors to this double issue, she is concerned to move beyond a “deficit” view of grammar and explore the grammar of meaning-making. In the first instance, she argues, the findings of such analysis are likely to be of interest to teachers who are concerned to teach students how to successfully produce what she calls “symbolic readings” of literary texts under examination conditions. The article, she emphasises, is *not* a case for teaching systemic functional linguistics in the classroom.

The point has been to show the potential of SFL knowledge about language for a better understanding of students’ linguistic know-how. Once we know something of what is valued in interpretive genres, we can use our knowledge to make better pedagogic decisions about how to teach these. A useful classroom grammatics should have the following features: it should orient students productively to a writing task, enable them to read a text successfully and then respond to this in writing (p. 120).

Grammatics, if it is to be of value, should provide students with thinking tools to enable them to make better choices in relation to a language production task.

Handoyo Puji Widodo’s narrative on “Approaches and procedures for teaching grammar” stems from his passion for innovative grammar teaching and his grammar teaching experience in the Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context. The narrative outlines a five-step procedure for teaching grammar in the EFL classroom. It is a procedure which incorporates notions of practice and consciousness-raising, explicit and implicit knowledge, and deductive and inductive approaches for teaching grammar. While the main focus of this double issue has been the English/literacy classroom in Anglophonic settings, Widodo’s EFL focus offers interesting parallelisms. For example, the traditional EFL grammar-translation method with its decontextualised teaching of grammar rules and vocabulary of the target language might be compared with traditional grammar teaching in the L1 classroom with its use of decontextualised parsing exercises. Widodo’s alternative emphasis on what he calls “consciousness raising” can be seen as analogous to, say, Macken-Hororik’s use of grammatics as a thinking tool aimed at increasing students’ option-taking. Like van Gelderen, Widodo explores the distinction between “explicit” and “implicit” grammatical knowledge with particular reference to second-language acquisition. In respect of the latter, he steers a middle course, suggesting that there is a place for pedagogical practices based in either.

Finally, Anette Wulff’s account of “VISL in Danish schools” is a reminder of the challenge of linguistic diversity to grammar – what we mean by it, whether and how it should be taught, and the rationale for such teaching. At one level, Wulff’s article can be thought of as an invitation to play by following the many game-links embedded. A noteworthy and basic feature of the VISL system is that all “VISL languages draw from the same ‘cafeteria’ of form and function labels, with the result that when users have become familiar with the system for one of the VISL languages, they can comprehend the analyses supplied for all VISL languages” (Dienhart, 2005, p. 31). The article is dedicated to the memory of the late John Dienhart. (Readers are referred to his [“Gentle introduction to the wonderful world of grammar”](#).)

In inviting contributions to this double issue, I suggested ten questions that might be addressed:

1. What is meant by “knowledge about language”?
2. Whose knowledges are we talking about when we refer to “knowledge about language”?
3. In what ways is “knowledge about grammar” subsumed under the term “knowledge about language”?
4. What relationships exist (as productive or non-productive) between the development of linguistics as an academic domain, and educational policy and practice in respect of the presence of “knowledge about language” in the English/literacy classroom?
5. What (if any) justifications exist for the inclusion of “knowledge about language” in an “intended” curriculum as knowledge worth knowing for itself?
6. How is knowledge about language affected by the technologised nature of its object?
7. Put another way, how does metalanguage need to change under pressure from the increased digitising and graphicisation of texts and text-based practice?
8. Are there any sustainable arguments for a positive relationship between knowledge about language (however understood) and increased effectiveness in some aspect of textual practice (reading/viewing or production)?
9. What is the relationship between metalanguage and metacognition?
10. What pedagogical frameworks or approaches appear to render “knowledge about language” effective or ineffective as a component of literacy teaching and learning?

Let me conclude this Part 2 editorial by briefly sharing a number of responses to these questions.

What is meant by “knowledge about language”? The blunt answer is “a number of things”. At one point in a recent chapter, Geoff Williams (2004) talks about the language knowledge of a class of children in an inner-suburban Sydney school, whose families spoke 15 first languages. The children’s discussion, unprompted by teachers, indicated such things as an awareness of the personal and social significance of language, language variation and the relativity of correctness to social situation. These children had knowledge about language which was, at least in part, facilitated by the access to linguistic diversity as a resource. This example is, I think, a salutary reminder that valuable, metalinguistic understandings are not the sole prerogative of linguists, and that such understandings (particularly in pupils from minority language groups) are too frequently ignored in day-to-day classroom practice.

I began this editorial with a reference to linguistic diversity and have already made some reference to “Language Awareness”. Tulasiewicz and Adams (2003) have described Language Awareness as:

the study of language, with one’s first language as the main area of study, concerned with its role in instrumental (communicative), affective (artistic and creative) and emancipatory (empowering the language user through a greater ability to handle language) functions by using the awareness approach (p. 82).

The authors make the pertinent point that such study is enhanced when it includes comparison with other languages and has particular value in multicultural and multilingual classrooms. An approach such as Language Awareness might be thought of as ideally suited to curricular and pedagogical formalisations which build on the (sometimes, but not always, imperfectly articulated) language insights gleaned from experience outside of the classroom.

As such, it offers one answer to the question: What is meant by “knowledge about language”? The use of the word “function” in the above definition highlights the concept’s relation with the real world of social actors using language to get things done by making effective choices. As such, it connects with the rhetorical basis for constructing a rationale for knowledge about language discussed by Martha Kolln and Craig Hancock (Part 1)(2005). It also connects with the kind of knowledge about language embedded in systemic functional approaches derived from the work of Halliday and Hasan. Their 1985 text, for example, is entitled *Language, context, and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. The title pretty much encrypts key assumptions central to a useful and usable knowledge about language: language use is context-dependent; texts can be understood only in context; texts are social events, embodying social processes and purposes, facilitating particular kinds of relationships; language is a meaning-making resource. Such knowledge about language is a long way from the decontextualised memorising of parts of speech (word classes) and the ability to identify a periodic, complex sentence.

Whose knowledges, then, are we talking about when we refer to “knowledge about language”? It depends. One would be foolhardy to say that there is no place for, say, linguists with a focus on the explicit articulation of syntactical rules. Such descriptions, as the article by Wheeler (in this issue) shows, do not demand *per se* decontextualised teaching approaches. One might say that it is a matter of horses for courses. The work of linguistic pragmatists is clearly useful in Language Awareness approaches and for helping to enhance intercultural communication. The widespread uptake of Hallidayan approaches to grammar by such practitioners as Norman Fairclough (1995) and Hilary Janks (2005, see Part 1) owes a lot to its perceived usefulness as a critically analytical tool. On the basis of his Australian research, Geoff Williams argues a different sort of case for adopting SFL, adopting a Vygotskian perspective to suggest that grammar can be thought of as a “tool” for understanding language, “a tool that is simultaneously both accessible to children and powerful enough to enable learners to see new possibilities for what they might accomplish with the tools” (1999, p. 92). However, as I have illustrated elsewhere (Locke, 2004), an allegiance to SFL is not a prerequisite for critical discourse analysis. And as Clark (Part 1)(2005) has argued, it may be that contemporary contextualisations of a pedagogic grammar should aspire to taking account of a range of theories of language.

In what ways is “knowledge about grammar” subsumed under the term “knowledge about language”? It is clear that the term “grammar” can be defined in different ways. The definition from Cope and Kalantzis (1993), referred to in the editorial to Part 1,

“Grammar” is a term that describes the relation of language to metalanguage; of text to generalisations about text; of experience to theory; of the concrete world of human

discursive activity to abstractions which generalise about the regularities and irregularities in that world (p. 20).

is an example of a very broad definition indeed and is virtually synonymous with systematically theorized knowledge about language. Hudson and Walmsley (2005), whose essay “The English patient: English grammar and teaching in the Twentieth Century” provided a kind of keynote stimulus for this double-issue enterprise, don’t explicitly grapple with problems of definition – with consequent slippage. For instance, at times “grammar” and “language study” are used synonymously (pp. 600, 602). Elsewhere, however, it is clear that they regard “knowledge about language” as a broader term than “grammar” (p. 610) and Language Awareness as going well beyond necessary grammatical understandings. As David Crystal (1987) writes, there are two steps involved in the study of grammar, identifying specific language units and describing patterns of relationship among these units and the part these patterns play in human meaning-making (p. 88). As he points out, the term will alter depending on the nature of the units so identified. Grammar then, is concerned with the structural properties of language, and that is how the contributors to this double issue have in the main used the term. (The notion of a “personal” grammar, developed by Rex, Brown, Denstaedt, Haniford and Schiller {2005} in Part 1, might be thought of as an exception to this.) What is significant about systemic functional grammar in this regard, is the way it systematically defines units and patterns of relationship in terms of functions that link directly with situations of language in use. By way of example, the traditional term “subject” (as in “subject” and “predicate”) can be understood without reference to the function of a sentence textually and contextually. The roughly synonymous term from SFL, “theme”, however, derives its meaning from its functionality in a particular context.

What relationships exist (as productive or non-productive) between the development of linguistics as an academic domain, and educational policy and practice in respect of the presence of “knowledge about language” in the English/literacy classroom? The relationship of, say, Hallidayan linguistics and the pedagogical work of the Australian genre theorists (see Cope & Kalantzis, 1993a; 1993b) and critical language awareness pedagogy (see Fairclough, 1992) is a good example of the productive relationship between linguistic developments in the academic domain and classroom practice. However, as Urszula Clark has indicated, using Bernstein’s theory of pedagogic discourse (1990, 1996), these relationships are not simple. Readers are referred to Chapter 1 of *War words: Language, history and the disciplining of English* for Clark’s account and application of Bernstein’s rules of distribution, recontextualisation and evaluation to this topic. Rules of recontextualisation, for example, operate to construct both curriculum content and pedagogical content knowledge of “subjects” such as English. Such constructions, powerfully affected/effected by policy regulation (via rules of distribution), constrain the ways in which a school English/literacy programme and its classroom practices draw on “original discourses in linguistics, literary study, day-to-day practices of language use, psychology, and sociology, [and incorporate them] into that of the imaginary subject of English” (2001, p. 15). Both Elizabeth Gordon (2005) and Urszula Clark (2005) in Part 1, writing out of two different settings, illustrate vividly the way in which the policy (and general social) environment can impact negatively on the potentially positive contribution to teaching and learning of linguistics as an academic discipline.

What (if any) justifications exist for the inclusion of “knowledge about language” in an “intended” curriculum as knowledge worth knowing for itself? When I was a secondary school teacher, I used to do a small unit of work with my Year 10 class on the history of the English language. Had I been asked to justify this decision, I would have remarked that I considered that this history was worth knowing and that my students wouldn’t have got it anywhere else in the school curriculum. If pressed, I might have parried the question by demanding a justification for the inclusion of knowledge of photosynthesis, or laws of action and reaction, in the curriculum. Like Psychology, and unlike Geography, Linguistics ranks among the disciplines or domains that Elliot Eisner (2002) includes under the heading of the “null curriculum” (p. 97).⁴ For the most part, as I have been suggesting, justifications for the inclusion of knowledge about language in the intended curriculum is inevitably tied up with policy decisions on the nature of English as a curriculum area and various initiatives concerned with issues of literacy across the curriculum.

In some ways, however, the question itself needs questioning. What does “for itself” mean? Among the seven justifications Hudson and Walmsley (2005) give for teaching grammar, only one might be thought of as non-utilitarian, that is, “To appreciate their own minds: grammar is a highly interconnected mental system, and when taught well, most people find it interesting” (p. 595). Their other justifications,

- the expansion of grammatical competence to cope with adult life;
- the underpinning of this competence in textual performance;
- support of foreign-language learning;
- the developing of thinking skills;
- the development of investigative skills;
- the development of a critical response to language in use,

have a utilitarian emphasis, which is hardly surprising in the context of an article which is in many ways an apologetics (pp. 594-5). Perhaps the utilitarian/non-utilitarian binary is a false one, however. Perhaps *all* knowledge is utilitarian, means to an end, and the assuaging of curiosity and the downright appreciation of something wondrous (like the human invention of language) are as legitimate purposes as the enhancement of writing skills.

How is knowledge about language affected by the technologised nature of its object? This question could have been put better. On the one hand, it is an attempt to recognise the increased “visuality” of print texts (see Kress, 1997). On the other hand, it recognises ways in which technological advances have facilitated, for example, the ability of daily newspapers to incorporate increased types of visual resources, or ways in which increased digitisation of the means of textual production has meant that different modes of representation “have technically become the same at some level of representation, and they can be operated by one multi-skilled person, using one interface, one mode of physical manipulation, so that he or she can ask, at every point: ‘Shall I express this with sound or music?’, ‘Shall I say this visually or verbally?’, and so on” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 2). In terms of theory, linguistics and semiotics can both be seen as engaged with the same question: How best can we

⁴ As Hudson and Walmsley (2005) note, England has had an examination subject at the last two years of secondary schooling called “English Language” (p. 611).

describe texts where differing modes of representation are utilised (non-hierarchically) in meaning-making, and what use can this resultant “knowledge” be put. “Knowledge about language” has consequently become subsumed under the much wider category of “knowledge about the functionality of representational resources”.

In their introduction to *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (1996), viewed as a seminal work by Len Unsworth in this issue (Part 2), Kress and van Leeuwen have this to say about the challenge of developing such a grammar and its relationship to semiotics:

In our view, most accounts of visual semiotics have concentrated on what linguists would call “lexis” rather than “grammar”, on the “vocabulary” – for instance, on the “denotative” and “connotative”, the “iconographical” and “iconological” significance of the individual people, places and things (including abstract “things”) depicted in images. In this book we will concentrate, by contrast, on “grammar”, on the way in which these depicted people, places and things are combined into a meaningful whole. Just as grammars of language describe how words combine in clauses, sentences and texts, so our visual ‘grammar’ will describe the way in which depicted people, places and things combine in visual “statements” of greater or lesser complexity and extension (p. 1).

As mentioned earlier, Len Unsworth’s contribution to this issue (Part 2) is a good example of an attempt to articulate (and illustrate the use of) a grammar which accounts for meanings made at the intersection of verbal language and image. Janks’ contribution to Part 1 (Janks, 2005) is a good example of the use of systemic functional grammar and critical discourse analysis to read closely a text (in this case a magazine, display advertisement) which combines verbal text with a visual image.

Are there any sustainable arguments for a positive relationship between knowledge about language (however understood) and increased effectiveness in some aspect of textual practice (reading/viewing or production)? In general, the contributors to this double issue either argue for a sustainable argument or allow for the possibility that future research will furnish one. In the latter category, for instance, Richard Andrews (Part 1)(2005), while questioning whether sentence-level grammar should be taught, advocates a research agenda (including further systematic reviews) concerned with aspects of teaching grammar (including the use of systemic-functional grammars) that were not addressed in the EPPI-Centre reviews (see Andrews et al., 2004a; 2004b). In this issue, Amos van Gelderen, while maintaining a healthy scepticism, inclines to a view that Language Awareness, broadened beyond a focus on sentence-level grammar and linked with what we know about the effective teaching of writing, might enhance such teaching.

A middle-ground position on this question, were I to plumb for one, is that represented by Debra Myhill (Part 1)(2005), who, while agreeing on the need for further research, develops a case for a pedagogy that enables students to develop a “metalinguistic awareness about linguistic choices” in an overall view of “writing as a social practice” (p. 84). Such a sentiment is echoed by Martha Kolln’s advocacy of “grammar knowledge as a tool that enables the writer to make effective choices” (1996, p. 29). In different ways, and with different agendas, both Weaver and her

colleagues (this issue) and Wheeler (this issue) also argue a place for grammar knowledge in classrooms in the service of increased option-taking.

It is interesting to note, I think, that attempts to argue a case for teaching grammar (or knowledge about language) in classrooms have tended to centre on the question whether such teaching enhances student writing. The York Review Team involved in conducting systematic reviews for the EPPI-Centre (see Andrews et al, 2004a: 2004b) chose to focus on the impact of such teaching on student writing. It might be argued, however, that while implicit grammar knowledge is at work in the production of text (including oral text), at least in L1 situations, there is a stronger case for the teaching of explicit grammar knowledge in relation to reading (including the reading of one's own texts). Such a relative emphasis is already evident in the ways in which critical literacy pedagogy tends to utilise a metalanguage more for reading/interpreting texts than for their production. (Hilary Janks' contribution to Part 1 {2005} is a good example of this.) Similarly, metalinguistic knowledge is more evident in the "modelling" and "joint negotiation of text" phases of the genre teaching cycle, which are more concerned with reading, studying, imitating, adapting (appropriate models) than the independent production of texts (see Cope & Kalantzis, 1993a).

What is the relationship between metalanguage and metacognition? In a word, intimate, with the former serving the latter. What is clear, however, is that not all metalanguages are equally useful as servants. This is the point made by Debbie Myhill (2005)(Part 1) when she argues for a metalanguage rooted in a view of writing as a social practice. A similar argument is made by Geoff Williams (1999, 2004) where he argues a case, not only that relatively young children are quite capable of taking on board concepts from systemic functional grammar, but also that these concepts are particularly appropriate in helping develop children's metacognition in relation to the production of various types of texts. The interview with Katarina in the latter stages of Williams' 2004 chapter is a good example of a child using grammatical concepts metacognitively to think about texts. One might say, adopting the perspective of Lesley Rex and her colleagues (Part 1)(2005), that Katarina's language study has been an example of a human social practice which has served to facilitate her adaptation/generation of her own personalised grammar (p. 113) – species-specific, socially conditioned and individually tailored.

What pedagogical frameworks or approaches appear to render "knowledge about language" effective or ineffective as a component of literacy teaching and learning? The deductive argument for efficacy is asserted strongly by Hilary Janks at the conclusion of her Part 1 contribution (2005): "If discourse analysis is not possible without grammar, and critical reading is not possible without discourse analysis, then we do our students an educational disservice if we do not teach them grammar" (p. 109). In terms of this position, a critical literacy pedagogy renders grammatical knowledge effective as a component of literacy teaching and learning. While Janks' article does not model the pedagogy, it does model the kind of analysis such a pedagogy would seek to incorporate. A comparable argument for efficacy can be found in Martha Kolln and Craig Hancock's Part 1 contribution (2005), where they argue for a rhetorical grammar, modelled in a brief article by Kolln (1996). Inductive arguments for efficacy can be found in the contributions of Weaver and her associates (Part 2) and Wheeler (Part 2). Both, in different ways, develop and articulate pedagogical frameworks – one based in a process model of writing, the other based in

strategies of Contrastive Analysis and Code-switching – deemed to be successful by virtue of an accumulated tradition of successful, classroom literacy practices. This being said, there is still clearly room for a variety of research traditions to be brought to bear with a view to evaluating the claims of the sorts of approaches represented by this sample.

In conclusion, I would like to once more express my gratitude to the contributors who have trusted this journal, and me as guest editor, with their scholarship. I would like to think I am a better thinker as a result of your generosity. It is my hope that my attempt at a few synthesising comments has neither misrepresented your substance and intent, nor trivialised the issue we all so obviously care about. I am sure that these conversations will continue, both in this journal and in other forums.

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