

## *Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics'* first 15 years: an introductory comment

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Journal indexes are a guide to the future as well as the past. Insofar as academics have an idealized conception of what their subject is 'about', an index can provide grounds for useful reflection, for it holds a mirror up to their practice, and provides signposts to the way a field is developing. My conception of the linguistic dimension of our subject, for speech, goes something like this. (An analogous reasoning would apply to writing and signing.) The primary purpose of language is to enable people to communicate with each other. This requires that they interact, meaningfully, in connected speech. To achieve this goal, they need to express their meanings using the forms of pronunciation, sentence structure, and vocabulary.

Turning this into discipline names, and ignoring all theoretical contention in the interests of making a simple point: I locate the study of primary purpose in the domains of pragmatics (interaction), semantics (meaningfulness), and discourse (connected speech); I locate the study of expression in the domains of phonetics and phonology (for pronunciation), grammar (for sentence structure), and again semantics (for vocabulary).

Three assumptions. (1) All of these domains are prominently implicated in the study of linguistic disability. If the field is developing in a balanced way, we would expect a representative clinical linguistic journal to achieve a balance of contributions over time. (2) *Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics (CL&P)* is the best example of a representative journal that we have. (3) Fifteen years is a sufficient time to demonstrate representativeness.

Table 1 shows the 360 articles found in volumes 1-15 inclusive. (The list excludes

Table 1. *Number of CL&P articles falling into various linguistic domains in volumes 1-15*

Linguistic themes	Journal volume numbers														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Phonetics	1	4	18	12	6	4	9	8	4	14	7	8	8	12	23
Phonology	4	9	2	3	7	9	7	6	8	1	10	5	7	9	19
Graphology	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Grammar	1	4	2	5	2	2	5	2	0	2	1	3	1	3	1
Semantics	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Discourse	0	0	1	3	2	1	0	0	1	1	4	7	3	2	5
Pragmatics	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	0
Sociolinguistics	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Linguistic theory	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Methodology	2	2	3	4	1	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	3	5

letters and other responses, and reviews.) Articles were classified on the basis of a judgement of their primary focus, as reflected in their titles and abstracts. In two cases (an article on semantic/pragmatic disorder and one on syntax/pragmatics profiling) the subject-matter was so evenly split between two domains that it would have been arbitrary to assign them to one or the other, so I have assigned them to both, making a total of 362.

Balance we evidently have not got. The table makes a single main point: 244 of the 362 assignments relate to phonetics and phonology (67%). It is a constant bias. If we break the 15 years down into three 5-year groups, we find similar proportions: 62% (volumes 1–5), 72% (volumes 6–10) and 67% (volumes 11–15). Grammar comes next, with 34 articles, then discourse (30—all dealing with the way disability manifests itself in connected speech, in various clinical conditions and settings). Under methodology, I include a range of articles where the focus is on the use of individual tests, procedures, and techniques of intervention, without any particular reference being made to a linguistic domain. Perhaps some of these could have been assigned to pragmatics, which certainly needs every bit of help it can get, as this domain is represented by just nine articles (on speech acts, politeness, communicative flexibility, echoing, imitation, semantic-pragmatic disorder, and pragmatic profiling, along with two studies of repair strategies and of conversational topics, either of which might have been assigned to the discourse domain).

Semantics ranked equally to pragmatics, and here too we see only a sporadic range of topics: temporal reference, use of instrumental verbs, naming ability, lexical repetitiveness (twice), and lexical acquisition (twice), along with a study of inference and relevance theory and a case study of semantic-pragmatic disorder, either of which might have been assigned to the pragmatics domain.

The three articles assigned to sociolinguistics dealt with race, non-standard dialects, and the general discussion of the nature of clinical sociolinguistics. The four assigned to linguistic theory were on parameter theory, sign theory, computational linguistics, and the interaction between linguistic levels. The two assigned to graphology were both to do with spelling.

Other points of linguistic relevance relate to the coverage of languages other than English: 20 languages were the major focus of 45 articles (12%): Arabic, Cantonese, Dutch, Finnish, French, Hebrew, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Norwegian, Persian, Portuguese, Putonghua, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, Welsh and Xhosa. Five articles dealt with aspects of bilingualism, and another five took a cross-linguistic perspective.

The index can also be analysed from a clinical point of view, but that is not the focus of this commentary. The clinical category which attracted most research was aphasia/dysphasia (42 articles), followed by apraxia/dyspraxia (23), dysarthria (22), deafness/hearing loss (19), stuttering (13) and cleft lip and palate (11). At the other end of the scale, dyslexia and dysphonia were examples of categories represented by single articles. There were less than 20 articles which called themselves case studies, for all domains. A separate statistic which cannot be derived from the index is that (excluding 46 articles which are indeterminate) 60% of the articles were on children and 40% on adults.

The field has come on amazingly in these 15 years, and—insofar as the journal title reflects two domains—clinical phonetics is being especially well progressed. But there is a long way to go before the contributions reflect the range of insights which linguistics as a whole can provide. It is disappointing to see so little on the three

domains related to my primary purposes, and on languages other than English. The book-review list shows that there were as many books published in this period on pragmatics as articles. Maybe that is where the productive energy is going. But a field which produces books in the absence of research-based articles is going to become increasingly woolly.

If I had to pick on one domain which is particularly crucial to our whole business, I would choose semantics, which continues to be the Cinderella of clinical linguistics. 'Semantic studies have lagged behind most other aspects of linguistic investigation', I said introducing the relevant chapter in *Clinical Linguistics* (1981: 131), and I had no reason to change my mind in 1998, when I carried out an exercise of the present type based on the articles in *Child Language Teaching and Therapy* (with some reference to the *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*), the results of which show that *CL&P* is not alone in its preoccupations. If there is one direction in which I hope our subject will go over the next 15 years, accordingly, it is in the direction of a well-developed semantics, and I hope the Editors of *CL&P* will be inundated with contributions relating to this domain. It is time for Cinderella to go to the Ball.

### References

- CRYSTAL, D., 1981, *Clinical Linguistics* (Vienna and New York: Springer Verlag).  
CRYSTAL, D., 1998, Sense: the final frontier. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, **14**, 1–27.