



11th Research Seminar

Friday, 9 April 2010

Salón de Grados (ground floor),
12.00–14.00 pm

Facultad de Filología
University of Santiago de Compostela

the research network consisting of the research groups
based at the Universities of Santiago de Compostela and Vigo

Variation, Linguistic Change and Grammaticalization (USC)
Spoken English Research at the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC)
Language Variation and Textual Categorisation (UVigo)
Methods and Materials for the Teaching and Acquisition of Foreign Languages
(UVigo)

is pleased to announce the following talks and programme:

1. **Kathryn Allan (University College London;**
<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english/about/staff/ka.htm>): “An
***academic* question? Exploring the meaning of a contemporary**
keyword through historical text resources”
2. **Eduardo Coto-Villalibre (USC): “On the use of *get*-passives in**
spoken New Englishes: A corpus-based approach”
3. **Brief report on the proceedings from the *ELC2 Postgraduate***
***Conference*.**

Abstract for Kathryn Allan:

The adjective *academic* has both positive and negative senses in Present Day English: it can describe anything related to higher learning or ‘scholarly’, but it is also used to mean ‘unpractical’ or ‘trivial’. This seems to reflect popular opinion about higher education in modern society: there is a tension between, on the one hand, the perceived prestige and value associated with scholarly activity and higher learning and, on the other, a view of non-vocational learning as indulgent and lacking practical use, and of academic institutions as irrelevant ‘ivory towers’ cut off from real life. Since *academic* seems to be caught up with contemporary

debates about the nature of academia, it could be considered a modern keyword in Raymond Williams' sense: a word that has 'virtually forced itself on my attention because the problems of its meaning seemed to me inextricably bound up with the problems it was being used to discuss' (Williams 1976: 13).

The pejorated 'unpractical' sense of *academic* is first attested in *OED2* in 1886, although some preliminary research using the *Times Digital Archive* suggests that there are slightly earlier examples (and therefore that redating in *OED3* is likely). This paper considers whether large-scale historical text resources such as the *Times Digital Archive* and the *19th Century British Library Newspapers Database* can offer fresh insights into the emergence of new polysemous senses that appear to be clearly culturally motivated. It explores possible triggers for a pejorated sense of *academic*, and examines the process by which the emerging new sense becomes more frequent and less contextually restricted.

Abstract for Eduardo Coto-Villalibre:

The aim of my talk is twofold. In the first part of my presentation, I will examine the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic characteristics of *get*-passives in Present Day spoken English, as well as the similarities and differences between *get*- and *be*-passives, as represented in the spoken component of the *British National Corpus (BNC)*. In the second part of the presentation, I will introduce the topic of my future research, namely the study of *get*-passive constructions beyond the standard varieties of English. I will focus in particular on some of the South and South-East Asian varieties of English - the English spoken in India, Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines. A comparative corpus-based analysis of these four New English varieties will be carried out with data from the *International Corpus of English (ICE)*.

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[Note: at the end of the seminar a light buffet lunch will be served at the Auditorio de Galicia.]