

**Linguistic Ethnography Forum**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**September 2002- July 2003**

to BAAL Executive Committee

**1. Background**

The UK Linguistic Ethnography Forum (LEF) was set up in March 2001, and we aim

- \* to bring together researchers conducting linguistic ethnography here and abroad
- \* to explore a range of past and current work, to identify key issues, and to engage in methodologically and theoretically well-tuned debate

We were accepted as the first Special Interest Group (SIG) within the British Association for Applied Linguistics at the BAAL AGM in September 2001. At the time, there were no formal guidelines on setting up SIGs in BAAL, and so one of our first tasks was to work with BAAL on formalising a SIGs policy. We contributed to the generic guidelines that BAAL published in March 2002,<sup>1</sup> and we are now in the process of bringing LEF into line with these emerging recommendations.

At our LEF Business Meeting at the BAAL Conference in September 2002, an Acting Coordinating Committee was elected, with a view to

- 1) continuing LEF's programme of academic meetings, and
- 2) developing its organisational structure.

The people elected were: Ben Rampton (Acting Convenor), Janet Maybin (Acting Treasurer), Angela Creese (Acting Meetings Coordinator), Karin Tusting (Acting Communications Secretary), David Barton (Acting Ordinary Member). Since then, David has stepped down, due to major commitments elsewhere, and Richard Barwell has agreed to take over as Acting Treasurer from Janet, who will continue to contribute to the committee's work as Acting Ordinary Member.

What follows is a very brief outline of our activity since September 2002 - much greater detail can be found at our (new) website - [www.ling-ethnog.org.uk](http://www.ling-ethnog.org.uk)

**2.1 Academic**

In the period September 2002 to July 2003, we have organised two meetings (the 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> we've held since we were first set up):

- a) LEF Colloquium at the 2002 BAAL Annual Meeting in Cardiff. This half-day event was divided into three sections: (i) recent and ongoing PhD research, with presentations by Andrey Rosowsky, Nigel Musk and Elena Ionnidou, and a discussion led by Julian Edge; (ii) a session on reflexivity and fieldwork, focusing on a presentation by Vally Lytra; (iii) a theoretical dialogue about the relevance to ethnography of Bernstein's 'language of description', led by Gemma Moss.
- b) A two-day seminar at Edge Hill College, on 'Translation, Interpretation and Representation: Issues for Linguistic Ethnography' (7-8 April 2003). Closely related to the theme, we addressed institutional interpreting processes (Moira Inghilleri) and the translation of Andean *testimonios* (Rosaleen Howard and Lindsay Crickmay), and we discussed pre-circulating readings (Pratt, Mehrez, Cronin). In addition, we had a classroom data session led

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.baal.org.uk/sig\\_guidelines.htm](http://www.baal.org.uk/sig_guidelines.htm)

by Richard Barwell, raising issues of interpretation, and Adam Lefstein led a session which asked how interpretive researchers could be affected by current policy interest in 'systematic reviews' of research. Jo Arthur was the local organiser, and she and the presenters went far beyond the normal call of academic duty, working very hard to structure the event so that there was a lot of dialogue and a good deal (but not too much!) coherence. Peter Flynn and Piotr Kuhiwczak both reported on the event in *BAAL News* (as well as at our website - see <http://www.ling-ethnog.org.uk/edgehill2003.htm>).

For the period September 2003 to July 2004, we are planning two events:

- c) A half-day colloquium at the BAAL Annual Meeting (4-6 Sept) in Leeds on '*Linguistic Ethnography at the Interface with Education*'. An outline can be found at [www.ling-ethnog.org.uk/baalleeds2003.htm](http://www.ling-ethnog.org.uk/baalleeds2003.htm).
- d) A two-day seminar in the Spring of 2004 on the relationship between linguistic and post-structuralist feminist traditions in ethnography.

Since its inception,

e) LEF has also been developing good international links. There have been participants based outside the UK at all of our seminars - see the international visitors' reflections at <http://www.ling-ethnog.org.uk/leicesteroverseasreflections.rtf> - and in November 2002, Brian Street, Angela Creese and Ben Rampton attended a seminar on the linguistic anthropology of education held at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. The organisers were Stanton Wortham and Betsy Rymes, and the meeting was also attended by Jim Collins (who was at LEF's first ever meeting in 2001), Misty Jaffe (who came to our 2002 meeting in Gregynog), George Kamberelis, Kevin O'Connor, Steve Thorne and Nancy Hornberger. There is substantial interest in UK LEF's activity in North America, and Ben presented a report on both our activity so far and on some of the issues arising.

## **2.2 Organisational**

During the year, the Acting Coordinating Committee has made quite a lot of progress setting up a formal and operational infra-structure for LEF. This has involved work on:

- a) a constitution for LEF. We are currently on a 8<sup>th</sup> draft (see attached), and have discussed an early version at a general meeting during the Edgehill seminar in April 2003.
- b) officers' job descriptions for the Coordinating Committee. We held a(n open) half-day meeting in June 2003 in which we drafted lists of the responsibilities and tasks of each of the Officers on the committee (see attached). These will be circulated for comment on the LEF email list.
- c) Official elections to the Coordinating Committee and a vote on the Constitution will be held in March or April 2004. Our initial plan was to get everything approved in September 2003 at an LEF general meeting at the BAAL AM, but experience suggests that during large conferences, business meeting attendance tends to be rather low, due to competing attractions. So instead, we have decided to shift LEF's main business meetings to the well-attended LEF Spring seminars, and our first official AGM will take place in the Spring of 2004.

Beyond working on a formal structure for LEF, we have also been busy establishing (and using) facilities for communication with our members and with the academic community more generally:

d) our email list has been operating since 2001, and it involves more than 130 researchers. During the period Sept 2002 to July 2003, the list has been used for discussion of specific issues (e.g. the merits and demerits of different kinds of recording equipment), for circulating conference notices, and for working out themes and issues for future LEF meetings.

e) We have also established an LEF website ([www.ling-ethnog.org.uk](http://www.ling-ethnog.org.uk)). This contains extensive information about LEF's past and future activities, papers & reports from LEF meetings, and contact lists and data on LEF participants. Our website is also linked to BAAL's ([www.baal.org.uk](http://www.baal.org.uk)).

Financially, we have been carrying a small surplus over from our three Spring Seminar, and our current balance stands at £589.07. But the high level of activity (and interest) associated with LEF may need a firmer financial underpinning, and Richard Barwell, who has taken over as Acting Treasurer, is currently drawing up a discussion paper on this.

### **3. Final remarks**

This has certainly been a busy year, not only with our continuing to organise academic meetings but also with laying down the formal foundations for our future. As BAAL's first SIG, there is quite a lot of new territory that needs to be charted, but we have received a lot of help and encouragement from the BAAL Executive Committee, and we hope that some of the procedures that we are establishing in LEF may be of some use to other SIGs. But maybe most important of all, at least within the Coordinating Committee, it has felt as though LEF is doing quite well addressing its main aims (see 1 above).

Ben Rampton

on behalf of the UK LEF Acting Coordinating Committee

(Richard Barwell, Angela Creese, Janet Maybin, Ben Rampton, Karin Tusting)

1<sup>st</sup> July 2003