Editors' Note

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Journal of English Linguistics 2009 37: 303
DOI: 10.1177/0075424209349567

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37(4) 303–304

DOI: 10.1177/0075424209349567
http://jengl.sagepub.com

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As our final issue of the year goes to press, we are delighted to include our fourth year-end interview with one of the titans in the field of English Linguistics, Richard W. Bailey. Richard W. Bailey has had a significant impact on the field both with his voluminous scholarship, focusing on topics as broad as modern American Dialects, World Englishes, and English lexicography, and with the important training he provided graduate students, who themselves have gone on to make important scholarly contributions. As he wrote in one of our very early "In the Profession" columns, one of the most important things we need to think about as teachers is what we want our students to remember after they have forgotten most of the content of what we taught. His answer is that "they should know something about the power of words: real words spoken by real people." Richard W. Bailey's reflections captured in this interview are a powerful reminder of the treasures of looking at those words. The interview was conducted by Michael Adams in the context of Perspectives on English Language Studies: A Symposium in Honor of Richard W. Bailey, which was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in December 2008. Adams then did a follow-up interview in August 2009 to address some additional questions. We greatly appreciate both Bailey and Adams agreeing to participate in our annual interview feature.

Like our previous year-end interviews, the interview with Richard W. Bailey highlights some of the guiding principles of Bailey's professional life, the most important of which is summed up in the first part of the title of the interview, "Shut Up and Listen." This captures Bailey's fundamental belief in the importance of listening to people speaking and interacting within the communities and cultures in which they are embedded. It also captures a second piece of Bailey's philosophy, which is the importance of being able to contextualize what you hear within not only a theoretical but also a historical perspective. In the interview, Adams and Bailey take us through some of the paths Bailey has traveled as one of the preeminent linguists working within English Linguistics, including such highlights as his involvement in the Ann Arbor Black English trial and in his early interest in computational and corpus-based methods of analysis. All in all, the interview reminds us of how critical it is to take a broad perspective in our academic pursuits and to understand that no matter which pieces we choose to cast our analytic gaze on, those pieces are always part of a much bigger, more complicated whole.

The two research articles in this issue build on many of the themes discussed by Bailey, particularly his call to study the real words of real people from a variety of perspectives. Tyler Kendall and Walt Wolfram, for instance, examine the use of African American English (AAE) features among three sociopolitical leaders in different contextual settings to show that the use of AAE features is socially distributed among AAE speakers in the same ways that features of all varieties are socially distributed.

Similarly, Thomas Purnell, Eric Raimy, and Joseph Salmons also look at the variation in the speech of a political figure, Sarah Palin, to understand why a politician from Alaska was perceived by so many to speak as if she were from the Upper Midwest.

In their article, "Local and External Language Standards in African American English," Tyler Kendall and Walt Wolfram admonish sociolinguists for focusing on the most "basilectal" speakers of AAE without exploring the kinds of variation that actually occur in communities where AAE is used. They focus on three leaders who are locally prominent in local rural communities and show that these leaders vary both from one another and from their age cohorts in their use of specific features as well as in their style-shifting practices. Kendall and Wolfram argue that the best way to model these differences lies in an understanding of local social practice, norms of self-presentation, and matters of linguistic habitus. They also show the importance of exploring the language use of individuals within the context of social groupings rather than relying on aggregate data alone.

Tom Purnell, Eric Raimy, and Joseph Salmons also focus on the speech of an individual and the ways in which that individual's speech is perceived and subsequently enregistered as belonging to a particular "dialect" in their article, "Defining Dialect, Perceiving Dialect, and New Dialect Formation: Sarah Palin's Speech." In examining several features of former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin's speech and their perception, Purnell et al. show that only a very few, variably produced features elicited the perception of her speech as coming from the Upper Midwest even though her speech shows characteristics of a broad range of northern American dialect features. Purnell et al. use the example of Palin's language use to consider the social and historical currents that lead to dialect enregisterment (Agha 2005) and to show how some features (e.g., the *caught-cot* merger) may be more salient than others (e.g., the merger of high front vowels before /l/). The difference in perceptual salience is one factor that led to the perception of Palin's speech as specifically Midwestern.

With Richard W. Bailey's words in mind, we have been interested to look back at previous issues and ahead to articles forthcoming to take stock of the many rich and exciting ways that scholars in English linguistics are studying the real words of real speakers, from variationist Sociolinguistics to the study of World Englishes, from American dialectology to the History of English, from critical discourse analysis to studies of language contact. Threaded through all of these areas is increased attention to the ways that language attitudes and ideologies play out in the history and current use of any variety of English—a recognition that speakers speak in contexts and communities with powerful belief systems that affect their language choices and that close analysis of speakers' language can reveal these attitudes and ideologies. The availability of more and more corpora of English, both past and present, is also allowing scholars in English Linguistics to draw an ever more detailed picture of the real language of real people—and to our great benefit, these resources and their associated methodologies demand that we strive for explanations and theories that account for all of the data that these speakers and writers produce. It is our privilege to edit a journal that brings these subfields and methodologies in English linguistics into conversation.

Reference

Agha, Asif. 2005. Voice, footing, enregisterment. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15. 38-59.