



THE UNIVERSITY  
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# Discourse Intonation Newsletter

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## *In this issue*

- Retirement and Changes
- Judy Gilbert
- Cobuild on CD-ROM
- Tony Dudley-Evans
- Tim Johns
- Marjorie Brazil
- Michael Halliday
- Favourite Tone-units

## Contents

<i>Judy Gilbert</i>	1
<i>COBUILD on CD-ROM</i>	2
<i>Tim Johns</i>	3
<i>Tony Dudley-Evans</i>	3
<i>Marjorie Brazil</i>	3
<i>Michael Halliday</i>	4
<i>Favourite Tone Units</i>	4

## Retirements and Changes

Welcome to the third issue of the new *Discourse Intonation Newsletter*. First of all, apologies for the late publication of this issue. The first nine months of the year proved to be busier than anticipated, and one of the casualties was this newsletter. There are some changes: from this issue onwards, *DIN* is jointly edited, by Richard Cauldwell and Martin Hewings. It also seems likely that there will be only one issue per year.

One of the functions of this Newsletter is to give you news of people at the University of Birmingham. Much of the news in the previous two letters has been of retirements—and this issue is no exception. On page 3 you will find news of the retirement of Tim Johns and Tony Dudley-Evans. With great sadness also, we report the death of Marjorie Brazil (page 3).

On professional matters, you will also find a brief review of the COBUILD Dictionary on CD-ROM (page 2) and news of a recent Michael Halliday lecture in honour of John Sinclair. And on page 4 we the first in a series of *Favourite Tone-Units* which presents short extracts of talk (overheard or recorded) which illustrate the workings of everyday spontaneous speech.

## Judy Gilbert visits Birmingham



In December 2000—just too late for a mention in the last issue—Judy Gilbert visited Birmingham. Judy is the author of *Clear Speech From the Start: Basic Pronunciation and Listening*



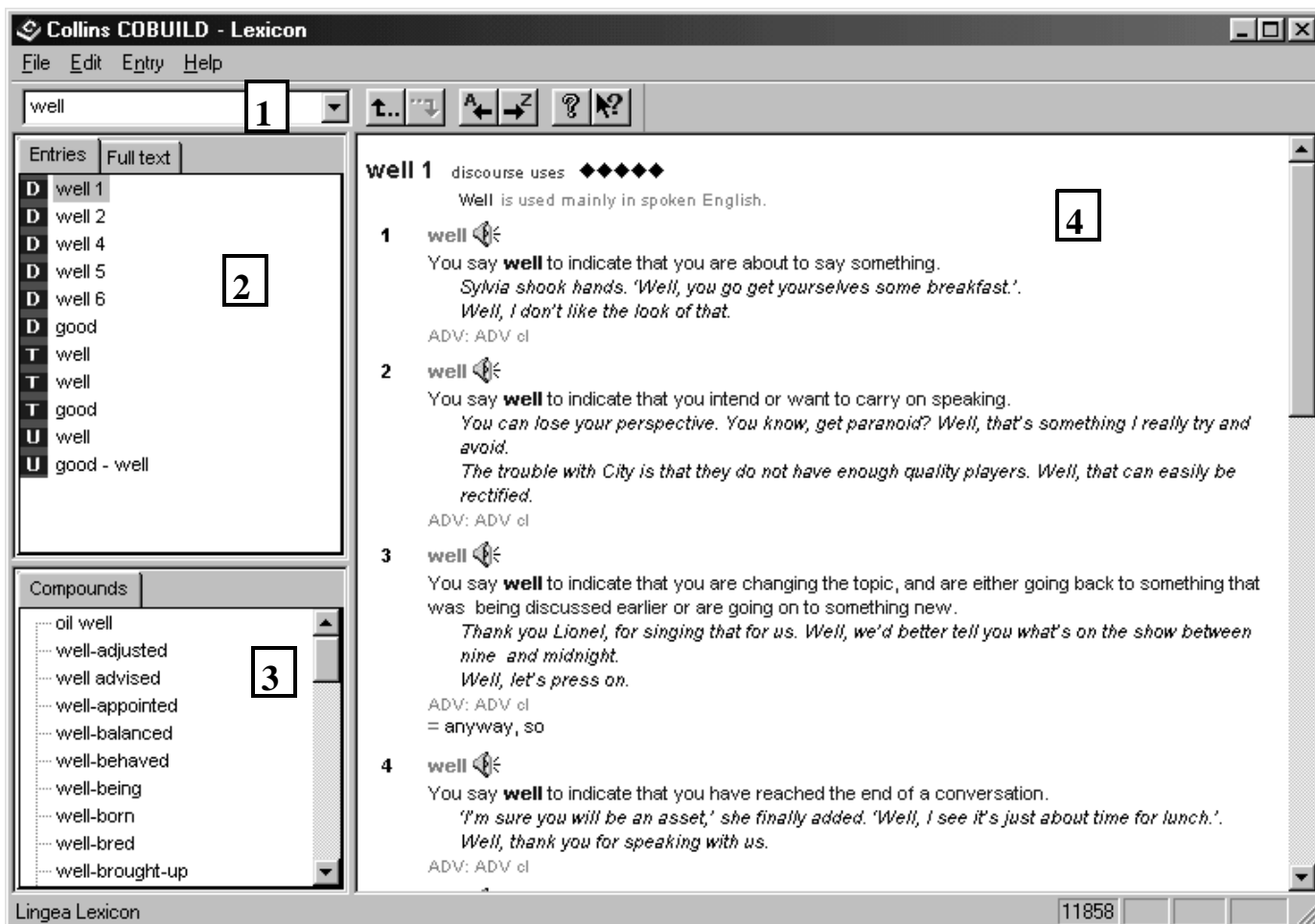
*Comprehension in North American English* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). Judy is someone whose courage I greatly admire. She gave a talk at the home of British Phonetics, University College London, last year. She suspected she might offend the sensibilities of the staff at UCL because of the line she was taking in her publications. She writes materials for teachers who have little training in phonetics, and students who cannot understand lengthy explanations. She expected that some of the simplifications that she had made in her new textbook would incur the wrath of her academic audience. This audience included Professor John Wells, Mike Ashby, and John Maidment. However, Judy explained carefully the characteristics of both the teachers and the students for whom she had written the materials, and showed that all her decisions followed logically from her starting point. Her audience listened with respect and interest—no antagonism at all. I sometimes feel that teachers are intimidated by academics into undervaluing their pedagogic decisions, but Judy and her audience neatly demonstrated that this need not be the case.

Richard

# Cobuild Dictionary (and more) on CD-ROM

First impressions by  
Richard Cauldwell

I do most of my teaching, lecturing, and presentations at conferences with the aid of a laptop computer, which enables me to present soundfiles to demonstrate the points I make about 'how speech actually is' as opposed to 'how textbook authors want it to be'. The Collins Cobuild on CD-ROM is a wonderful help in this task in that it provides good-quality citation-form recordings of British English words (except where the entries themselves are exclusively American e.g. 'ballplayer' when an American accent is heard). There are 67,000 pronunciations including weak forms of words such as 'do'. You can either access Collins Cobuild through the CD-ROM or load it directly onto your hard-drive (it requires 620MB). The CD contains not only the dictionary, but also the *Guide to English Usage*, *Cobuild English Grammar*, *English Usage and Thesaurus*, plus a '5-million-word Wordbank' from the Bank of English. The version I have (Version 1) does not quite do everything that the Collins Cobuild website at <http://www.cobuild.collins.co.uk/> says it should. At the time of writing, the website mentions integration into MS Word, which is not actually possible. The user is pretty much left unguided (the help files are curt)—and I missed having a leaflet to guide me through. As a result, I have not yet made use of anything other than the dictionary component. The screenshot below show the search field (1) (the example is of the word 'well'); the list of entries relating to 'well' in the Dictionary, Thesaurus, and the Usage components (2); a list of compounds involving 'well' (3); and in the main window (4) the dictionary entry, with a speaker icon which, when clicked, will play you the recording. You can record your own pronunciation, and compare it with the original With 67,000 recordings (an enormous logistical task) there are some errors-e.g. 'put' and 'putt' get identical pronunciations-but it is a wonderful resource to have, with recordings just a click away.



## Tim Johns and Tony Dudley-Evans retire

It can truly be said that the retirement of Tim Johns and Tony Dudley-Evans marks the end of an era: between them they have worked for 55 years in the English for International Students Unit. Richard Cauldwell organised a series of eight ‘retirement celebration seminars’ in the Spring Term of 2001—four each—there were also parties in their honour.

### Tim Johns

Tim Johns joined EISU in 1971. The four speakers who came to speak in his honour in the retirement seminars were Mike Scott (University of Liverpool), Scott Windeatt (University of Newcastle), Silvia Bernardini (University of Bologna), and John Higgins (now retired, formerly of Stirling University). Scott Windeatt told of the time when at an early conference on computers and language, Geoffrey Leech with an army of research assistants and a room-sized computer presented some findings, only to be outdone by Tim who produced a Sinclair computer out of one pocket a printer out of another and produced teacher-friendly materials. Tim will remain very active in retirement, researching and publishing articles on Arthur Ransome, and promoting his view of language and language teaching on the web. If you have not visited his Web pages yet, we do urge you to do so. You can find them at <http://web.bham.ac.uk/johnstf/>



### Tony Dudley-Evans



Tony Dudley-Evans joined the Unit in 1976. The speakers who came to give seminars in his honour were Anna Mauranen (University of Tampere, Finland), Willie Henderson (The University of Birmingham), and Ann Hewings (Open University), and Theo van Leeuwen of Cardiff University. Theo van Leeuwen gave the final seminar in the series, entitled ‘Jazz and Genre’ which neatly encapsulates Tony’s academic and personal interests. Indeed Tony has taken early retirement to pursue his interest in jazz. He is a major force in the UK, and particularly in the West Midlands area, in organising and promoting jazz concerts and tours by visiting artists and bands. He was director of the English for International Students Unit for many years, preceding Martin Hewings and Judith Lamie. In the future, you will be more likely to see him at conferences of Arts organisers than those associated with language teaching.

## Marjorie Brazil

It is with great regret that we report that Marjorie Brazil, widow of David, died on Friday 16th November at the age of 74, after a long illness. The funeral was held at Grafton Flyford Church on Monday 26th November, and Martin Hewings and Richard Cauldwell attended. Many recipients of this newsletter will remember Marjorie’s friendliness, joy and excitement as she travelled the world with David – she even travelled to Kenya in April this year, despite her illness.

The weather on the day of the funeral was magnificently autumnal: bright crisp and cool, with the leaves on the trees a wonderful array of orange, yellow and red. This brilliant weather set the stage for a wonderful, moving farewell to Marjorie from the pastor, the families of Jon and Christopher Brazil, friends and neighbours. May she rest in peace.



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## Michael Halliday gives the first Sinclair Lecture



Last year, in the first issue of the new Newsletter we reported on Professor John Sinclair's Valedictory Lecture. On his retirement he was given three presents: one of which was a series of five annual lectures in his honour. The first lecture took place on 12th June, delivered by Professor Emeritus of Sydney University Michael Halliday.

The lecture was entitled 'Judge takes no cap in mid-sentence'. The words of the title comes from a style manual, and in that context means 'Do not begin the word *judge* with a capital letter'. In another (legal) context it could be taken to refer to the practice of a judge placing a black cap on his head while delivering a sentence of death. The main theme of the lecture was the complementarity of lexis and grammar. The next 'Sinclair Lecture' will be given by Professor Ron Carter of the University of Nottingham.

## Favourite Tone-units

Murray Walker, the famous British motor racing commentator, once said: 'When I consider Formula One racing now with what it was twenty years ago, it's safer, but not completely safe'. He spoke the last few words as follows:

01 // ↘ ↗ it's SA FER //

02 // ↘ but NOT comPLETEly safe //

Interestingly, both syllables of the word 'safer' are prominent: the second syllable, containing the comparative morpheme 'er' (normally unstressed, with schwa) is made both prominent and tonic (referring, fall-rise tone). Murray's choices illustrate that the desire to be absolutely clear and at the same time economic ('improving in safety' is conveyed in the one word 'safer') means that speakers can dramatically alter the sound shape of a word. Thus 'fer' becomes prominent and tonic and the vowel quality changes from schwa to the 'nurse' vowel. For the same reasons, we might – in other contexts – expect to find the following:

03 // ↘ ↗ it's DAR KER //

04 // ↘ but NOT dark eNOUGH //

OR

05 // ↘ ↗ it'BRIGH TER //

06 // ↘ but NOT suffICIently bright //

Notice that, as with 'safe' in 02 above, tone-units 04 and 06 have 'dark' and 'bright' respectively as non-prominent – these concepts are brought fully 'in play' in 03 and 05 and do not need to be made prominent in 04 and 06.

This is the first in a series of *Favourite Tone-Units* - short extracts of talk (overheard or recorded) which illustrate the workings of everyday spontaneous speech.

For more on the meaning of prominence see Brazil, 1997 (Chapter 2 ) and Brazil, 1995 (Chapter 8).