

June 2008

1. Messages from the outgoing president and the new president

2. Thank you to long-serving ALT officers

3. ALT Conference: Berkeley 2009

4. ALT Awards

5. ALT's website

6. Mouton de Gruyter

7. Teaching materials on language endangerment

1. Messages from the new president and the outgoing president

1.1. Message from Nick Evans, ALT's outgoing president

As outgoing president of ALT I would like to bid farewell from office - though certainly not from ALT, where I will continue to remain a dedicated rank-and-file member - with some closing remarks in this issue of the newsletter.

What brings us together as typologists is a shared love of languages and a curiosity about what their diversity and unity have to tell us about many aspects of human life.

The field of typology is a very special one.

First, and at this point still only in principle, it draws on every one of the world's 6000 languages and the peoples and cultures that have moulded them. A distant dream which we should strive to move closer towards is that of bringing speakers of every one of these languages, as spokespeople for the many intellectual traditions they represent in finding ways to talk about this world, into the grand enterprise of typology.

Second, in addition to diversity of languages we must also value the varied insights given by the diversity of different scholarly approaches to doing typology - from St Petersburg to Cologne, from Paris to Stanford. Though ALT has achieved much through its ethos of methodological and scientific pluralism, the geographical distribution of its membership remains skewed - the Americas, India, China and Africa are all woefully under-represented - and until we fire scholars from those regions with the same enthusiasm for typology found in Europe, Russia, Japan or Australia our field will not realise its full potential. Meeting this challenge will require a number of initiatives - the generous decision by Mouton de Gruyter to extend on-line journal access to scholars from designated countries in the developing world is one; the location of our biennial conferences in a wider range of regions is a second; and the founding of local chapters and the training of young scholars in areas without traditions of typological research is another.

Third, good typology draws on many different approaches - from foundational descriptive work of little-known languages, through individual syntactic or phonological studies of particular phenomena, through samples of various sizes which challenge our synthesising abilities and increasingly call for new techniques, often from neighbouring fields such as biomathematics. Likewise, greater interaction with other fields like psychology, neurobiology and aphasiology, which help us to understand the

biological underpinnings that shape possible language systems, is becoming ever more important. In the other direction we typologists have not, I believe, done a good enough job of explaining the significance of their discoveries to the broader scientific community. The work of psychologists and cognitive scientists, for example, is rarely informed by the discoveries of our field, but even in linguistics our impact has been much less than it should be. Next year's biennial conference in Berkeley is in the midst of the LSA Institute. Organised by two figures dedicated to improving dialogue between typology and the rest of linguistics, Larry Hyman and Johanna Nichols, it offers us a unique chance to engage with the wider field of linguistics and at the same time promote interest in typology in North America, where it has declined notably over the last couple of decades.

Our scholarly association plays a central role in creating the dialogues - or multilogues - that bring these ideas together. And the two central vehicles for doing so have been the journal and the biennial conferences.

Our journal, *Linguistic Typology*, recently celebrated 10 years of steadily growing stature, impact and character under Frans Plank's inimitable and tireless leadership and is now deservedly recognised as a top-rung journal in the field.

Last year's conference in Paris established new levels of participation and excitement and I would like to use this parting address to thank, this time in print, the organising committee - Isabelle Brill, Jocelyne Fernandez-Vest, David Gil, Ekkehart König, Brian Migliazza, Edith Moravcsik, Stéphane Robert, and Martine Vanhove - for their dedication and creativity, as well as the French Ministry of Research, the CNRS (in particular Alain Peyraube) and the Fédération Typologie et Universaux Linguistiques du CNRS for their financial and logistical support. I would also like to thank the committees of the Panini and Greenberg prizes and in particular their chairs, Marianne Mithun and Eva Schultze-Berndt, for the work they put into reading the submitted dissertations: the eminence of the committees and the work they put into their judging contributes enormously to the status these prizes will carry and thereby to the assistance they will give to young scholars.

I would also like to thank two other founding officers of the Association who have recently completed long terms of service: secretary Johan van der Auwera, who over the 12 years since ALT was established has been the architect of so much of what is good about it, and webmaster Peter Kahrel whose work maintaining the website has held our far-flung international community together.

I would also like to welcome the new office bearers in the Association - Anna Siewierska as president, Jean-Christophe Verstraete as secretary and Ljuba Veselinova as webmaster. We are lucky to have such talented people give of their time and commitment.

Finally, I thank the membership of ALT for the manifold acts of support, friendship and intellectual stimulation they have given me over my term as president. It has been equally an honour and a pleasure to serve as President of such a varied, talented and generous community. See you all in Berkeley next year!

Nick Evans

1.2. Message from Anna Siewierska, ALT's new president

Dear Colleagues,

I am very honoured to have been elected the fourth president of ALT and would like to express my most sincere thanks to all those who put their trust in me. I very much hope that I will be able to steer the Association

as successfully as my illustrious predecessors, Bernard Comrie, Marianne Mithun and Nick Evans. I am very much enjoying working together with Jean-Christophe Verstraete, the new secretary-treasurer, Ljuba Veselinova, our new webmaster, and the executive committee: Alexandra Aikhenvald, Balthasar Bickel, Grev Corbett, Nicholas Evans, Martin Haspelmath, Jack Hawkins and Frans Plank.

Like all presidents, I would like to see the association grow both in numbers and in influence. Our membership still mainly consists of scholars from Europe and North America. It would be wonderful to see some growth, particularly in geographical areas such as Asia, Africa and South America. While I would like to think that ultimately we can achieve truly global coverage, I would like to suggest that for the next four years we concentrate on one area. My proposal is that we focus on China. There are several reasons for this suggestion. First of all, among the enormous population of China, and the many universities and other institutions of higher learning, there are bound to be scholars willing to engage with linguistic typology and the international typological community. We could benefit greatly from their expertise and knowledge. Secondly, many of us already have important individual and institutional contacts with the Chinese academic community which we could develop further. We would not therefore be starting from scratch, so to speak. Moreover, our support could be of benefit to them, creating a wider forum for their activities and providing more publication outlets. Thirdly, as so many Chinese students come to study in Europe, the US and Australia, we have a chance of igniting their interest in typology while they are abroad. The likelihood that they will develop their interest further will be all the greater if typology receives more of a presence in China itself. And finally, given the high mobility of Chinese students and increasing mobility of Chinese academics, now seems the right time to make a concentrated effort to encourage their interest in typology.

If you share my concern in our lack of representation in China and have some ideas as to how we could remedy this situation, I would be very pleased to hear from you. Some simple things that have occurred to me are:

- a) the possibility of sponsoring or supporting the participation of a young typologist from China at the next ALT conference;
- b) organising a special workshop on the languages of China in Berkeley or at the ALT conference after that;
- c) having some ALT publicity material in Mandarin;
- d) pooling our information on past and future lecture tours or conference presentations given by ALT members at Chinese universities (to help us establish where the interest in typology is to be found).

I look forward to hearing your views and to your suggestions.

Best wishes

Anna Siewierska

2. Thank you to long-serving ALT officers

After the 2007 elections, the president and the executive committee decided to honour three long-serving ALT officers: Johan Van der Auwera, who was ALT's secretary-treasurer for twelve years, Peter Kahrel, who was ALT's webmaster for twelve years, and Frans Plank, who founded ALT and has been the driving force behind its journal since 1997. To recognize their service to ALT, they were presented with a medal and a personalised present in Konstanz (Frans), Stockholm (Johan) and Lancaster (Peter). The recipients appreciated the recognition, and were delighted with the presents.

3. ALT Conference: Berkeley 2009

Association for Linguistic Typology 8th Biennial Conference (ALT8)
Typology and the study of language: Comparative grammar and beyond

University of California, Berkeley
July 23-26, 2009

Website: <http://lsa2009.berkeley.edu/alt8>

Abstracts on any topic in typology are invited for 20-minute papers, posters, and possibly a limited number of workshops. Non-members of ALT may submit abstracts but will be expected to join ALT in order to present a paper at the meeting.

Deadline for receipt of abstracts: January 12, 2009

Instructions for submitting abstracts will be on the conference website soon. Essentially, abstracts will be about 500 words (1 page), submitted on-line to the conference website. Decisions will be announced about March 1.

Program committee: Ekkehard König, chair; Jocelyne Fernandez-Vest, Larry Hyman, Edith Moravcsik, Johanna Nichols, Martine Vanhove.

4. ALT awards

At the conference in 2009, ALT will present two awards:

The Joseph Greenberg Award for the best doctoral dissertation or equivalent in linguistic typology, for a thesis accepted between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2008. Martin Haspelmath will be the chair for the 2009 Greenberg award. The deadline for submission will be 31 January 2009.

The Georg von der Gabelentz Grammar Award, for published grammars, published between 1 January 2005 and 31 December 2008. Nikolaus Himmelmann will be the chair for the 2009 Gabelentz award. The deadline for submission will be November 30 2008.

For both awards, a formal call for contributions will be sent out later in 2008.

5. ALT's website

ALT's website has moved to a new URL: <http://www.linguistic-typology.org>

Our new webmaster, Ljuba Veselinova, is working on a revised version of the site. Notable features will include an updated membership database, and a bibliography of reference grammars, possibly in the form of a wiki.

6. Mouton de Gruyter

6.1. ALT membership

We asked Mouton de Gruyter to review their system of sending unclear invoices to ALT's members. In response to our suggestions, Mouton de Gruyter assured us that from now on, invoices will be sent with an accompanying letter that explains what the invoice is for, and how it can be paid, i.e. by cheque, credit card, or wire transfer.

Should anyone experience problems when applying for or renewing membership, please contact the secretary-treasurer: jean-christophe.verstraete at arts.kuleuven.be

6.2. Discounted Mouton books

Mouton de Gruyter offers a special ALT discount for its series Empirical Approaches to Language Typology, and Mouton Grammar Library. To receive the discount, members should order on-line via Mouton de Gruyter's website, and mention their membership discount in the "message" field (underneath the billing and shipping information). The on-line ordering system will show the full price, but a note in the "message" field will allow Mouton's staff to charge the reduced ALT price.

7. Teaching materials on language endangerment

(From Kees Hengeveld, Chair, NWO Endangered Languages Programme)

The Endangered Languages Programme (ELP) of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) has as one of its continuous aims to increase the awareness of the problem of language endangerment among the general public.

The programme felt that one of the best ways to achieve this for the years to come was to prepare teaching materials on the issue of language endangerment for secondary education.

At the request of the ELP, Cecilia Odé prepared a fascinating multimedia course in Dutch to be used in geography classes, that has been received very well within the educational system in The Netherlands.

Encouraged by this response, we decided to prepare an English version of the course as well, which is now available at: www.bedreigdetalen.nl. We would appreciate it very much if you could have a look at this new version. If you feel this course could be useful within the educational system of your country, please help us bring it to the attention of potentially interested organizations in secondary education in your country.

We are also investigating the possibilities of translating the course into other languages, and would appreciate your help with this as well.