

ALT News No. 44

January 2009

1. *Message from the President*
2. *ALT conferences: Berkeley 2009, Hong Kong 2011*
3. *Membership poll*
4. *E-LT*
5. *News from the Executive Committee*
6. *Website & membership database*
7. *ALT awards*

**1. *Message from the President***

In the last newsletter I announced my intention of focusing the attention of ALT on propagating linguistic typology in China. I am pleased to be able to inform you that my call has been very warmly received both by our colleagues in China and members of ALT. I am very grateful for the expressions of support that you have given me and for the practical help that you have offered such as providing contact information, filling me in on past initiatives (I will summarise these in a future newsletter), sending materials to colleagues in China etc.

Over the course of the last six months I have been exploring various additional ways of creating greater awareness of linguistic typology in China and increasing our links with scholars interested in working within typology and/or utilising it in their descriptive and theoretical research.

One initiative that has emerged is the publication of translations into Mandarin of key typological articles which have not been easily accessible within China and which are likely to be of help to Chinese scholars working on the documentation of the languages of China. This initiative has been launched by Dr. Weng Feng from Peking University and The Central University of Nationalities (CUN) in Beijing. He has secured the cooperation of Prof. Dai Qingxia who is to head the editorial board of the series of volumes. The other members of the editorial board are to be Randy La Polla and myself. Prof. Weng Feng and Dr. Hu Chenglong will be coordinating the whole process. We are currently at the stage of selecting the articles for the first volume of about 400 pages. Needless to say, there is still a lot of work ahead of us relating to the securing of copyright permissions, finding translators etc. I trust that I will be able to bring you more information about this in the next newsletter.

Another initiative that I have been discussing with Prof. Liu Danqing from the Linguistics Institute, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing (CASS) is the holding of a typology workshop in 2010 in Beijing which would create a forum for typologists in mainland China to present their research as a warm up event for ALT 2011.

I hope to get further ideas from my visit to China in May this year and from attending the 17th International Association of Chinese Linguistics meeting in Paris in July.

I very warmly welcome any suggestions that you might have.

Anna Siewierska

## **2. ALT conferences**

### *2.1. Berkeley 2009*

The 8th Biennial Meeting of the Association for Linguistic Typology will take place in Berkeley July 23-26, 2009. The meeting will start with registration most likely late on Thursday afternoon, July 23, followed by a combined ALT8/LSA Institute Forum Evening Lecture by Mark Baker. Registration will continue and regular sessions will begin on Friday morning July 24.

A total of 164 abstracts were received for oral and poster presentations, as well as a few workshop proposals, which are now being reviewed by the Program Committee. (Recall that simultaneous workshops were discouraged. If accepted it is hoped that the meeting can end in the early afternoon on Sunday, July 26, and that these workshops would then follow, but this cannot be determined until the review process of all submissions has been completed.)

Besides Mark Baker, the two other invited speakers are Balthasar Bickel and Joan Bresnan.

The Program Committee hopes to make the results of the abstract review process known to the submitters by March 2. A preliminary program and further information, e.g. concerning lodging, will be made available shortly thereafter.

Questions should be addressed to [alt8@berkeley.edu](mailto:alt8@berkeley.edu).

### *2.2. Hong Kong 2011*

ALT received four excellent bids for its 9<sup>th</sup> conference, in 2011: Dartmouth, Hong Kong, Leipzig, and Oxford. We are very grateful to all colleagues who offered to host the conference, and we hope that calls for the next conferences will receive as many high-quality offers.

The Executive Committee decided on Hong Kong as the venue for ALT9 in 2011, to be held in mid-August. It took into account general principles like alternation between regions and generating interest in new areas, as well as the results of the membership poll (see next point).

## **3. Membership poll**

### *3.1. Questions*

Last September, the Executive Committee organized a membership poll with the following questions:

"Would you like

- I. the location of the conference to alternate between
  - a) Europe, (North) America and Other
  - b) Europe and Other
  
- II. the conference to be held
  - a) every two years
  - b) every year

Independently from the questions pertaining to post-2011 policy, the Executive Committee would also like to have an idea of how members feel about the venue for ALT's conference in 2011. We're in the luxurious position of having four very good offers to host this conference. One of

the many considerations in choosing between them is how many ALT members would have an opportunity to attend them. So, without prejudging the decision, the executive committee would like you to indicate

III. if you would firmly plan to attend the ALT conference if held at:

- a) Dartmouth (late August, early September)
- b) Hong Kong (mid June, mid October, mid August)
- c) Leipzig (late August, early September)
- d) Oxford (August)"

### 3.2. Decisions

In the end, 115 people took part in the poll, which is about one fifth of ALT's total membership.

The second question was the only one that produced a clear result: the majority were in favour of a bi-annual rhythm for conferences, so the Executive Committee decided to maintain this principle.

The first and third questions did not produce clear-cut results. Given that only one fifth of ALT's membership took part in the general poll, the Executive Committee decided to put these questions to the vote.

- The cycle of "Europe, America, Other" was about as popular as the cycle of "Europe, Other". The vote within the EC decided in favour of a cycle of "Europe, America, Other" for ALT's conferences.

- Among the bids for ALT9, there was only one for which potential attendance was significantly lower than the rest. The vote within the EC included all four bids, and finally decided in favour of Hong Kong.

## 4. E-LT

Linguistic Typology is available in electronic form via Mouton de Gruyter's new platform "Reference Global". The URL is <http://www.reference-global.com/loi/lity>

For the time being, access to the electronic version is restricted to institutional subscribers, which means that individual ALT members do not have access if their institution does not provide it. Mouton de Gruyter is working out a system to provide individual access to all ALT members. As soon as the system is in place, it will be announced via the ALT-list.

## 5. News from the Executive Committee

In its day-to-day work, the Executive Committee regularly comes across issues in the function or structure of the Association that need clarification. Below are the results of some discussions in the last half year.

### 5.1. Abstracts for ALT conferences

How should the Program Committee deal with abstract submitted by its own members? Previous Program Committees have always taken this into account in some way, but the EC decided it would be good to adopt an official policy. From ALT8 onwards, the policy is that members of the Program Committee can submit an abstract, but they cannot evaluate their own abstract. In practice, this means that abstracts by Program Committee members are evaluated by fewer people.

### 5.2. Nominating committee

Two vacant seats had to be filled in the Nominating Committee, whose job it is to nominate people for the positions of President, Secretary-Treasurer,

Editor-in-Chief, as well as for vacant positions in the Editorial and Executive Committees. The president nominated Sonia Cristofaro and Spike Gildea, who were approved by the EC and agreed to take up their function. The new members will replace Edith Moravcsik and Masha Polinsky, whose term in the Nominating Committee came to an end. We are very grateful to Edith and Masha for their service in this committee, some of which was well beyond the call of duty.

### *5.3. ALT archives on-line*

A complete list of past and present officers has been put on-line, as well as the Association's full constitution. They can be found at:

<http://www.linguistic-typology.org/ALTOfficersJune2008.pdf>

<http://www.linguistic-typology.org/ALTstatutes.pdf>

Together with the searchable set of past newsletters, to be found at <http://listserv.linguistlist.org/cgi-bin/wa?A0=ALT>, these will form an on-line archive that documents the Association's past and present officers, activities and decisions.

### **6. ALT's website**

ALT's new website is now fully operational. We are grateful to the Department of Linguistics at the University of Stockholm for providing server space, and to our webmaster Ljuba Veselinova and her colleague Rickard Franzén for designing the site and the associated databases.

<http://www.linguistic-typology.org/>

One new feature is that members can update their own membership details: address, e-mail, personal website, language expertise and domains of interest. This can be done at:

<http://ling-map.ling.su.se/login.html>

As with the old website, the new one features searchable lists of language expertise and research interests, a feature which many people will find useful.

### **7. ALT's awards**

The jury for ALT's 2009 Gabelentz Award is chaired by Nikolaus Himmelmann, and will further consist of Hein van der Voort, Nick Evans, Birgit Hellwig, Sonia Cristofaro and Michael Noonan.

The jury for ALT's 2009 Greenberg Award is chaired by Martin Haspelmath, and will further consist of Edith Moravcsik, Vladimir A. Plungian, Matthew S. Dryer, Eva Schultze-Berndt, Isabelle Brill and Elena Maslova.