

Gary Barkhuizen

Telling language learners' stories



Gary Barkhuizen has heard many language learners' stories. From his time lecturing in the English Language and Linguistics department at Rhodes, through his experiences teaching English as a second language at a high school in Mmabatho, North West, to his current job as an associate professor of Linguistics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, he has gathered a wealth of insight into the ways in which people learn language.

Barkhuizen will be returning to his alma mater to share some of these insights in a keynote address at *Interactions and Interfaces*, a conference about language which Rhodes will be hosting from 26 to 29 June. His talk is entitled "Language learning success: Multiple narrative perspectives". In it, he will be telling a variety of language learners' stories to show how "success" meant something slightly different for each of them. These ideas of "success" shape the way they learn, and what

motivates them to learn.

Gary Barkhuizen's own story is one of his inspirations for finding out other people's stories. He completed a BA and HDE (the old equivalent of a Postgraduate Certificate in Education) at Rhodes, and lectured at Rhodes' Department of English Language and Linguistics for various periods between 1982 and 2001. Between these periods, he spent a stint co-ordinating a MA programme for teachers of English to speakers of other languages at Columbia University, New York, and then four years teaching English in Mmabatho, near where one of his favourite fictional characters lives, Mma Ramotswe from Alexander McCall-Smith's *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series. In 2001 he moved to the University of Auckland.

As a migrant himself, Barkhuizen has become interested in the stories of other immigrants to New Zealand who learn English in order to communicate in the country in which they have settled. In an abstract he wrote for a keynote address at another recent conference, he wrote "As the Migration Studies Project at Pennsylvania State University observes, 'Migration today goes beyond the stereotypical notion of poor people entering a more developed country ... seeking a better quality of life'. Not all migrants need to learn English, either because they are already proficient in the language or because they have no need for English in their lives. And not all of them, when they are in New Zealand, wish to maintain their own first language. Some do, of course, and some also, often desperately, wish to learn English." All this is more than enough reason for teachers to remember that all language learners have their own individual stories.

Gary Barkhuizen's keynote address will take place from 9:00 to 10:00am on Tuesday 28 June, the second day of *Interactions and Interfaces*, in Eden Grove.

Paul Foulkes profile

Using phonetics to catch criminals



Picture a courtroom drama: a member of the local Narcotics Control Board is up on charges of drug-dealing. The prosecution's main piece of evidence: a tape recording in which the accused is speaking to a suspected merchant about a sale. The defense says he made the recording as part of a set-up, trying to get the merchant to say something incriminating. The prosecution believes the recording is about a genuine drug deal. Who can tell the difference? A group of linguists from a local university, who do an analysis of the tape and find that the recording is not part of a stage-managed sting operation. The Narcotics Control Board member is found guilty, and sentenced to 15 years with hard labour.

This isn't the script for a Hollywood blockbuster, but the very real story of a celebrated criminal trial in Ghana, which forensic linguist Paul Foulkes will be talking about in his keynote address on the last day of Interactions and Interfaces, a conference which the Rhodes Linguistics department will be hosting next week. Foulkes is a professor at the University of York, and also a consultant for J.P. French Associates, the UK's longest-established forensic speech laboratory. He has been involved in about 150 cases, working both for the prosecution and defense, and has even delivered training seminars to the FBI and United States Secret Service.

Foulkes will focus on two main ways in which forensic linguistics is being used in solving crimes. The first is speaker profiling. In cases like kidnappings where there is a voice recording of the perpetrators, but they have not yet been identified, forensic linguistics can be used to find out what area or social class they come from, what ethnic group they could be a part of, and what other languages they might speak.

Even more common is speaker comparison, where a voice from a recording taken during a crime is matched up with recordings from various suspects taken from concealed recording devices, voice messages or hoax calls to emergency numbers. This type of analysis can form the clinching piece of evidence in a criminal trial like the one described above.

Foulkes writes that "Well known cases that have involved forensic speech analysis include Watergate, the Yorkshire Ripper enquiry, the UN war crimes tribunal of former President Milosevic, and the 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' fraud trial."

His keynote address will be held from 9:00 to 10:00am in Eden Grove Blue on Wednesday 29 June.