

Conference Report: Lizzy Hanks

I attended the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) conference at University of York in August 2023. The conference was a wonderful experience for me to meet professors and other students, learn about cutting-edge research, and present my own work.

I had the chance to connect with new people during the networking activities and throughout the conference. BAAL opened with a speed networking event, which made me nervous at first but turned out to be a beneficial experience. We had some time to prepare an elevator pitch which included discussion of our position, research interests, and current projects. We then circulated around the room, sharing our pitches with five different people. During this activity, I met early-career researchers and graduate students. I connected with many of them on social media and ended up attending talks and activities throughout the conference with many of these people. I am glad I attended this event because it made me feel more comfortable talking about myself and sharing my research.

The talks at the conference were thought-provoking. The theme of the conference was opening up applied linguistics, so many of the plenary talks related to open science. I learned about databases like IRIS that help linguists share datasets, and I have a list of other helpful resources as well. I enjoyed learning about open-access materials because I believe taking advantage of them can not only help us build cumulative scholarship but can also help us build a community of linguists who support each other. I attended several talks, one of which is directly relevant to my dissertation work. The presenter talked about the idea of “incipient task” in conversation analysis, which is when interlocutors engage in talk while completing an ongoing task. I did not know this term existed, but upon learning about it, I have been able to integrate it into my dissertation prospectus.

I also had the chance to present my own work. I discussed transcription of a spoken corpus project, and I was happy to see that the room was full and there was a lively discussion afterwards. The symposium I was a part of was particularly intriguing for me, since all the speakers discussed transcription from different perspectives. I presented on transcription from a corpus perspective, and others discussed it through the lens of forensic linguistics and conversation analysis. It was interesting to see insights across different sub-fields align, and I enjoyed reflecting on the various ways we conceptualize transcription. For forensic linguists, it seems the accuracy of lexical items was particularly important, while the conversation analysts discussed the transcription process as an integral component of their analysis through which they can become more familiar with the data. For my part, the corpus discussion focused on practical methods we can apply to transcribe more efficiently.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity I had to attend BAAL 2023. I have connected with new friends and potential collaborators, gleaned insight that has been incorporated into my dissertation, and exchanged ideas about my ongoing project. These academic and social experiences will stay with me for years to come.