

Corpora and crises

Sometimes the world directly impinges even on language journals. This notably happened to *ET* 69 (18:1, Jan 02), the first issue after terrorists destroyed New York's Twin Towers. In that issue, I looked at some of the usage of this new kind of terrorism and those who have to deal with it, focusing first on the terror (notably at *Ground Zero* in New York), then on the words of George W. Bush, who was described by one journalist as 'moving from the quiet language of grief to the rowdy colloquialisms of the Old West', and finally to Islamic expressions both co-opted by al-Qaeda and used by Western writers.

It seemed to me then (as to others concerned with language, communication, English, Arabic, and the like) that there was both more horror and more linguistic novelty to come. And there has been, from the half-war in Afghanistan to the harsh alliteration of *bombings* and *blasts* in *Bali*. President Bush's 'war on terror' moved to Iraq – a development deplored by many people worldwide. It is the political rhetoric accompanying developments in Iraq in 2003 that has particularly concerned Mario Saraceni. A teacher of English at Assumption University in Bangkok, Thailand, he recently took corpus analysis a step beyond the usual, applying it to a range of public statements about Iraq and Saddam Hussein by both George W. Bush and his coalition partner Tony Blair.

We welcome comment on Saraceni's research, whose statistical information is of broad general interest while serving rhetorical ends of its own, unequivocally signalled by echoes of Robert Louis Stevenson in 1886. As both President Bush and Prime Minister Blair extol (as many do) the virtues of freedom and democracy, it is intriguing to see how such freedom and democracy are embodied in language analysis. Coincidence often has a hand in putting an *ET* issue together, and it is also intriguing that, at about the same time as Saraceni got in touch, long-time contributor (and English teacher) Gerry Abbott sent in a squib with the title 'Reading skills and terrorism'.

There is more however to this issue than war and terror. We also cover English in India, California, New Zealand, and South Korea, as well as an Atlantic pidgin that is used in the Pacific, the changing usage of the Mississippi Chinese, concern about word stress on TV, a reply to Paul Bruthiaux on 'unaccusatives' in IT usage, and those hardy perennials of the language, the Fowler brothers.

Tom McArthur

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