Literature as an academic discipline has become a sort of endangered species in a number of curricula in various parts of the world. In some developing countries (e.g., in Brazil), its marginalization is already a crude reality. Some of the reasons for this situation can be attributed to the lack of proper pre-service teacher training and the fact that few of our colleagues are involved in studying their own practice (Hanauer 2010). With the advent of the Web, hypertexts, digitalized sources, new reading habits are formed which are still not always integrated into literature teaching. Economic constraints have also aggravated the crisis within the discipline, since, among other reasons, vocational rather than liberal education gets the bulk of funding. The slow reaction to change not only raises doubts about the usefulness and the function of literature, but also contributes to “extinguishing the flame [by] deadening students’ literary sensibilities” (Berkowitz 2006; see also Graff 1987 and Chace 2009). There is a need to readdress pedagogical stylistics so that awareness of what happens in class is raised. In the light of the above, this workshop aims at reassessing stylistics and literary education by discussing the role of empirical stylistics in this scenario.

Over 10 years ago, the first attempt was made in this direction when the first PALA PED-SIG group was proposed. The goals of the group then were to establish a working definition of pedagogical stylistics, to identify the theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings of the discipline shared by L1 and L2 practitioners, and to investigate aspects of classroom practice (Clark and Zyngier 2003). These first objectives prepared the ground, establishing the field of Pedagogical Stylistics as a sub-discipline within applied stylistics. Pedagogical stylistics at that time was not a new phrase, as it had already been the object of investigation of isolated efforts (Zyngier 1994; Carter and McRae 1996, among others). Clark and Zyngier (2003) innovated by conducting a collaborative small-scale pilot study. Despite all these efforts, the area has been largely dormant in terms of further concerted projects.

With Michael Burke’s proposed revitalizing the area at the 2009 PALA conference, the scope of the group was broadened and calls for an interdisciplinary approach were launched. In his PED-SIG proposal, Burke wrote: “The core aim of the PALA PED-SIG II group is to keep all aspects of pedagogical stylistics, including rhetoric and related subjects, at the forefront of PALA research activities primarily through producing quality research that is inextricably linked to our teaching and learning processes and practices but also through interacting with pedagogy specialists in other fields and by regular live and online discussion within the group”. Pedagogical Stylistics: Current Trends in Language, Literature, and ELT (forthcoming) showcases new research developments in the area. Language and Literature has also been the venue for two special issues on the subject (Burke 2010; Knights and Steadman-Jones 2011; see also Jeffreys and McIntyre 2011). These recent publications indicate that interest in the area is growing, but that a unified and coherent research project aiming at a more systematic study has yet to be developed. In order to resume such studies and foster rigorous systematization, we
propose that the PED-SIG becomes involved in empirical research to contribute to the teaching of literature. We also propose it becomes more comprehensive, including not only the area of applied stylistics but also embracing literary education more broadly.

The proposal for a new beginning includes the development of one main research project, with sub-projects that are grounded theoretically, but are empirical in nature. I propose that PALA PED-SIG becomes an experimental setting for trying out new ideas and new disciplinary structures and becomes a venue so as to enable scholars to work:

a) **extensively**, mapping the problems of the area and specifying where the need for intervention is imminent;

b) **collaboratively** rather than individually – the latter has typically characterized the discipline;

c) **interdisciplinarily**, on the assumption that different disciplinary domains can be enlightening;

d) **empirically**, by better understanding how actual student-readers function in the classroom.

**References:**


For further information, please contact Olivia Fialho (ofialho@ualberta.ca)
Letter of Invitation

The 2012 Pre-Conference PED-SIG Workshop

Sunday, July 15th, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

The goal of the 2012 PED-SIG Workshop is to support the development of Empirical and Pedagogical Stylistics by facilitating contact and collaboration among researchers with common interests. Participants are invited to discuss their current research projects and research interests with the objective of developing supportive working relations with the ultimate goal of setting up long-term research projects. PALA PED-SIG workshops will become an annual venue where participants will discuss the progression of their shared research areas. Together, they will be encouraged to:

a) map the problems of the area and define the scope of their projects
b) define project objectives and theoretical domains
c) design a series of empirical studies
d) define locations for the application of the studies
e) set up strategies for inviting new researchers/teachers/schools who would like to get involved
f) decide how materials will be stored
g) set a framework for data analysis
h) develop strategies to obtain funding
i) create plans for continued communication

Networking is also the key theme of this year’s IGEL Summer Institute (International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature and Media: http://www.psych.ualberta.ca/IGEL/index.php), where I am currently serving as one of its facilitators. It is the spirit of networking that guides the common grounds where I believe both PALA and IGEL can meet and some fruitful exchanges help enrich the area of Pedagogical Stylistics. In this spirit, I am pleased to announce that Dr. David Miall, one of PALA’s keynote speakers this year, has agreed to participate as both a speaker in the workshop and as a member of the PED-SIG in the years to come. In this way, we hope not only to foster communication between the two societies, but also to continue working for the developing area of Pedagogical Stylistics.

The specific objective of the 2012 workshop in Malta is to facilitate contact and collaboration among researchers with common interests. Experienced, intermediate and junior researchers are welcome. During the first hour of the workshop, an introduction to the workshop will be provided and participants will be invited to present their current research projects briefly. Participants are encouraged to discuss the studies they are currently working on, even if they are accepted to be presented during the 2012 PALA
conference. During the second hour, researchers with common interests are expected to form coalition-specific groups. Communication of the PED-SIG group and their different sub-groups should continue informally throughout the conference and, more formally, through a community website.

Those who are interested in participating in this workshop may apply immediately by providing information about your research area and background and current research projects. To this purpose, please fill in the application form and send it to Olivia Fialho (ofialho@ualberta.ca).

The 2012 PALA PED-SIG Workshop: Application Form

There is no registration fee but each applicant must provide the following information no later than May 20:

• degrees, specifying the discipline, and/or recent positions, starting with the most recent (maximum 5 lines);

• recent publications, including those relevant to Pedagogical Stylistics, starting with the most recent (maximum 10 lines);

• the title and a 100-150 word outline of an ongoing or planned research project related to Pedagogical Stylistics
• a rationale for your participation in the workshop (maximum 10 lines)