An Interview with APPLE Lecture Speaker Professor James Pennebaker

Eun Young Kang, Yulin Liu, Sarah Sok, Di Yu & Yuna Seong

INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2017, the TESOL/AL Web Journal (represented by Eun Young Kang, Yulin Liu, Sarah Sok, Di Yu and Yuna Seong) had the opportunity to sit down with Professor James Pennebaker, guest speaker for the 2017 Applied Linguistics & Language Education (APPLE) Lecture Series, hosted annually by the TESOL/Applied Linguistics Programs at Teachers College, Columbia University. Professor Pennebaker spoke about his research and advice he has for current and future researchers in the TESOL and Applied Linguistics fields.

Professor James Pennebaker is the Regents Professor of Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin. He is also the Executive Director of a university-wide educational initiative called Project 2021. His work on expressive writing found that physical health can improve by writing about traumatic events/experience. We thank Professor Pennebaker for the great opportunity to learn more about his work and research. We also thank Fred Tsutagawa for videotaping and Dr. Hoa Nguyen for coordinating the APPLE Lecture Series Interview.

THE INTERVIEW
Here is the link to the full interview.

1) Your research has included many facets from psychology, sociology, medicine to linguistics and education. What brought you to these fields and what do you see as the common thread linking your diverse interests? [**Q1 Video**]

Research

2) Your paper/research reminds me of a quote that I found interesting, which says that "we write to find out what we don't know we know." How much do you agree with the quote? [**Q2 Video**]

3) The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) is one of the main text analysis programs you use in your studies to examine writing styles and vocabulary use. What would you say are the current advantages and weaknesses of LIWC? [**Q3 Video**]

4) In your paper titled "When Small Words Foretell Academic Success: The Case of College Admission Essays," you found the relationships between higher grades at college and greater article and preposition use in college admission essays. You analyzed students' use of function words, but given that articles and prepositions are usually followed by nouns, do you think that their use of nouns also played a role in the results reported in the study? [**Q4 Video**]

English Language Learners & Teaching

5) Articles and prepositions are two grammatical features that are notoriously difficult for English language learners to master. Do you think that the analysis of English learners' article and preposition use would generate similar findings? **[Q5 Video]**

6) What implications would the study have for writing teaching practice? **[Q6 Video]**

7) The idea of being able to create an individual's psychological signature through text analysis of his or her writing is fascinating. Would it be possible to create someone's psychological signature through analysis of his or her spontaneous, oral utterances? Writing often times tends to be a premeditated activity, as opposed to the relatively unrehearsed, unfiltered nature of spontaneous speech. How might one's psychological signature differ based on whether it was forged through analysis of his/her writing or analysis of his/her speech, and which signature would provide a truer measure of one's psychological state? **[Q7 Video]**

8) When it comes to second language learners, will the psychological signatures from their first language be transferred (in part or en masse) to their second language? Or will the learners construct a completely new psychological signature in the process of creating a new identity/psychological state in their emerging second language? What might be the relationship between the first language psychological signature and the second language psychological signature? **[Q8 Video]**

Application & Future Research

9) Given the current political climate in this country, I wonder what your thoughts are regarding creating the psychological signatures of important public figures and how the public and the press can be informed to make use of the findings. The reason that motivated me to ask this question is because, after watching the Q&As at press briefings and during network news interviews, I keep wondering how the press, as represented by reporters and interviewers, can do better during these rounds of Q&As. **[Q9 Video]**

10) Similarly, since we are at a time when we genuinely disagree about what constitutes truth and facts, can similar research be done to help the public identify the "real fake news" and "real alternative facts"? **[Q10 Video]**

11) We would like to ask for your advice for students and future researchers like us. What advice do you have for students and future researchers who are interested in doing similar line of research you are doing? **[Q11 Video]**