

To / From the Editors

Correction of error

R. M. W. DIXON

In his memorial tribute to Ken Hale (2002: 138), Daniel E. Everett writes

Ken, according to Bob [R. M. W. Dixon] was the reason that Bob had begun research in Australia. Before M. A. K. Halliday (Bob's PhD thesis advisor) had pointed out to Bob Ken Hale's work, Bob had wanted to do research in the North-western United States, on Salishan languages.

Unfortunately, Everett has misremembered what I said in several particulars. Before publishing this anecdote he should have checked with me. Or he could have looked it up in my published account (Dixon 1984: 5–6):

I went to Halliday and said that I wanted a language of my own – some interesting and unusual tongue that was in need of study. I had been reading Boas and Sapir, so when Halliday asked what language I had in mind, I replied – remembering the daunting polysynthetic complexity of Nootka, in British Columbia – that I'd been thinking of an American Indian language.

“No,” said Halliday, “leave those to the Americans. What you want is an Australian language . . . Go and look at Capell's paper in Volume Ten of the Australian anthropological journal *Oceania*, about the Kimberley languages. They have lots of gender classes and extensive grammatical concord, perhaps even more than the Bantu languages of East Africa.”

Everett's account errs in the following respects:

1. Halliday directed me to a 1940 paper by Arthur Capell, not to the work of Ken Hale. He could scarcely have directed me to Hale's work since this conversation took place in early 1962 and Hale's first publication on Australian languages did not appear until later in 1962 – see Nash (2001: 1).
2. Halliday was not at the time my 'PhD thesis advisor'. I did not in fact register as a PhD student until 1966.
3. I had not shown interest in Salishan languages of the Northwestern USA, but in Nootka, a Wakashan language of Western Canada.

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References

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Editorial note on reported speech, tense, and double negation

by FRANS PLANK

Reviewing and copy-editing material for LT, we carefully see to it that quotations, of data and of other writers, are accurate. (And I continue to be amazed at not infrequently finding that what is supposedly “direct” quotation can range from free indirect speech to science fiction.) However, so far we have not been doublechecking references to personal communications, and I apologize, to historical protagonists as well as to our readers, should personal history therefore, once in a while, have inadvertently been misreported in our pages.

The Ken Hale memorial section of LT 6-2 (2002) included, on pages 138–139, reminiscences of a conversation that Daniel L. Everett had had with R. M. W. Dixon and others in Porto Velho in the summer of 1993. LT is grateful to Professor Dixon for letting us share his own recollections of that conversation with our readership, entitled by him “Correction of Error” and printed above (as received on 15 October 2003). His recollection differs from Everett’s, not in what is the gist of Everett’s anecdote (The Hale Tape), but in a matter of more immediate concern for Professor Dixon himself, namely whose work or example was, or was once owned to be, an influence on him in picking his first language “of his own” in 1962.

While we accept the moral (and legal) obligation always to correct errors of fact that have slipped into LT, as a scholarly journal we see ourselves in no

viable position to adjudicate on irreconcilably differing recollections of conversations. However far the memories and memoirs about them are diverging as time goes by, the years 1959-62 were clearly momentous ones for Australian linguistics, and typology in its various forms was not slow to benefit. The memory be green.

On two more tangential points raised by Professor Dixon, first, tense in noun phrases is a fascinating topic which is only beginning to attract the typological attention it deserves. English is generally considered to instantiate what appears to be the majority type where NPs are NOT tensed – so that, at least in contexts like that of LT 6 (2002), page 138, 7th line up, an NP such as *Dixon's PhD thesis advisor* can be construed as meaning 'Dixon's former PhD thesis advisor', 'Dixon's then PhD thesis advisor', and 'Dixon's PhD thesis advisor to be'.

Second, there is no denying the fact that, although both are manifestations of human Language, share polysynthesis, and are encountered not too far apart, Salishan and Wakashan are different, and should not be confused. There remains the intriguing question, perhaps too rarely pursued in the History of Ideas, what difference it makes, for oneself or the fields (not) concerned, NOT to study one family or NOT to study the other.

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