

RESPONSE TO DR FERGUSON'S
`COMMENTS ON THE "GRAMMAR AT THE COALFACE SERIES"

As in `Errors in the Coalface Grammar' (henceforth `Errors'), I cite passages from Dr Ferguson's text and then add my comment.

[1] p. 1

The `Grammar at the Coalface' series is now old business from a practioner viewpoint.

... most of us have moved on

Dr Ferguson fails to mention the crucial fact that the `Grammar at the Coalface' articles were presented as a teaching resource written in response to requests from members `uncertain how to include functional grammar in classrooms'. A teaching resource is something teachers are invited to use in the preparation of their classes. I cannot think it was the intention that teachers should use the Coalface Grammar in preparing their 2008 classes and then move on to something new for the 2009 year (or move back to what they had been doing before). The natural expectation is that they would use the material until it was superseded (as it no doubt would be following the introduction of the forthcoming national curriculum). I did my best to have the material corrected by the March 2008 *Words'Worth* but was frustrated in my efforts by Dr Ferguson's refusal to admit that it needed large-scale correction. It is this refusal that has led to the long struggle to alert readers to the numerous and serious errors in it.

It is natural that Dr Ferguson should want to move on, but this can't be done while the major issue remains unresolved within ETAQ: Were there, as she maintains, just half a dozen errors in the Coalface Grammar, now corrected, or is it riddled with errors, many of them very serious, making it quite unsuitable for use as a teaching resource, as I have argued? I have presented a great deal of detailed evidence in support of my position, and it has been endorsed by the President of the Australian Linguistics Society, but Dr Ferguson has throughout refused to engage in serious debate concerning that evidence. She is not entitled to move on under such circumstances.

[2] p. 1

It is unnecessary to post a detailed response to `Errors in the Coalface Grammar'.

Essentially, it presents, as errors:

- numerous statements that do not exist in my articles
- a great deal of additional material (more than half of its 40 pages) that is beyond their stated purpose, scope and capacity
- `errata' published in *Words'Worth* in 2008.

None of the three points justifies the refusal to examine in detail the unacknowledged errors catalogued in my paper.

(a) The claim that I present as errors numerous statements that do not exist in the articles is false. Each item in the catalogue begins with a citation from the Coalface Grammar, and goes on to discuss the error or errors in it. Most of the errors, moreover, had been included in my earlier paper `Problems with the Coalface Grammar', and Dr Ferguson had never suggested that I was criticising statements or analyses that weren't in her text. In *The Australian* of 14 June 2008 she is reported as saying that the disputed terms appeared as mistakes when taken out of context, but no example was given, and this charge was never repeated. In the September 2008 *Words'Worth* and the defamation papers (see `A short history of the Coalface Grammar dispute', posted on the same website as the present document) she claimed that some alleged errors were not errors

when considered from a functional grammar point of view, but again no example was given and following my refutation of this charge in 'Errors', §Ib, it does not appear in the present document. Instead we have another charge with no example given, and it has no more validity than its predecessors.

(b) The fact that the 'Errors' paper is twice as long as the earlier 'Problems' is no reason for refusing to consider it. One reason for the extra length is of course that every item begins with a citation from Dr Ferguson's text (including four tables). A second factor is that the earlier paper was written in accordance with what I said in my initial email of 16 July 2007: 'my focus would be on presenting a sounder and clearer account of the material, not on criticising your paper'. This approach had apparently failed to get her to see how full of errors the Coalface Grammar was, and hence in the new paper I did focus on the errors, explaining them in painstaking detail in the hope that she would acknowledge them. As I have said, this paper was originally written in preparation for my defence in the defamation case and was therefore somewhat more comprehensive in coverage. Why should this constitute a reason for not examining the errors?

The aim of 'Errors' is stated in the first paragraph: to demonstrate 'more clearly that the Coalface Grammar is indeed full of errors, many of them very serious, and that in its present form it is therefore quite unsuitable for use as a teaching resource'. There is nothing in it that is not relevant to that aim.

The crucial point, again, is that significant errors in a teaching resource must not be allowed to go uncorrected. If Dr Ferguson wants to challenge my claim that the Coalface Grammar is riddled with errors making it unsuitable for use as a teaching resource, then she needs to respond in detail to the evidence and argument I have provided in support of that claim.

(c) The 'Errors' paper notes clearly that four errors were acknowledged in the March 2008 *Words'Worth* and hence doesn't provide arguments that they are errors. There is therefore nothing for Dr Ferguson to discuss in her response. But how could this possibly absolve her from discussing the errors in my catalogue that had not been acknowledged?

The refusal to enter into serious discussion of the errors has been her policy over the last two years. It is quite unacceptable. You can't acknowledge a small number of errors and simply ASSERT that there are no others. Dr Ferguson did the members of ETAQ a major disservice by presenting them with a teaching resource containing a huge number of errors: she has compounded this disservice by refusing to either acknowledge or discuss the great majority of them.

[3] p. 2

Any item in a list is, of necessity, out of its context. Thus there is the possibility of misrepresentation. Perhaps this is why about half the items in [Professor Huddleston's] lists state that I "classified" words incorrectly. The word *classify* does not appear in my articles.

Teachers know from experience that classificatory grammar causes confusion for students. By operating with the grammatical function of words, however, students can consider more easily how language structures contribute to meaning. I took the latter approach and clarified it early in my first article ... Specifically, I stated:

*Many words can belong to more than one word class. They are assigned a word class according to the grammatical role they play in each instance, e.g. a **round of drinks** (noun), a **round clock** (adjective), **round the edge** (verb), **go round** (adverb), **go round the corner** (preposition).*

Words were thus considered for their capacity to function grammatically in certain classes. I was explicitly concerned with function and not classification, e.g. 'porcelain' in 'porcelain figurine' functions as an adjective (*What kind?*), and therefore is an adjective in that context.'

This passage appeared in the draft version: Dr Ferguson has ignored my comments, although they deal with a major misunderstanding of functional grammar that is again revealed here.

There are two points to make here.

(a) You don't need to use the word 'classify' in order to classify. 'Classify' means "to assign to classes", and Dr Ferguson uses that expression in the italicised quotation from the first Coalface article. When she includes an item in a list or column headed 'Adjective' she is assigning that item to the class adjective, hence classifying it. There is, quite naturally, a great deal of classification in the Coalface Grammar: early in the first article, for example, we find over four pages devoted to word classes – the parts of speech.

Precisely because words can belong to more than one class, there is no implication that when an item is assigned to a given class – adjective, say – it does not also belong to another. On p. 37 of the first article, for example, *square* is included in a list of adjectives, i.e. classified as an adjective, but I naturally didn't call that a classification error on the grounds that it can also be a noun. I talked of errors only when an item is assigned to a class that it never belongs to. There is no construction in which *a pair* (or *pair of*) or *set of* is an adjective.

(b) The second, more important, point is that although Dr Ferguson uses the terms FUNCTION and CLASS, she fails to distinguish correctly between them, just as she did in the Coalface Grammar. To quote from 'Errors', p.5:

A function is a relational concept: when we say that in *The meeting started late*, for example, *the meeting* is Subject, we are describing its relation to the verb; in *They started the meeting late*, by contrast, *the meeting* stands in a different relation to the verb and is functioning as Object. A class, on the other hand, is a set of expressions which are alike in the language system: when we say that *the meeting* is a noun group we are saying that it behaves grammatically in broadly the same way as *a book, that car, my uncle*, and so on.

Similarly, modifier is a function term, while adjective is a class term. In *a round clock*, say, *round* stands in the relation of modifier to the head noun *clock*, and it belongs to the class adjective because it is broadly the same kind of word as *big, strong, beautiful*, etc. Now function (or functional potential) is a major factor determining the class of words, but it is not the only one – as in fact is evident from Dr Ferguson's account of the parts of speech in the first Coalface article, where she gives a number of criterial properties. So when she says in the above passage,

I was explicitly concerned with function and not classification, e.g. 'porcelain' in 'porcelain figurine' functions as an adjective (*What kind?*), and therefore is an adjective in that context.

she is confused and mistaken. It doesn't make sense to say that *porcelain* in her example 'functions as an adjective' because 'adjective' is the name of a class, not a function: she should say that it functions as modifier. And, for the same reason, it is a mistake to say that in calling *porcelain* an adjective she is explicitly concerned with function, not classification, since she is assigning it a class label, not a function label. You can't identify the class adjective with the function modifier. Adjectives don't always function as modifier. In *He was happy*, for example, the adjective *happy* is functioning as attribute (or predicative), not modifier. And some adjectives never function as modifiers: *afraid, amiss, asleep, bereft, content, remiss* and the like belong to the adjective class, but they do not function as modifiers – they function as attributes. So you can say *The child was afraid*, but not **the afraid child*, and so on. And, conversely, not all modifiers are adjectives. Common and proper nouns also function as modifiers: *a government inquiry, the Rudd government*, and so on. It is thus an error to classify *porcelain* as an adjective in *a porcelain figurine*: it is a noun functioning as modifier. It has the same function as the adjective *valuable* in *a valuable figurine*, but in the language system it is a

different kind of word than *valuable*: it belongs with *government*, *Rudd*, etc. in the class of nouns. Functional grammar places great emphasis on the distinction between functions and classes, and thus naturally allows that certain kinds of modifier – in particular, classifiers – can be realised as nouns, treating examples like *porcelain figurine* in the way just described: see *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p. 320. Note also that in his letter to Dr Ferguson of 20 July 2008 endorsing my critique and recommendation, Professor Randy LaPolla, President of the Australian Linguistic Society, included almost a whole page explaining functional grammar's concepts of function and class, and illustrated with a construction like *porcelain figurine*, namely *school building*, with *school* classified as a noun. (See 'Professor LaPolla's Coalface Grammar letter' at this website.) It is remarkable, moreover, that while this is one of only two places in her reply to my 'Errors' article where Dr Ferguson actually discusses some specific point of grammar she fails to make any reference to my item [9], where I present the grammatical evidence for treating *porcelain* here as a noun, not an adjective.

The same confusion between the class term adjective and the function term modifier is seen on p. 39 of the first Coalface article, where Dr Ferguson writes: 'Determiners appear as determining adjectives in noun groups, e.g. an exciting book, the new book, those useful books'. This is incoherent, for the underlined words can't belong simultaneously to two distinct parts of speech. They belong to the class determiner, and function as modifier – or, on a different dimension of noun group structure, what functional grammar calls 'deictic': see 'Errors', pp. 18–19.

The distinction between function and class occupied a significant place in the discussions Dr Ferguson and I had in January 2008, by email and in a face-to-face meeting, as described in §1.2 above. As noted there, Dr Ferguson saw my exposition of the distinction as providing 'information about key grammatical concepts not dealt with in coalface'. She was thus admitting that the Coalface Grammar failed to explain what is probably the most basic and important conceptual distinction in functional grammar. But there is no mention of this fundamental defect in the response she made to my 'Problems' paper in the March 2008 *Words'Worth* or in later statements, including the one under consideration here. The quotation in [3] above betrays confusion and error concerning the function/class distinction in general and the analysis of noun groups like *porcelain figurine* in particular, suggesting a lack of awareness and understanding of functional grammar's treatment of these matters. It is deeply depressing to find this appearing in what is scheduled as the last ETAQ publication on the Coalface Grammar.

[4] p. 1

Academic grammars and grammars developed for schools also reflect their quite different purposes – one theoretical and one practical. To illustrate: as the grammatical properties of nouns and pronouns are identical¹, in my second article *Sam's* was included as an example under the heading 'possessive pronoun' as one kind of determiner in the widely-used table – premodifying structures of a noun group. That inclusion has prompted some teachers to usefully amend the heading in this table to 'possessive noun or pronoun'. I deliberately scoped my articles in focus, extent, and approach to address the needs of schools and students, and included widely-used classroom practices and resources to make links with teachers' current experiences.

'Errors in the Coalface Grammar' replaces my practical framing with a theoretical one and evaluates my articles from this superimposed perspective.

[Footnote 1. See Huddleston, Rodney & Pullum, Geoffrey (2002) *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. In this grammar, pronouns are not given as a separate word class. They are said to be syntactically indistinguishable from nouns except that pronouns cannot take determiners as dependents. This distinction is arguable, however, as in the common expression 'This is my one', *one* is a pronoun and *my* its dependent determiner. Nevertheless, students need to consider more factors than just syntactic properties as they develop and refine their literacy skills. Thus it is desirable to keep nouns and pronouns as separate parts of speech in classroom activities, while acknowledging

their common syntactic properties.]

This passage (except for the last sentence of the text) was not included in the draft; it reads as though it was written in haste, and it is difficult to fathom precisely what Dr Ferguson is wanting to say. Whereas earlier she had contrasted my allegedly structural approach with the mainly functional approach underlying the Coalface Grammar, she is now distinguishing my 'academic' grammar with her 'practical grammar' or 'practical framing'.

The second and fourth sentences in [4] read as though Dr Ferguson is arguing that while the classification of *Sam's* as a possessive pronoun is an error in an academic grammar it is not an error in a practical grammar for schools. But the argument is clearly invalid, for it is based on an obviously false premise – that the grammatical properties of nouns and pronouns are identical. How can anyone suggest that the grammatical properties of *we* and *themselves*, say, are identical to those of *men* or *windows*? Try substituting *themselves* for *windows* in *One of the four downstairs windows was broken*. The claim is simply absurd: no grammar of English could fail to distinguish grammatically between pronouns and common or proper nouns.

The first four sentences of the footnote seem designed to derive that premise from Huddleston & Pullum (2002). But the documentation is done in a shockingly unscholarly way. Anyone with a university degree should know that it is not acceptable to document a specific point like the grammatical relation between nouns and pronouns by merely naming a book of over 1800 pages that deals with literally thousands of topics of that kind: you need to give page references. And if Dr Ferguson had tried to find pages in this book that say what she claims or assumes, she would have looked in vain. We nowhere say that the grammatical properties of pronouns are identical with those of [common or proper] nouns except that they cannot take determiners as dependents – and we don't treat the *one* of *my one* as a pronoun. (Pronouns are discussed on pp. 425–430; *one* is a common noun, a non-pronominal member of the class of 'pro-forms', which also includes non-pronouns like *there*, as in *He was born in London and lived there all his life*.) It is misleading to say that we don't give pronouns as a separate word class: we merely treat them as a subclass of noun rather than a separate primary class. This is the position adopted by most modern grammars, including functional grammar: the reason is that pronouns are functionally like common and proper nouns in that they function as head of noun groups.

I would add that it is disingenuous to cite our book as source for the claim that the grammatical properties of nouns and pronouns are identical, given that the Coalface Grammar is not based on our book. In the Coalface Grammar nouns and pronouns are distinct parts of speech and are described separately in the first article, where *boy's* is given as the possessive case form of a noun. So to classify *Sam's* as a pronoun in the second article is inconsistent with what was said in the first. And inconsistencies are no more acceptable in a practical grammar than in an academic one. You can no doubt allow yourself to fudge somewhat in places, but not to blatantly contradict yourself.

Even more important, however, is the fact that it is common knowledge that *Sam's* is a proper noun, not a pronoun. There is just no justification for introducing in a school grammar a highly unorthodox analysis like the classification of *Sam's* as a pronoun while offering no explanation for it.

This is no doubt why, according to the third sentence of [4], some teachers have 'usefully' amended the heading in this table to "possessive noun or pronoun". But this completely undermines Dr Ferguson's argument. If it is useful to amend the heading in this way, this is because the original was incorrect. So the classification of *Sam's* as a possessive pronoun was an error, and the distinction between academic and practical grammars has no bearing whatsoever on the matter. The last sentence of the footnote effectively says the same thing. Why couldn't Dr Ferguson admit this in the first place, in the March 2008 *Words'Worth*?

There is in fact more that needs to be said about this example. As with the *porcelain figurine* example discussed in [3], Dr Ferguson makes no reference to what I say about her

analysis of *Sam's* in `Errors', item [60]. The discussion there shows that although amending the heading in Table 2 to `possessive noun or pronoun' is an improvement, it is not a satisfactory solution to the problems with this table. The reason is that in this position in structure you can get possessive expressions longer than a single word: *Uncle Sam's results*, *the new boss's plans* or (to give an example from a learning exercise on p. 45 of the first article) *a little girl's life*. So we need to talk about `possessive noun group', not `possessive noun or pronoun'. And this raises two major problems. First, we have to allow for one noun group to function within the structure of a larger one: this is a matter of rankshift, but as noted in `Errors', item [2], this crucial concept was not properly explained in the Coalface Grammar. Secondly, the analysis raises again the distinction between functions and classes. Consider the following reduced version of Table 2 from p. 56 of the second article:

Determiners		Head word
article	possessive pronoun	noun or pronoun
<i>the</i>	<i>Sam's</i>	<i>decisions results</i>

If we replace `possessive pronoun' by `possessive noun group' we are allowing for rankshifted noun groups to be determiners. But according to the Coalface Grammar determiner is a part of speech, a word class. So in the above table we have the same fundamental mistake as in [3]: a single term is used for a function and a class. In [3] it was adjective, here it is determiner. Instead of `determiner' in the table we need a distinct function term; functional grammar's name for the function filled by words of the determiner class or rankshifted noun groups is `deictic', so this is what we need for the top left position. And it is misleading to put article, demonstrative and possessive in sequence for they are mutually exclusive. We can thus amend this part of the table as follows, using small capitals for functions and bold for classes:

DEICTIC		HEAD
determiner		noun
<i>the</i>		<i>decisions</i>
possessive noun group		noun
<i>Sam's</i>		<i>results</i>

[5] pp. 1–2

`Errors in the Coalface Grammar' ... demands an extensive, pure grammar rather than my selection and combination of material and practices that are effective in developing literacy skills.

... Its renaming of `Grammar at the coalface' to `The Coalface Grammar', signals a repositioning from the practical to the theoretical. This change is confirmed by its exclusion of the framing introduction in my first article and of the illustrative learning episodes and activities' (p. 1, last two paras)

I do not RENAME 'Grammar at the Coalface' as 'The Coalface Grammar'. The former is the name of a series of eight articles, whereas I introduced the latter as a cover term for the two articles I was concerned with – the two articles whose major focus is on the description of aspects of English grammar. With a couple of exceptions, I didn't discuss the illustrative learning episodes and activities because I did not feel qualified to do so as I have had no experience of teaching English in schools. It is incontestable, however, that the two chapters contain a good deal of material that presents a description of major aspects of English grammar, and because this material is so defective it was perfectly proper to devote my critique to it.

It is not true that I demand 'an extensive, pure grammar' rather than a selection and combination of materials. I will deal with the 'extensive' and 'pure' components of this in turn.

(a) 'Extensive' has to do with how much is covered, and I assume Dr Ferguson is here making the same point as in the September 2008 *Words'Worth*, where she complained about an apparent perception on my part that the brief articles 'should provide exhaustive details'. I dealt with this false claim at relevant parts of 'Errors'. For example, in item [50] I dealt with the error of DEFINING imperative clauses as having no subject, citing examples of commonplace imperatives that do contain a subject, but I emphasised that I was not saying that it was necessary to exemplify such clauses in a short overview. My point was that they should not be explicitly excluded. There's only a length difference of one word between 'Imperatives can't have a subject' and 'Imperatives usually don't have a subject', but it is sufficient to change a false statement into a true one.

(b) 'Pure' contrasts with 'eclectic' – a selection and combination of materials. It will be evident from my web paper, 'Problems with the Coalface Grammar', that I do not advocate a pure functional grammar. The paper is divided into three parts – 1: Inconsistency, error and confusion in *CF* itself; 2: Problems with functional grammar; 3: Simplifying functional grammar. Part 2 deals with two topics where I find functional grammar's analysis unsatisfactory: the concept of complement and the treatment of groups headed by adjectives. Part 3 suggests various ways of simplifying functional grammar to make it more appropriate for use in schools. I was thus very much advocating an eclectic approach.

Writing an eclectic grammar, however, is a good deal more difficult than writing a grammar that follows a single approach. You need to have a sound knowledge of all the models you draw on and be aware of the relations between them. My criticism of the Coalface Grammar is not that it is eclectic but that it is inconsistent, selecting mutually incompatible elements from different grammatical models. The traditional concept of complement, for example, is very different from that found in functional grammar, and it therefore won't do for the Coalface Grammar to introduce it first in the traditional sense and then silently switch over to the functional grammar sense (see 'Errors', item [7]).

THE ROLE OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

On the ETAQ website Dr Ferguson's paper is called a 'response' to my 'Errors' paper, but it isn't. I have written a forty-page paper identifying and explaining a huge number of errors in the Coalface Grammar, and she effectively ignores it. She doesn't discuss the evidence I have produced with respect to a single error. She simply maintains the position she has held for two years – that there are no uncorrected errors remaining – but she again refuses to defend that position with evidence and specific argument. Members of ETAQ deserve better than that.

It is a quite extraordinary situation. A great many of the errors are absolutely obvious and incontestable, and yet for two years the author has been allowed to get away with simply denying that there were any errors beyond the small number acknowledged. She has been allowed to get away with it because she has had the support of the President and the Management Committee: their statement in 'Reflections' reports that they had passed a unanimous vote of confidence in her as editor.

I have to say that I am at a complete loss to understand the position they have taken during this long dispute. As evidenced in 'A short history of the Coalface Grammar dispute', §4 (this website), the President has explicitly endorsed her position. According to the AATE website, he is 'an enthusiast for functional grammar ... and currently tutors at QUT on the subject'. Is it possible for one to tutor in functional grammar and not to have noticed for oneself that the Coalface Grammar gives a massively defective account of functional grammar, with numerous misrepresentations and confusions? And what of the other sixteen members who signed the statement? Do they all believe that *Sam's* is a possessive pronoun, that *set of* is an adjective, and so on? Surely that is not possible. But in that case how could they pass a vote of confidence in an editor who refused to acknowledge and correct such errors in her own work?

The official line, as expressed in 'Reflections', is that

- [6] a. The views expressed in signed articles and reviews are not necessarily those of The English Teachers Association of Queensland.
- b. ETAQ has adopted no official position in relation to the details of any of the Coalface materials or related articles commenting on them and the Management Committee does not consider that it would be appropriate to do so.
- c. ... individual authors may seek to provide a response to criticism of, or disagreement with, aspects of their articles published in the journal but it is not the business of ETAQ as an association to do so

Point [b] is somewhat compromised by the President's statements quoted in 'A short history of the Coalface Grammar dispute' and by the Management Committee's statement that my approach to *The Australian* was unnecessary. Point [c] would normally be appropriate for an article by a member of ETAQ written and submitted at their own initiative. But the case of the Coalface Grammar was significantly different from this. As reported in 'Errors', the preface to the first 2007 issue of *Words'Worth* states:

- [7] For the past twenty years, functional grammar has been promoted in Queensland schools, and professional organisations and individuals have conducted seminars and workshops to assist teachers. Follow-up messages show that many teachers are still uncertain how to include functional grammar in classrooms. This year, ETAQ has decided to include regular classroom-level support in this area through this journal.

The Coalface project was thus organised by ETAQ, and it would be reasonable for members to expect that ETAQ would take responsibility for ensuring that the output was basically sound.

Most importantly, the Coalface Grammar was explicitly presented as a teaching resource. There is an obligation on all concerned to ensure that significant errors in a teaching resource are acknowledged and corrected. Normally it will be the author who does this, but the present case is exceptional in that the author refuses to acknowledge more than a small proportion of the errors identified. She is not even publicly acknowledging some errors that she did acknowledge in private email correspondence with me before the publication of the March 2008 *Words'Worth*. What is worse, she refuses to respond to the evidence that has been provided to demonstrate there are many errors not yet acknowledged. My 'Errors' paper catalogues around sixty errors beyond those she has acknowledged, but her response does not consider even one of the entries. ETAQ has posted her response on its website, acquiescing in her refusal to make a proper response. In this situation the obligation to warn readers of the errors falls on the Management Committee, as publisher of the Coalface Grammar.

It is not enough that ETAQ has posted my 'Errors' paper on their website because it is emphasised that the Association does not officially endorse the content and because it is accompanied by a response from the author that rejects it. In this context, why should members be motivated to read a very long critique by a person whom they don't know, who is not a

member of ETAQ and who has been criticised in the Management Committee's September 2008 statement and denied the right of reply?

It would be an educational disaster if teachers systematically and comprehensively taught their students the material presented in the Coalface Grammar. No doubt teachers will not in fact be so uncritical as to reproduce all the errors. Dr Ferguson herself notes that some have amended the heading in the table containing *Sam's* from 'possessive pronoun' to 'possessive noun or pronoun', but unless they have a good independent knowledge of English grammar in general and functional grammar in particular, there will be many errors that they will not recognise, let alone know how to correct. As I pointed out above, Dr Ferguson doesn't say that anyone has seen the need to amend the heading to read 'possessive noun group' or to change the class term 'determiner' to the function term 'deictic'. This last point is particularly important: it is clear that Dr Ferguson does not have a sound grasp of the distinction between functions and classes – the distinction that Professor LaPolla calls 'the fundamental basis of functional grammar'. It is incontestable that the Coalface Grammar gives a highly confused and defective account of functional grammar that will make it more difficult for members to understand and apply the theory. What possible justification is there for the Management Committee to acquiesce in this state of affairs?

Rodney Huddleston

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