

# Foreword

It has been fascinating to watch the development of clinical linguistics and phonetics from its infant beginnings to its current state as a mature and confident discipline of study. As with any new domain of enquiry, it began with a concern to identify its subject matter and distinguish itself from other disciplines – a descriptive emphasis that I would summarise as a focus on the ‘what’. As a domain where development and change is central, an associated focus was on the time that things happen – the ‘when’. Next, as research became more sophisticated, we saw a move from description to analysis, with social and cultural perspectives directing our attention to the ‘where’ and the ‘who’ involved in language variation. And then we began daring to look for explanations of it all, asking the question that pragmatics is best placed to explore – the ‘why’.

That leaves one further question-word, relevant for both clinicians and academics: the ‘how’. In the end, as teachers of English as a foreign language have long recognised, it all comes down to methodology. How do we teach our patients? How do we teach the teachers of our patients? How do we study the teaching of the teachers of our patients? It takes time to develop a principled methodology, as this requires the evolution of a professional self-confidence and a sharing of experience that comes from working in diverse educational settings, engaging with a variety of students, and coping with innumerable practical constraints. The whole process needs to be openly discussed along the way. And this book shows we have at last reached that point in our subject.

I like to think of a teaching method as a kind of patient. Is it performing well? Is it handicapped in some way? Could it do better? We need to screen, assess, compare, diagnose. And if necessary we need to treat. The chapters in this book, in their various ways, herald a new era of clinical linguistic enquiry. When a discipline develops a critical awareness of its methods – standing back from them in order to discuss them objectively and critically – it has come of age. The first steps are to describe what we do, analyse what we do, and explain why we do what we do. And that is what this book is all about.

Professor David Crystal