



# Webwords 39

## Child language bonanza

Caroline Bowen



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**W**ebwords freely admits to her passions and pet peeves. Passions? She could bore for Australia on child phonology and her perennial hobby horse of reasonably priced access to quality journals for clinicians. Peeves? Don't get her started on graffiti, waiting lists, oral motor exercises or apostrophe use. Above all, you should never, never ask her for a derivation unless you really, really want an answer! As a researcher she is perseverance personified: a ferret, a terrier, Hercule Poirot, and Robert the Bruce's spider united in the pursuit of accuracy.

### Midnight oil

Our friend Speechwoman tells of a half-full red-eye flight to Darwin when she idly wondered aloud about the origin of "hobby", prompting a 15-minute disquisition from Webwords, Kindle Dictionary in hand, disambiguating hobbies as "small or middle-sized horses; ambling or pacing horses; and ponies". A further 15 minutes passed as Webwords provided the good oil on hobby horses (children's toys, pet topics, and Mayday in Padstow, Cornwall). She had only just launched into a soliloquy on the difference between "Mayday" and "PAN-PAN" when she was cut short by a perambulating passenger who had the three seats in front of them to himself. Apologising for interrupting he asked Webwords whether the battery life of her Kindle was long enough for space shuttle missions. Or, by any chance, the Sydney to Darwin via Adelaide midnight flight!

Speechwoman gladly exchanged seats with The Liberator spreading out luxuriously in 23D, E, and F, and listening drowsily as the Kindle discussion developed between the occupants of 24D and 24F behind. The Liberator was clearly Webwords' kind of guy: fond of words, delighted by a clever turn of phrase, articulate, precise, sociable and computer literate. The conversation ebbed and flowed soporifically with Webwords taking turns to consider and to share ideas and information with a kindred spirit. The Liberator matched her eloquence and particularity until the fitful, light flickering, galley clattering experience that passes for a good night's sleep on a 767 overtook all three of them.

### Morning light

Breakfast came early and a lively flight attendant murmured to Speechwoman and The Liberator that they should return to their allocated seats, securely fasten their seatbelts, lock their tray tables, ensure their seats were in the upright position, do something in the overhead locker that Speechwoman couldn't quite hear, and generally make ready for Darwin.

"Sorry I stole your travelling companion."

"No problem." Speechwoman smiled, heading for the shuttle into town with Webwords not far behind defining, with examples, "**portmanteau word**"<sup>1</sup> for a surprised and yawning new friend from Malta.

"On your first visit to the Territory?"

"Third. I'm here to work with some children with language disorders. Just for a few weeks. For the **Remote Area Health Corps**<sup>2</sup>; I'm a speech pathologist."

"Really? So am I ... I mean, so are we! What a coincidence! Are you coming back for the conference? Did you tell Webwords you were a speechie?"

It was The Liberator's turn to be surprised. "Webwords? We didn't exchange names. She's not ACQ Webwords, is she?"

"The very same!"

"Then I must talk to her some more. Pick her brain about how to access articles on child language while I'm here. I want to explore some of the recent literature while I have the evenings to myself to read. The one compensation for being away from my family for so long. You don't think she'd mind, do you?"

"Mind what?" The sleepy traveller had met his hosts and was asking them what Maltesers were, and Webwords had caught up with them. "What wouldn't I mind?"

### Bonanza

Webwords did not disappoint, providing TL with a prize collection of useful sources such as the **Boston University Conference on Language Development**<sup>3</sup>, the Child Language Data **Exchange System (CHILDES)**<sup>4</sup>, the **Child Language Research Center**<sup>5</sup> at the University of Iowa, the **Child Language Video Archive**<sup>6</sup> at Macquarie University, free **EBP Briefs**<sup>7</sup> from Pearson, the University of Western Ontario's **Encyclopedia of Language and Literacy Development**<sup>8</sup>, resources and publications from the **LOCHI Study**<sup>9</sup>, the **SRCLD Archive**<sup>10</sup>, and faculty pages of prominent researchers in child language disorders. TL was surprised to find how many of these scholars, like **Mabel L. Rice**<sup>11</sup> at the University of Kansas, freely share their published works. Other rich sources were the ASHA Convention archives for 2009, 2008, 2007 and 2006.

The Liberator was looking a little pale in the face of all these suggestions, so for recreation Webwords proffered several language-related blogs: **Literal-Minded**<sup>12</sup> by Neal Whitman, Lynne Murphy's **Separated by a Common Language**<sup>13</sup>, treasures, including wicked cartoons from **Dorothy Bishop**<sup>14</sup>, witty and interesting reflections from **David Crystal**<sup>15</sup> and for a complete change of pace, the high jinks of the **Banbury Hobby Horse Festival**<sup>16</sup> (giving the page at least ten minutes to load before enjoying Rosy Burke's cheerful images).

### Links

1. <http://www.worldwidewords.org/articles/blend.htm>
2. <http://www.rahc.com.au/>
3. <http://www.bu.edu/buclid/>
4. <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/>
5. <http://www.uiowa.edu/~clrc/home.html>
6. <http://www.maccs.mq.edu.au/laboratories/acquisition/languagevideos.html>
7. <http://www.speechandlanguage.com/ebp/>
8. <http://www.literacyencyclopedia.ca/>
9. <http://www.outcomes.nal.gov.au/index.html>
10. <http://www.srclid.org/Archive/ArchiveIndex.aspx>
11. <http://www2.ku.edu/~cldp/MabelRice/>
12. <http://literalminded.wordpress.com/>
13. <http://separatedbyacommonlanguage.blogspot.com/>
14. <http://deevybee.blogspot.com/>
15. <http://david-crystal.blogspot.com/>
16. <http://www.hobbyhorsefestival.co.uk/>

Webwords 39 is at <http://speech-language-therapy.com/webwords39.htm> with live links to featured and additional resources.