Language description and use

DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES OF PARTICULAR LANGUAGES
ENGLISH

85–615 Bauer, Laurie (Victoria U. of Wellington, NZ). Tracing phonetic change in the received pronunciation of British English. *Journal of Phonetics* (London), **13**, (1985) 61–81.

Thirty-seven RP speakers were recorded reading a standard passage between 1949 and 1966. These recordings were analysed with respect to four vowels: /u:/, /ae/, /a:/ and /ʌ/. Over that period there was noticeable diachronic shift for /u:/ and /æ/, but while the other vowels showed variation, there was no apparent diachronic shift. A follow-up experiment using recordings from 1982 shows the same shifts continuing. There are also implications for studies of sound change in apparent time.

85–616 Declerck, Renaat (U. of Leuven). 'Pure future' *will* in *if*-clauses. *Lingua* (Amsterdam), **63**, 3/4 (1984), 279–312.

Nine different types of sentences in which *will* or *would* are used to express future time are identified and discussed. (E.g. type 1 is: *If he will go to China next year, then we should publish his book now.*) A number of distinctions can be made between the various types of conditional sentence: some have closed condition, others an open one; some are *p*-primary (i.e. have the logical structure 'if *p* then *q*') others are *q*-primary (i.e. have the logical structure '*q*, if *p*'); some imply or contain an embedded *if*-clause, others do not; in some the use of *will* depends on the kind of verb that is used, others do not share this restriction; in some of them the head clause expresses a conclusion, in others it does not; some involve an *if*-clause that is relatively free, others do not. All, however, use the tense system of head clauses. The substitution of a present tense for pure future *will* or *be going to* in *if*-clauses is a matter of linguistic economy and is not due to the fact that such *if* clauses represent a future event as a fact.

85–617 Wales, Kathleen (Royal Holloway Coll., U. of London). Problems of pronoun concord: or no one's sexist, are they? *UEA Papers in Linguistics* (Norwich), **20** (1984), 28–45.

It is argued that the modern English grammarian would better reflect modern (and past) idiomatic usage if they (not he or he/she) included the *they*-form in preference to generic *he* as the pronominal form following indefinite pronouns like *everyone*, *someone, anyone, no one* or dual gender nouns like *student, teacher* or *grammarian*. For example: *No one says he after no one, do they?* in preference to *does he? A student can come to my room anytime. But they* (not he) *should knock first.*

FRENCH

85–618 Schmitt, Christian (Bonn/Heidelberg). Variété ́et développement linguistiques: sur les tendances évolutives en français moderne et en espagnole. [Varieties of linguistic development and the evolution of modern French and Spanish.] *Revue de Linguistique Romane* (Strasbourg), **191/2** (1984), 397–437.

From study of Milleran's *Deux grammaires fransaizes* published in 1694 and in particular of the rules given for spelling, it is possible to build up a picture of how French was pronounced at the end of the seventeenth century and how it differs from modern French. Many changes in the pronunciation of words have taken place as a result of the influence of the written form. A similar trend towards spelling pronunciations can be discerned in modern Spanish. New trends may emerge now that the age of TV has succeeded the age of the book and the written word is beginning to lose its prestige. However it is not possible to predict the nature of future changes. Linguistic evolution is not an automatic process.

85–619 Forest, Robert (U. of Paris). Entre le lexique et la syntaxe de l'énoncé complexe: réflexions sur les énoncés résultatifs de l'allemand. [Between the lexicon and the syntax of the complex utterance: reflections on German resultative utterances.] *Linguistique* (Paris), **20**, 2 (1984), 49–67.

The translation and analysis of resultative utterances of the type *Und am nächsten Tag log die Regierung das Verbrechen in eine überraschende Volksaktion* 'And the next day the government lyingly transformed (*lit* lied) the crime into an unforeseen popular action', poses problems. The resultative constituent can be realised by a prepositional phrase (*in* + the accusative, as above), an adjective (*ich lache mich tot*) or a separable particle (*der Herr pfeift seinen Hund zurück*) or, after a factive verb, by an object complement (*das macht mich nervös*) or a prepositional phrase (translative *zu* + the dative: *man hat ihn zum König gemacht*). Typically the verb is exceptionally transitive or transitive in an unusual way; the resultative constituent cannot be considered as an optional adjunct. The productivity of the structure rules out a lexicalist solution. A bisentential analysis may 'work' for cases where the resultative element is an adjective (*ich lache* + *ich bin tot* → *ich lache mich tot*), but the change of case where a prepositional phrase is involved would cause problems (*er füllt die Erdnüsse in die Tüten* ← *?er füllt* + *die Erdnüsse sind in den Tüten*) and it would be difficult to assign to separable particles a predicative status. A functional explanation is sought. The extreme concision of the resultative construction comes from the balance of dynamic and stative: either the verb is dynamic (e.g. *machen*) and the resultative is stative (e.g. adjectives such as *klar*) or the verb is stative (*tun*, *leben*) and the resultative is dynamic (separable articles such as *aus*, *vor* or prepositional phrases in the accusative case). Coupled with the vague semantic status of the direct object in German, the focussed end-position of the resultative obviates the need to mark the cause – effect relationship between the other two constituents and therefore the need to have two surface sentences.

GERMAN

85–620 Fourakis, Marios and Iverson, Gregory K. (U. of Iowa). On the 'incomplete neutralisation' of German final obstruents. *Phonetica* (Basel), **41**, 3 (1984), 140–49.

Recent work in acoustic phonetics purports to show that neutralisation of the voiced/voiceless contrast in final position in German is only apparent, because it is incomplete. Thus, a recent study shows that native speakers of German do regularly devoice word-final obstruents, but they also produce slightly longer vowels before the morphophonemically voiced obstruents (e.g. *Rad* 'wheel') than before the voiceless ones (e.g. *Rat* 'advice'). However, work replicating these studies indicates that the previously observed differences actually resulted from hypercorrect spelling pronunciation, and that in more natural linguistic contexts the neutralisation is indeed complete.

85–621 Müller, Ursula and Schmidt, Lothar. Einige Probleme und Ergebnisse des Forschungsvorhabens 'Sprechbewegungsablauf' (als Beitrag zur Erhöhung der Kommunikationsfähigkeit ausländisher Studierender). [Some problems and results of current research into 'Sprechbewegungsablauf' – 'Speech mobilisation time' – as a contribution to the raising of communicative abilities in foreign students.] *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (Leipzig, GDR), **21**, 3 (1984), 174–80.

The entire vocabulary of the instructional material at the Herder-Institute was phonetically transcribed and computer-analysed to discover the frequency and distribution of two-item phonetic combinations in the German represented there. Previous research has shown that communication between specialists in different areas becomes difficult because of defective articulation, despite considerable practice in the 62 sounds of standard German. These would theoretically generate 3864 two-item sound combinations but many never occur, while 80 are so frequent that nearly 50 per cent of communication needs can be met by them. Some 320 cover 80 per cent of needs and 700 the remaining 20 per cent.

Comparisons of two-item sound occurrence were made for words used in each of the 13 specialisms taught, a total of 10377 words producing 1307 different sounds. It emerged that the hypothesised 88 most common sounds did not occur evenly across all subjects; on the contrary the most communicatively useful sounds were largely different from one subject to another. Only about 50 per cent appeared to coincide in each. Tables of results are presented and it is concluded that both language and subject teachers must provide a good model of articulation for their students so that these differences can be offset.

SPANISH

85–622 Kliffer, Michael D. Beyond syntax: Spanish inalienable possession. *Linguistics* (The Hague), **21**, 6 (1983), 759–94.

Inalienable possession (i.p.) has generally been viewed as a semantically definable category manifesting syntactic correlates. This paper argues instead for a multilevel approach. The formatives involved (dative clitics, definite article, possessive adjective) are shown to make a discrete semantic contribution and to lack any categorical link with inalienables. Following Garcia (1975), a semantic explanation stemming from formal differences is provided for structures lacking the dative reflexive and those requiring it. The link between an inalienable and its possessor is seen to transcend syntax, while the evidence from Ss with two potential possessors supports a perceptual strategy. Double datives, however, display an i.p. constraint which suggests that inference does not totally eclipse syntax. Literary data further support the interplay of levels *vis-à-vis* article/possessive variation. Inalienables arise with the possessive normally for reasons of salience, but the variation also reflects the influence of pragmatics and register (both discourse and lexical). With abstract inalienables, conventionality too is a factor. Further investigation will aim at a cross-Romance scale of i.p. grammaticalisation and a sociolingusitic study to detect correlations between the high literary incidence of possessive and register differences in oral data.

TRANSLATION

85–623 Toury, Gideon (Tel Aviv U.). Aspects of translating into minority languages from the point of view of translation studies. *Multilingua* (Amsterdam), **4**, 1 (1985), 3–10.

Minority languages are weak by definition, not only *vis-à-vis* the majority language of the community, but also – due to the inherent difficulties of producing in them the entire range of discourse types – with regard to most of the languages that are possible candidates to serve as source languages for translating into them. Consequently, there is an initial great likelihood that this activity will be a primary activity, in contrast to the hypothesised 'natural' position of translating among the utterance-generating activities within a culture, hence in a position to cause changes in TL and the target discourse habits, namely in the direction of appoximating them to the models and norms underlying the source utterance/language, through interference (which is a universal of 'communication in translated utterances' anyway) followed by converg-ence. However, the relative autonomy of the various language and discourse levels in terms of susceptibility to interference makes it possible to intervene systematically in the translational behaviour in accordance with the TL policy, by directing interference to those levels and domains where it is needed for the evolution of the minority language into a more or less full-fledged communication system. A precondition for success in such an operation is a favourable ideological climate of enhancing the prestige of the minority language and the self-esteem of its speakers, as well as of imparting importance to translating as an activity in itself, hence tolerance for, if not pride in its output.

LEXICOGRAPHY

85–624 Bergenholtz, Henning. Grammatik im Wörterbuch: Syntax. [Grammar in the dictionary: syntax.] *Germanistische Linguistik* (Marburg, FRG), **3/6** (1984), 1–46.

One of the major uses of dictionaries is the checking of the syntactic construction in which a word may occur. It is thus astonishing that the various German dictionaries in current use differ in many respects in the syntactic information they give. Some give very sparse syntactic detail, while many have examples which disagree with the syntactic definitions given. These definitions are hindered by the over-use or opacity of technical terms, and many examples are unusual or unambiguous. Three methods by which the lexicographer may arrive at syntactic definitions are discussed, each having its theoretical and practical shortcomings: introspection, questionnaires, and the analysis of text corpora. The availability of machine-readable text makes the latter a more feasible alternative. Issues such as the above are discussed and exemplified by studies of the major available dictionaries.

85–625 Gottlieb, Karl Heinrich. Grundprinzipien eines Wörterbuchs der 'falschen Freunde des Übersetzers.' Ein Beitrag zur praktischen Lexikographie. [Basic principles of a dictionary of 'The translator's false friends'. A contribution to practical lexicography.] *Germanistische Linguistik* (Marburg, FRG), **36** (1984), 103–34.

Dictionaries dealing with the 'translator's false friends' are still few and far between. Given the differences in both treatment and size of such dictionaries the author holds a discussion of the rationale behind them to be necessary. As a preparatory step the author considers some general questions like: What exactly are 'false friends'? Do they really constitute pitfalls? The terminological and analytical approaches to the notion are reviewed. A definition is broached. A further preparatory section presents a typology with four classes of use to a non-expert audience.

There follows a comparison of a German–Russian/Russian–German dictionary of false friends aimed primarily at Russian native speakers and a (projected) smaller Russian–German one aimed at German native speakers. A number of criteria for the choice of included words are given; cross-linguistic analogy cannot be determined solely in formal terms. The stage of the learner's knowledge of the language plays an important role as well as questions of meaning and stylistic level. A final section considers in detail the organisation of the entries in both dictionaries, looking at how meaning is explained, the use made of synonyms and antonyms, translation and cross-references, etc.

85–626 Kühn, Peter. Primär- und sekundärsprachliche Grundwortschatzlexikographie: Probleme, Ergebnisse, Perspektiven. [The lexicography of first and second language basic vocabularies: problems, results, perspectives.] *Germanistische Linguistik* (Marburg, FRG), **3/6** (1984), 239–306.

Basic vocabularies, e.g. of the 'first 1000 words', are generally based on frequency analyses. For German, many are based on Kaeding's (1898), which is outdated and

was, moreover, not intended for this use. The development of second-language vocabulary lists has been from the claim that the most frequent words are the most useful, through revisions of the frequency lists to include, e.g. spoken texts, distributional analyses and multi-lingual lists, to the compilation of lists according to pragmatic considerations (e.g. the type of language – scientific, business, etc. – being learned). The conclusion is that such lists should be organised by 'semantic field' and accompanied by translation equivalents. Similarly, the use of frequency lists in developing basic first-language vocabularies is clearly inadequate if the latter are intended as aids or controls in the learning and teaching of spelling. Rather, such lists should be shaped by the findings of developmental psychology and pedagogical research into spelling problems.

LEXICOLOGY

85–627 Leech, Geoffrey and others (U. of Lancaster). The automatic grammatical tagging of the LOB Corpus. *ICAME News* (Bergen, Norway), **7** (1984), 13–33.

The LOB Corpus is a corpus of British English running into a million words being collected by the universities of Lancaster, Oslo and Bergen based on the corpus assembled at Brown University 1971–8. To this has been added a computer programme called Tagset which automatically assigns grammatical and punctuational information from a selection of 134 items to the words already collected. The raw language in the corpus reads horizontally from left to right in the normal way but it has to be verticalised into columnar form before tagging can begin. The Vertical Corpus, after automatic tagging, contains, alongside each word, one or more grammatical tags, placed in order of their likelihood of occurring in this context. Samples so far analysed show that 86 per cent of the words can be unambiguously tagged with less than 1 per cent error. The automatic tagging programmes are described in detail. It consists of three stages – Wordtag, Idiomtag and a tag selection programme, Chainprobs. The latter is a particularly valuable contribution to automatic language processing and demonstrates that a first-order Markov process can be a 94 per cent adequate model for human language. The automatic tagging should have been completed in the summer of 1983 and made available for research.

85–628 Poplack, Shana and Sankoff, David. Borrowing: the synchrony of integration. *Linguistics* (The Hague), **22**, 1 (1984), 99–135.

The notion of loanword assimilation is operationalised in a number of different ways, focusing on both linguistic and social aspects. The indices of integration thus constructed are applied to a set of lexical data elecited from Puerto Rican children and adults from East Harlem, New York. The results of this survey are analysed statistically using the method of principal components. The output is interpreted in terms of the social and linguistic trajectory of words during the borrowing and integration process. Of particular importance are the relatively close relationship between increase in usage frequencies and the processes of phonological integration, the transient nature of inconsistencies in gender assignment, and the fates of competing lexical items for a single referent.