

Language description and use

DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES OF PARTICULAR LANGUAGES DUTCH

86–418 Eefting, E. and others. Emergency intonation contours in Dutch. *PRIPU* (Utrecht), **10**, 2 (1985), 13–24.

When a speaker is under time pressure, or is uncertain about a text he/she has to read, or both, this may have consequences for the intonation contours he/she will decide to use. This expectation was tested for five speakers who had to read semantically predictable and unpredictable texts at a normal and at a high speech rate. The most outspoken differences with normal speech occurred in unpredictable texts read out at a high speech rate. Speakers use more accents under this condition than they normally do, mostly in the form of prefix blocks with an accent-lending rise-fall (type 1B, notation 't Hart and Collier, 1975). These accents are predominantly given on content words. At a fast speech rate, speakers have a tendency to break up the sentence at a major syntactic boundary and to use a 'quasi-end block' in such instances. If a continuation block is used, it is an accent-lending rise (type 1). As for the end-block, there is a preference for an accent-lending rise followed by an accent-lending fall (type 1A).

FRENCH

86–419 Boyer, Henri (U. Paul Valéry, Montpellier III). L'économie des temps verbaux dans le discours narratif. [The economy of verb tenses in narrative discourse.] *Français Moderne* (Paris), **53**, 1/2 (1985), 78–89.

Narrative discourse makes use of both the *passé simple* (PS = past historic) and the *passé composé* (PC = perfect). A spoken text is examined which contains two 'micro-systems': the narration of a legend (using the imperfect or pluperfect and the PS) and a commentary on the legend (using the imperfect or pluperfect and the PC). A second text, written for publication in the readers' letters page of a magazine, uses the PC in various ways: to speak of past experiences whose effects are still with the writer and to frame or foreground other linguistic information. Here, both PC and PS are in contrast in the foreground, while the imperfect provides the background. In a third, autobiographical, text, a background (imperfect and pluperfect) contrasts with a foreground (PS, PC and present) but at the same time the narrator uses the PC to narrate events in which she or her mother are principal participants and the PS to narrate events in which other persons participate (participant orientation). Contrasted with this is her use of the PS for more dramatic events and the PC for less dramatic events (event orientation). The present is used as a neutralisation of the two orientations. Much textual organisation is spontaneous and may become aleatory in

the hands of an inexperienced writer/speaker. Such observations show that the dichotomies of Benveniste (historic *v.* discursive utterance) and Wienreich (commented *v.* narrated universe) are too rigid and exclusive to account for tense use. They ignore the principles of foregrounding within a text.

86-420 Cadiot, Anne and others. 'Enfin' marqueur metalinguistique. ['Enfin' as a metalinguistic marker.] *Journal of Pragmatics* (Amsterdam), **9**, 2/3 (1985), 199-239.

The goal of this article is to provide a description of the French morpheme *enfin*. Concerning its nature, the authors' position – which, in this respect, differs drastically from more traditional ones – is to regard it as a metalinguistic marker; its function is to indicate that a given discourse fragment is meant to preclude the utterance of a previously possible discourse. Such a definition as the one proposed permits a classification of the various uses of *enfin* in terms of the discursive roles involved in the aforementioned discourses. Among those roles it is necessary to distinguish between that of 'locuteur' (speaker) and 'éconciateur' (the presumed author of the illocutionary act under consideration).

86-421 Callebaut, Bruno (U. de l'Etat à Gand). Onomatopées et noms d'oiseaux en français. [Onomatopoeia and the names of birds in French.] *Français Moderne* (Paris), **53**, 1/2 (1985), 49-77.

Concentrating only on items whose onomatopoeic origins remain transparent, the study reported finds that most such names of birds derive from their calls rather than their song (*lulu* and *coucou* being exceptions). Where the sound of the birds is more familiar than their sight, e.g. in passerines and grallatores and in nocturnal birds of prey, an onomatopoeic origin is more frequent. Dialect lists show more such items than do standard lists (where modern nomenclature prefers clearer identification by means of designation derived from Latin or proper names). From the phonological point of view, there is considerable disagreement as to the correspondence between bird calls and human phonemes. In birds the sound source is the syrinx rather than the pharynx, so that onomatopoeia is a question of mimicry or transposition rather than copying. Sonagrammes of bird calls shadow vowel-like patterns but no consonantal ones. Consonants in the lexical items can be taken to indicate principally abruptness of onset or termination (plosives) or whistling (fricatives and affricates). Onomatopoeia obeys the general phonological rules of the language (in terms of permitted segments, syllables, etc.) though it may call upon certain sequences more frequently than does the rest of the lexis; examples are a predominance of initial voiceless plosives (*cata*, *titi*, *pipit*), frequently followed by liquids (*cloute*, *tritri*). Reduplication frequently calls for the repetition of the initial segment(s) and often involves vocalic alternation (*cricrac*). Liquids are often found word-internally, to mark the transition between vowels (*carakin*, *courlis*, *loriot*). Initial vowels, relatively rare unless introduced by an /h/ of non-liaison (*huppe*, *hibou*), are typically /u, y, i/. After consonants they are /i, y, u, ja, wa/, in decreasing order of frequency.

While origins appear to offer an exception to the Saussurean principle of the

arbitrariness of the sign, they are nonetheless highly symbolic and based on metonymy, thereby bringing such lexical items into the general schema that associates 'signifiant' and 'signifié'. Their linguistic behaviour and history appears exactly like the mass of unmotivated items in the language.

86-422 Morin, Yves-Charles (U. of Montreal). On the two French subjectless verbs 'voici' and 'voilà'. *Language* (Baltimore, Md), **61**, 4 (1985), 777-820.

The much-debated syntactic status of *voici* 'here is' and *voilà* '(t)here is' in French relates principally to the theoretical status of syntactic categories and of grammatical subject. The first issue can be properly addressed only if one accepts a minimal theory of constituent structure. The surface distribution of *voici/voilà* then shows that they are two subjectless finite verbs with a single tense and mood: present indicative. Not surprisingly, they have lost some of these exceptional characteristics in certain dialects of French: they have acquired a personal conjugation in Québec French, and new tenses in Walloon and Franco-Provençal. These facts are relevant to syntactic theories which require all basic sentences to have grammatical subjects at some level of analysis, since no independent parameter is available to account for the systematic absence of surface subjects before a small set of verbs in a non-'PRO-drop' language like French.

GERMAN

86-423 Lötscher, Andreas. Syntaktische Bedingungen der Topikalisierung. [The syntactic conditions for topicalisation.] *Deutsche Sprache* (Berlin, FRG), **13**, 3 (1985), 207-29.

This article gives a general formulation of the syntactical conditions for topicalisation in Standard German. It is shown that not only constituent structure but also conditions of deletability and pronominalisation play an important role. The results are discussed with regard to the more general problem of a word-order grammar for Standard German.

86-424 Zifonun, Gisela. Grammatische Verständigungsprobleme und wie deutsche Grammatiken damit umgehen (könnten) – Dargestellt an einem Beispiel. [Problems of grammatical understanding and how German grammars (could) deal with them – an example.] *Deutsche Sprache* (Berlin, FRG), **13**, 3 (1985), 193-206.

There are grammatically conditioned communication difficulties which need to be clarified. Grammatical communication difficulties have practical consequences, for instance in the communication between the authorities and citizens. This is demonstrated in a study of the use of *oder* 'or'. Grammars of German have not yet paid sufficient attention to the area of 'assistance with grammatically conditioned communication problems', as is shown in the treatment of this example. In such cases we

are not dealing with norms of expression, but with the interaction of form and function and with the influence of different parts of an utterance on each other. There are reasons why phenomena like these, critical to communication, have been ignored.

ITALIAN

86–425 Moss, Howard (University Coll., Swansea). Italian grammar: the 'rules' revisited. *Bulletin of the Society for Italian Studies* (Cambridge), **18**, (1985), 10–27.

This is a critical but mostly laudatory review of the first seven volumes of Jacqueline Brunet's *Grammaire critique de l'italien*, a twelve-volume project describing the Italian language on the basis of written texts with checks from the oral usage of native speakers.

The merits and defects of the prescriptive and descriptive approaches to grammar are discussed. Brunet's work is purely descriptive but, while her dictum that normative grammar is antilinguistic is largely endorsed, the practical value of simplistic rules is defended. Indeed, it is only against a background of such defective rules that the superior explanatory value of Brunet's work can be appreciated. Details of Brunet's investigations are cited (e.g. the semantic value of alternative plurals; elision and apocopation; definite articles; possession; comparison, etc.). Her explanations from generative grammar are often simpler and more complete than the alternatives and the wealth of example cumulatively supports the points she makes, including suggestions for further research. None the less, the reviewer quotes numerous counter-examples; the literary examples are checked against modern oral usage and sometimes found to be awkward. The book is for scholars rather than students and constitutes a major monument in Italian linguistics.

LEXICOGRAPHY

86–426 Atkins, Beryl T. (Collins Publishers Ltd.). Monolingual and bilingual learners' dictionaries: a comparison. *ELT Documents* (London), **120** (1985), 15–24.

Whereas monolingual dictionaries, being non-user-language specific, must cater for users of any native language, this is not the case with bilingual dictionaries. Although most major bilingual dictionaries are intended as dictionaries of communication (comprehension and production of the target language) for native speakers of either language, this is not necessarily so when one language has world-wide use and the other is geographically restricted.

Twelve bilingual and monolingual dictionaries with English as L2 are compared from the point of view of headword and derivatives, grammar classification and its status within the entry, division into semantic categories with explanation, exemplification of usage and metalanguage. Students prefer bilingual dictionaries while

teachers try to encourage the use of monolingual dictionaries. A hybrid dictionary combining the best features of both types might prove a more flexible teaching aid [examples].

86-427 Hill, C. P. (U. of London Inst. of Ed.). Alternatives to dictionaries. *ELT Documents* (London), **120** (1985), 115-21.

The basic disadvantages of ordinary alphabetical dictionaries are their circularity, and lack of rich contextualisation. The use of illustrations in the *English Duden* is discussed, as is its semantic structuring. The article also concentrates on assessment of particular alternative lexical reference sources, i.e. *Roger's Thesaurus*, the *Longman lexicon of contemporary English*, the *Topic dictionary*, and West's *General service list of English words*. A call is made for an updating of the latter, as well as publication of a lexicon which also includes frequency tags. There is a need for more exploitation of CALL technology in the production of a new generation of audio-visual dictionaries.

86-428 Jackson, Howard (City of Birmingham Poly.). Grammar in the dictionary. *ELT Documents* (London), **120** (1985), 53-9.

In the description of a language, a grammar and a dictionary are, arguably, complementary, the former being concerned with types of grammatical 'meanings' such as plurality, and the formal ways, such as inflectional endings, by which the meanings are realised and the latter being concerned with lists of lexical items and the description of their meaning and usage.

Two types of grammatical information are provided in dictionary entries: (a) inflectional forms which do not conform to the general rule, and (b) class labels such as 'noun', although these are not always adequate and are consequently of limited value. Two further types of information should be included in entries: (i) details of the syntactic operation of individual items, and (ii) examples which illustrate meaning and use. Carefully selected examples illustrate how grammar, meaning and usage of a lexical item converge.

To avoid an excessively complex system of coding, the lexicographer must achieve a balance between what is understandable and easy to use as against comprehensiveness and usefulness. Nevertheless, grammatical information included in a dictionary assists the learner in the production of correct and appropriate sentences in the foreign language.

86-429 Johnson, Mark. Computer aids for comparative dictionaries. *Linguistics* (The Hague), **23**, 2 (1985), 285-302.

Much of the collating and indexing work associated with constructing a dictionary can be automated. This paper describes how to use a computer to 'undo' regular sound changes to produce a set of reconstructed forms which are then used to index entries in a comparative dictionary, resulting in a substantial time saving over manual compilation of the dictionary. Moreover, after completion of the dictionary, a data base of lexical entries is available to aid further research.

86-430 Lamy, Marie-Noëlle (U. of Salford). Innovative practices in French monolingual learners' dictionaries as compared with their English counterparts. *ELT Documents* (London), **120** (1985), 25-34.

As a result of the world-wide dominance of EFL over French-as-a-foreign-language, the majority of monolingual French dictionaries (MLDs) are compiled primarily for native-speaker purchasers and consequently exhibit fewer innovative features than their English counterparts intended for the foreign learner. One of the principal differences concerns definitions, with English MLD lexicographers working towards an ever tighter system of defining terms whereas the French merely promise 'clear and simple definitions'. However, the application of the principles of structural linguistics to lexicography has led French MLDs to attempt to break the mould of the dictionary as alphabetical list. Of the three dictionaries studied, *Le dictionnaire du français contemporain* (DFC) aims to encourage the user to think structurally. Though the DFC and *Le Robert méthodique* are less geared to the early stages of language learning than their English counterparts, they both provide the advanced learner with sophisticated linguistic information, while the third (the only one destined for the foreign learner), *Le dictionnaire Larousse du français langue étrangère*, makes a radical and innovative attempt to combine lexicography and pedagogy at a more basic level. There are signs of increased awareness of the foreign-learner market in the last few years.

86-431 Rossner, Richard (Bell Sch., Cambridge). The learner as lexicographer: using dictionaries in second language learning. *ELT Documents* (London), **120**, (1985), 95-102.

Foreign learners are, in effect, amateur lexicographers, who deploy a variety of strategies for dealing with vocabulary acquisition. They establish rough and ready lexicons having the advantage both of being extremely flexible, and of containing only those lexical items seen to be relevant. Moreover, these informal dictionaries can be structured in whatever way is perceived to be most congenial, e.g. semantically rather than alphabetically. Teachers can provide valuable feedback for this heuristic process, especially by encouraging individualisation, keeping an open mind about the potential value of bilingual dictionaries, and by sensitising learners to componential/collocational possibilities.

Dictionaries have a limited usefulness because language is dynamic and unpredictable; they give learners little help in comprehending the connotative or illocutionary value of words as they occur in discourse.

86-432 Sinclair, John (U. of Birmingham). Lexicographic evidence. *ELT Documents* (London), **120** (1985), 81-94.

The author briefly considers two main sources of lexicographic evidence: (1) received and documented linguistic description, e.g. other dictionaries, and (2) native-speaker introspection, which can be further subdivided into informant testing, and introspection by linguists themselves. Received description has the disadvantage of lagging

behind current usage, while introspection allows the lexicographer only to evaluate subjectively, rather than create, linguistic evidence.

Most of the article concentrates on observation of language in use, which should precede both received description and introspection as an analytical tool. The potential value of computers in amassing and structuring citational evidence from text corpuses is described. The basic linguistic unit is defined as a 'lemma', i.e. a string of letters with spaces on either side. In dictionary terms, a lemma would be the initial, uninflected entry word. Isolating lemmas in a text and examining the occurrences of their varied associated forms by computer search are valuable, but they nevertheless involve subjective decisions by the researcher. [Detailed consideration of the word *decline*.] Lemmatisation can provide suggestions about how various words should be handled in a dictionary. Citational evidence is integral to valid lexicography, though there is a need for an underlying theoretical rationale.