Studies of particular languages

ENGLISH  See also abstract 75–162


A corpus of expository prose from sources such as The New Yorker is analysed in terms of Hunt's T-units, and a typology of topic sentences (delayed, assembled and inferred) and a rank scale (major topic sentences, topic sentences and sub-topic sentences) is offered. Only 13 per cent of the corpus paragraphs began with a topic sentence.


A discussion of dialect usage, based on the work of Orton, particularly A word geography of England (1975), and others. Diverse speech forms are now tolerated and even desired as badges of belonging, particularly among working-class men. Local rural dialects and the localised speech of schoolchildren preserve many traditional features [examples and isoglosses]. Sociolinguists often use methods which confirm hypotheses devised to confirm hypotheses: the emphasis should be on the researcher/hearer rather than the speaker [Pellowe's method]. Most dialect speakers are bidialectal [prejudices and propriety with regard to accents]. Many people retain their dialect.

FRENCH  See also abstract 75–162


Four major differences between nineteenth-century and present-day French are: replacement of the nasal un by in; loss of phonological vowel length [examples]; dropping of the pronoun complement when of negligible informational content, and the omission of ne in negative or restrictive constructions. The ratio of omission is the percentage of times ne is dropped from negative or restrictive constructions. This varies according to the level of formality of language, the speaker's personality and the form of the utterance. [Tables give omission ratios for speakers of Lorraine dialect, Parisians and other groups.]
In writing, omission is rare in formal texts, but frequent in graffiti and informal correspondence [examples]. A high degree of retention marks formal speech, but a wide variation appears in written dialogue. Among other determinants, the nature of the subject is significant [table]; also the number of syllables between ne position and the negative or restrictive particle. Articulatory economy seems a minor factor. Historically, the omission of ne spread from substandard speech from about 1820-50, and is now so common that unvarying retention is a mark of a non-native speaker.

**GERMAN**


Whereas adjectives are always inflected (disregarding their use after sein), adverbs are uninflected, except in comparative forms. They are single words or preposition+nominal group. They fall into three main groups – manner, time, and place – and are either context-free (−m) or context-related (+m); many can form ‘pro-adverbialia’ with da- or hin/her.

The generally accepted order in a sentence is: subject, finite verb, pronoun field (including pro-adverbialia of time), the general pro-adverbial field (including subject, if it is displaced by inversion etc.), pro-adverbialia of place, time and nicht, adjunct field (including adverbs of manner and place), and completion field, e.g. separable prefix or past participle. [References.]

**SPANISH**


It is doubtful whether rules of standard generative phonology (as stated by Schane) actually form part of the speakers’ mechanism for understanding or producing utterances. The validity of recent phonologies describing Iberian Romance pluralisation systems on the basis of abstract underlying forms is therefore disputed. [Work generated by the contributions of Foley and Saltarelli is discussed.] The Latin Stress Rule, which motivates most of these previous analyses, is felt to be inadequate to describe native speakers’ intuitions, as with few exceptions stress is predictable on the surface form of Spanish plurals. Spanish grammarians’ insights on stress (marking with an accent all the unpredictable cases) represent a valid intuition. Separate algorithms are sug-
gested for the decoding and encoding of plural forms, although it is not maintained that either would be universally valid among Spanish speakers. The decoding algorithm is centred around the high degree of correlation between plurality and unstressed-vowel-plus-s endings. The encoding algorithm is based on the position of stress, rather than the stress being dictated absolutely by phonological shape. [References.]

RUSSIAN


The form буржу́й probably arose as a colloquial by-form of буржу́а (a rare morphological type in Russian) in the 1860s, on the model of words like холу́й 'lackey', and was first used in print by Turgenev in 1877. The two words were not exact synonyms in the late nineteenth century: буржу́а referred to a member of a given social class, whereas буржу́й was more expressive, referring to a crude and greedy kulak. **Буржу́й** is not attested in dictionaries until 1912, and Lenin used буржуа much more frequently than буржу́й.

After the October Revolution буржу́й became the dominant form, while буржуа took on an aura of old-worldliness. **Буржу́й** was used as a pejorative term (or ironically, by those to whom it referred), and gained the upper hand during the period of conflict between the Bolsheviks and the Provisional Government. The expression недорезанный буржу́й was probably used primarily as an ironic term by members of the bourgeoisie. A number of other derivative by-forms are attested with the same meaning, essentially as nonce-forms; the word буржу́йка referred primarily to a kind of heater which consumed lots of wood, i.e. could only be afforded by the rich. **Буржу́й** is now obsolescent, except as a historical term.


Recent work on early Slavonic ethnonyms has unfortunately reached the negative conclusion that similar ethnonyms occur in different Slavonic areas simply by chance. In discussing ethnonyms in relation to migrations, it is important to consider evidence for both the centre of ethnolinguistic movements and the direction of movement. At some period, the Carpathians were a focal
point for the Slavs. [Both the Croats and the Dudlebi migrated round the Carpathians, following reports of more favourable lands to be occupied.]

Comparison of Slavonic and other Indo-European ethnonyms should not be purely semantic, but also formal. [Examples of derivational parallels and divergences among Slavonic, Baltic, Germanic, Celtic, Illyrian, Thracian.] Derivatives in -t- and -n- and the virtual absence of appellatives link Slavonic with Celtic and especially Illyrian and Thracian, although the parallels are typological and the result of contact. As with the southern Indo-European groups, there is a common name for the whole Slavonic group.

Similarities between East and South Slavonic ethnonyms are too numerous to be fortuitous [examples]. The southward migrations comprised Slavs other than those from contiguous areas, including East Slavs. The traditional tripartite split into Western, Eastern and Southern Slavs is too simplistic to account for the patchwork of ethnolinguistic and other lexical isoglosses.