Language description and use

Descriptive studies of particular languages
English

87–400 Cannon, Garland. Blends in English word formation. *Linguistics* (Amsterdam), **24,** 4 (1986), 725–53.

The process of blending seems to occur in all languages, to be very common in them, and to occur in every stage of the language's development. The voluminous scholarship on this very old process displays wide disagreement on terminology, definition, scope, and place within a modern taxonomy. Analysis of the six broad patterns exhibited by 132 recent written English blends, together with a refined definition, helps to show the dynamic role of blending in word formation and language development, and the interrelations with derivation and compounding. Present phonological and word-formation rules cannot account for these blends, which considerably complicate any viable theory of the lexicon. The untabulated number of contemporary oral and written blends is evidently huge, with slips and other oral nonce forms pouring out from perhaps millions of businesses and persons who are enjoyably indulging their linguistic individuality in a way that perhaps no other word-forming process can challenge. Paradoxically, despite this enormous, ever-growing popularity, blending mainly produces oral forms that quickly die. The process has not significantly expanded the English lexicon; but blends are important and diverse, and one of the most intricate of all the word-forming categories.

87–401 Wierzbicka, Anna (Australian National U., Canberra). Precision in vagueness. The semantics of English 'approximatives'. *Journal of Pragmatics* (Amsterdam)*, **10,** 5 (1986), 597–614.

In this paper, the author explicates a number of English 'approximatives' such as *around, about, approximately, roughly, at least, at the most, almost* and *nearly.* In each case, she offers a paraphrase substitutable for the particle itself. She argues against a 'radically pragmatic' approach to particles, advocated by Sadock and others, and advocates an alternative, 'radically semantic' account. She tries to show that even the vaguest 'hedges' and 'approximatives' can be given rigorous semantic explications, which correctly account for the particles' use.

French

87–402 Blanche-Benveniste, Claire. La syntaxe et le français parlé. [Syntax and spoken French.] *Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée* (Paris), **63,** 7/9 (1986), 16–22.

The study group at Aix-en-Provence for research into syntax (GARS) has undertaken a study of spoken French based on transcribed recordings. This study makes it necessary to revise some of the preconceptions generally held about 'spoken French'. Spoken French is not the privileged place of improvisation, of the familiar, of expressiveness and variety. By 'spoken French' one does not mean the most spontaneous and the most incorrect French, because that does not correspond to the observation of French as it is spoken. Such a study can not lead to the formulation of a separate grammar for spoken French, but to a reconsideration of grammar for French in general.

87–403 Darbelnet, J. (Laval U., Quebec). Réflexions sur la typologie de l'emprunt linguistique et des situations bilingues. [A consideration of the typology of linguistic borrowing and of bilingual situations.] *Multilingua* (Amsterdam), **5,** 4 (1986), 199–204.

The study of interaction between languages has become an important area of sociolinguistics, and it would therefore seem useful to consider the terminology used to classify the various phenomena. The principal concept is found in the title of a book by Louis Deroy, *L'Emprunt linguistique* (linguistic

borrowing) (1956). Borrowing takes place when two languages come into contact with each other, and during any given period one of the pair generally gives more than it takes. The following remarks concern the influence of English on French. An initial distinction should be made between lexical and semantic borrowing – i.e. the borrowing of words or meanings – because lexical borrowings are immediately apparent, while the other kinds of borrowing can only be detected by trained ob-servers. The people of Quebec have been particularly susceptible to lexical borrowing, which has long been the chief way in which English has affected the French as spoken in Canada. This is no longer so much the case since the influence of English on the French spoken in France now goes beyond lexical borrowings. A system of classification permits a more precise study of the two situations and their developments.

87–404 Fornel, Michel de. Socio-pragmatique des pronoms personnels et inférence conversationnelle [The socio-pragmatic perspective of personal pronouns and inference in conversation.] *Etudes de Linguistique Appliquee* (Paris), **63**, 7/9 (1986), 23–39.

This article is devoted to the study of some non-typical uses of personal pronouns in French. In order to examine these uses, the authors take a socio-pragmatic perspective by establishing a collection of recognised examples and by carrying out a precise analysis of the interactional and social context, in particular of the respective positions of the partici-pants with regard to the conversational activity. These 'rhetorical' uses of personal pronouns are particularly important for the linguist, because they raise in new terms the problem of inference in conversation. Accordingly, a reformulation of some of the principles of Grice's theory of conversation is proposed.

87–405 Nølke, Henning. (U. of Nancy II). Le subjonctif: fragments d'une théorie énonciative. [The subjunctive: fragments of a theory of utterance.] *Langages* (Paris), **80** (1985), 55–70.

The concept of 'polyphony' (Ducrot, 1982; Ansombre, 1986) can be used to explain some cases of the use of moods in French. In this utterance, a speaker can choose to present the *énonciateurs* (i.e. authors of the pragmatic acts forming the meaning of the utterance) in many different ways. 'Poly-phony' involves at least two different *énonciateurs* in a single utterance-act. Negation and interrogation are typical examples of polyphony, and in French they require the subjunctive in following noun clauses.

Why is the subjunctive required in *Qu'un ambassadeur devienne industriel, la chose n'est pas non plus très commune*, 'For an ambassador to become an industrialist is not very common either', but not in *Que Pascal n'a pas agi sur lui, il est inutile de le démontrer*, 'That Pascal did not influence him, it is unnecessary to demonstrate'? The subjunctive is excluded when the content of the preposed noun clause is part of the new information.

In *De là vient que Daudet n'a pas fait l'école: de là vient aussi qu'il plaise à tant de lecteurs différents*, 'Whence the fact that Daudet did not teach: whence also the fact that he is enjoyed by so many readers', the postposed noun clauses are functioning as subjects. In the first, a fact is present as known (hence the indicative in the noun clause), whereas in the second the fact is new (hence the subjunctive). These data are further interpreted and explained in terms of polyphony.

German

87–406 Hartmann, Dietrich (Ruhr U. Bochum, FRG). Context analysis or analysis of sentence meaning? On modal particles in German. *Journal of Pragmatics* (Amsterdam), **10**, 5 (1986), 543–57.

During the past ten years there has been growing linguistic interest in investigating the semantic and pragmatic functions of German (modal) particles like *ja*, *doch*, *denn* etc., along with intensive discussion of other expressions with comparable functions (conjunctions, adverbs). Some basic problems, how-ever, remain unsolved. Do modal particles have only one core meaning, or are there several,

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depending on conditions of (verbal) context? The paper sums up some results of a broader discussion and reviews new proposals concerning these questions presented by Doherty (1985). Analyses of the meaning of modal particles in the latter and in previous research are discussed with regard to 'richer' or 'poorer' semantic description of particles. Finally, it is argued that the semantic analysis of modal particles in relative clauses supports Doherty's assumption that modal particles have only one basic meaning.

Spanish

87–407 Nissen, Uwe Kjær. Sex and gender specification in Spanish. *Journal of Pragmatics* (Amsterdam), **10,** 6 (1986), 725–38.

Although a number of authors traditionally have treated the sex-discriminating aspects of language, they have for the main part dealt with languages having predominantly semantic gender. Recently, languages that contain grammatical gender have also been analysed. In this article, the Spanish language is subjected to an analysis of its relations between sex and gender. The multiple methods of naming human beings and the various ways of specifying their sex are examined. It turns out that the mere fact that systems of sex-specification exist in a language is not enough to prevent societal mechanisms from obstructing the reasonable or timely development of appropriate occupational titles. These mechanisms are studied thoroughly for Spanish and compared to those of other languages. In the final analysis, it is necessary to discuss the various strategies open to women: it becomes clear that choices here are not so much dependent on strictly linguistic determinants, but rather on subjective factors having to do with the social status of the persons involved.

Translation

87–408 Ladd, Philip (U. of Bradford). Pre-editing of machine-translation input: an experimental evaluation. *Multilingua* (Amsterdam), **5,** 4 (1986), 217–24.

Based on the premise that a significant proportion of errors arising in machine-translation output are attributable to causes external to the system itself, an analysis of raw output from the WEIDNER system revealed that 38% of errors could be traced to specific SL features, a further 4.6% being due to poorly formulated input material and 9.8% to inadequate or incorrect dictionary entry. A pre-edited version compiled according to a corpus of empirically formulated rules equally applicable for technical writers demonstrated a decrease in error incidence of 27.5% with a significant improvement in overall readability. Taking dictionary and formatting errors into account, a potential error reduction of 40.6% was established, a factor calculated to be of considerable short-term value in adapting MT to meet the requirements of both the current and potential markets.

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