Language description and use

Descriptive studies of particular languages
English

89–127 Bland, Susan Kesner (Cornell U.). The present progressive in discourse: grammar versus usage revisited. *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **22**, 1 (1988), 53–68.

Traditionally the progressive form of the English present tense has been accepted as indicating that an action was in progress, or that it was incomplete. It was also accepted as occurring mostly in combination with verbs of event, e.g. *write*, but not with verbs of state, e.g. *like*. Increasingly, however, verbs of state are used in the present progressive in spoken English. The combination occurs when the speaker wishes to endow certain states with features and functions of event verbs. Thus intensity, emotion, vividness, politeness, or change of some sort are added to the state: *Joe is discovering the truth*; *The plane is landing*; *This operation is costing a lot*.

The area is unstable at present, and various problems remain unresolved such as overuse of the form by advanced, non-native speakers. It is an area which requires the attention of teachers and curricula and materials designers. There are many new uses of the form in spoken English, and grammar book descriptions must be reassessed and greater emphasis put on the form's communicative purpose.

Esperanto

89–128 Isaev, M. I. (Moscow). Международный вспомогательный язык эсперанто: вопросы теории и практити. [Esperanto: theory and practice.] *Вопросы языкознания* (Moscow), **4** (1987), 83–94.

The ideal of 'one language for all mankind' stretches back to Plato. It was in 1887, however, that the history of Esperanto began. With Scheiner's experimental language, Volapük, losing in popularity, Ludwig Zamenhof, a Warsaw doctor, approached the problem from a practical rather than a theoretical angle and Esperanto was born. Familiar with the workings of several languages, Zamenhof took words which had become 'international' or 'semi-international' Latin words to make up a set of 900 roots from which nearly all new words could be formed.

A history of the language in the Soviet Union is given; the first three of the six periods in the development of Esperanto were heavily influenced by Russian. Esperanto very quickly gained wide support in Russia, though its popularity soon spread into other countries. English and French have been most influential since the Second World War. Just as with any literary language, Esperanto has developed; Zamenhof allowed for improvements to be made whilst preventing a succession of changes which would damage the stability of the language. The methods of controlling and developing Esperanto are examined in terms of its grammar and vocabulary. [Examples of the use of Esperanto in the fields of classical literature and propaganda are also given.]

French

89–129 Ashby, William J. (U. of California, Santa Barbara). Français du Canada/français de France: divergence et convergence. [Canadian French and French French: points of convergence and points of divergence.] *French Review* (Baltimore, Md), **61**, 5 (1988), 693–702.

Samples of speech from two groups of French speakers in Canada were compared with samples from metropolitan France, from the region of Tours where a 'pure' form is considered to be spoken. The two innovations studied – erosion of negative *ne* and non-pronunciation of *l* in pronouns, appear to have progressed much further in Canada than in France where speakers prove more conservative; however in Canada the position has stabilised while in France the language is still in a state of flux.

The initial assumption made was that both Canadian French and French French derived from a common linguistic base but had evolved at varying rates. Some researchers, however, have suggested that French in Canada arose from a *koine* (a mixture of several different French dialects).

German

89–130 Köpcke, Klaus-Michael (U. of Hannover, FRG). Schemas in German plural formation. *Lingua* (Amsterdam), **74,** 4 (1988), 303–35.

In a structural theory of morphology based on an 'Item-and-Process' model the plural marking system of German appears to be a complex series of unmotivated rules and lists of exceptions. Experimental data show that at a general level adult speakers of German make use of certain tendencies in the existing nominal lexicon when asked to assign the plural to nonce words. However, on a specific level subjects deviate substantially from existing patterns in the lexicon. These deviations are accounted for by a psychological model of the 'cue strength' of specific morphemes based on their salience, frequency, and cue validity, and a process of plural schema matching. Additional support for the plural schema approach is drawn from plural assignment to recent loanwords and from historical changes in the plural marking system of German.

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