Language description and use

Descriptive studies of particular languages

French

89–396   Combettes, Bernard (Nancy II). L'opposition écrit/oral et les stratégies de lecture. [Written/oral opposition and reading strategies.] *Langue Française* (Paris), **80** (1988), 33–50.

Studies of reading comprehension have concentrated on the grasp of grammatical structure, but in practice the reader's problems have more to do with the information structure of the text – which elements go together, which are 'given' or 'new'. Mis-reading is often due to the strategy of 'local attachment', trying to understand a word or phrase in conjunction with another close to it in the sentence, when in fact it goes with something more remote.

Ambiguities in information structure are far rarer in the spoken language, which is a totally different kind of information system. Most of the article is devoted to this system and to ways in which it avoids ambiguities and information-processing difficulties. Some of these involve prosodic devices (especially intonation) and gesture used to clarify information structure. The density of information is also kept low, notably by following Lambrecht's maxim that a referent is not introduced and commented on in the same proposition, one consequence being that a new referent is rarely introduced in subject position. In spoken French, an introductory formula such as *y a* or *tu vois* is often used, so that instead of *Pierre s'est acheté une nouvelle voiture*, we have *y a Pierre, il s'est acheté une nouvelle voiture*.

89–397   Roy, Jean-Louis (Quebec's Delegate General in Paris). La langue française est-elle en déclin dans le monde? [Is the French language in decline in the world?]. *Dialogues et Cultures* (Paris), **32** (1988), 57–61.

In spite of considerable unifying factors in the world, there is still powerful spiritual and cultural diversity. French is chosen as the second or third language throughout the world, but we must not forget that France is the only French-speaking country where no other language is officially spoken. Demographically and geolinguistically the outlook seems bleak for French, but the enormous increase in students and teachers of French, particularly in South America, is extremely encouraging. English may be the language of politics and economics, but French must be promoted in the audio-visual world, as well as in science and technology. French speakers must support each other. Forecasts of the demise of French are ill-founded.

Russian

89–398   Glinkina, L. A. Речевой этикет: 'ты' п 'вы' [Speech etiquette: ty and vy.] *Русский язык за рубежом* (Moscow), **6** (1988), 25–6.

The development of *ты* (you) and *вы* (you) and their use in contemporary Russian are described. Right up to the end of the 17th century *ты* was commonly used to address everyone. Then a more formal form of speech came to be used in international and official business. During the last few centuries *ты* became used when a more familiar form of speech was called for, and *вы* became used when a more polite form was needed. However, this distraction between the two speech forms did not always remain constant, as was seen during the Revolution when *ты* (thought to be more demo-cratic) became more generally used in official, as well as in friendly, situations.

In contemporary Russian *ты* is used for intimate, non-official speaking at home, in a family group or with friends, *вы* is used when speaking in a solemn, neutral, official way – particularly in the street, on transport or in shops. Problems can often arise when people feel they have been wrongly addressed, as the two pronouns enjoy very different positions of social significance.

89–399   Uluhanov, I. C. Грамматический род и словообразование. [Grammatical gender and word building.] *Вопросы языкознания* (Moscow), **5** (1988), 107–21.

The important role played by grammatical gender in word building and morphology in contemporary Russian is examined. The factors which help or hinder the word-building process are considered. The suffixes of nouns are closely linked to the development of word building and are discussed in detail. The characteristic suffixes of male, female and neuter nouns enable the words to be divided into different categories. The suffix is closely linked with the word's inflexion and can be partially divided on that basis. Affixes are also considered and are also divided into different categories.

The classifying and the word changing of the gender category function in different ways in word building, and by far the greater importance is attached to the classifying role.

Translation

89–400   Coughlin, Josette M. Artificial intelligence and machine translation: present developments and future prospects. *Babel* (Budapest, Hungary), **34**, 1 (1988), 3–9.

Despite progress in Artificial Intelligence (AI) research, the techniques it offers for use in machine translation (MT) are limited. AI can provide dictionaries which incorporate increasing amounts of data, and resolve problems of words with several meanings. It is also increasingly possible to make inferences from known facts when faced with a new context. AI-assisted MT will continue however to need a measure of post-editing if it is to attain the quality of human translation.

89–401   Gawn, Peter (Translation Bureau, Ottawa). Authenticity and quality of translation. *Bulletin of the CAAL* (Montreal), **7**, 2 (1985) [publ. 1989], 103–11.

In a bilingual country official documents of many types must be issued in both languages, each version being authentic. For various reasons, most documents originating in the Canadian federal government are drafted in English: the French version is then prepared by means of translation. This poses the question whether a translated version can have the same authenticity as a text produced by subject specialists and drafting experts. Furthermore, the quality of the French text does not always satisfy the consumer. Various factors such as time constraints, unfamiliarity with subject area, inexperience, inability, work organisation, isolation of translation, contribute to a linguistically non-authentic text and a style that has been characterised as Ottawa French. This paper proposes solutions intended to improve the authenticity of French texts.

Lexicography

89–402   Lépinette, Brigitte. Les définitions des émotions en français et en espagnol: étude sémantique et lexicographique. [Definitions of emotions in French and Spanish: a semantic and lexicographic study.] *Revue Québécoise de Linguistique* (Quebec), **17**, 2 (1988), 95–131.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the possibility of a standardisation of lexicographic definitions in lexemes which belong to a bilingual semantic field. An analysis of a group of French and Spanish words denoting emotions is presented. The principles that underlie the constitution of the definitional standard pattern are discussed, together with the results for this particular field. The authors enumerate the general consequences entailed by this definitional pattern for the analysis and comparison of the semantic characteristics of lexical units belonging to two tongues. They also show that the systematic introduction of definitional patterns in bilingual lexicography would mean a qualitative transformation of the bilingual dictionary.

89–403 Shaikevich, A. and Oubine, I. Translators and researchers look at bilingual terminological dictionaries. *Babel* (Budapest, Hungary), **34**, 1 (1988), 10–16.

The American Translators Association has carried out research among translators and scientific researchers in an attempt to establish the most common shortcomings of bilingual terminological dictionaries. The following were perceived as major weaknesses: inaccuracy, incompleteness, padding, omissions, lack of sufficient context and of meaning discrimination, and incorrect information from previous dictionaries.

A good dictionary, that is one which meets the requirements of users, would require regular updating and republishing, abbreviations contained in a separate section, provision of definitions for new and complicated entries, and word combinations in key-word entries. These are some of the recommendations offered to lexicographers and publishers.

89–404 Zgusta, Ladislav (U. of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana). Pragmatics, lexicography and dictionaries of English. *World Englishes* (Oxford), **7**, 3 (1988), 243–53.

This paper treats the influence of pragmatics on lexicography, with illustrations from several dictionaries of English as well as from other mono- and bilingual dictionaries. The history of the term 'pragmatics' is discussed, and the emergence of pragmatics as a discipline is described as having origins in transformational grammar and in the study of speech acts. A general discussion follows of more and less common pragmatic aspects of the dictionary, such as indexicality (deixis). Three pragmatic aspects of dictionaries are discussed: the cultural setting, equivalence in bilingual dictionaries with English, and the lexicographic definition. It is shown that the cultural setting can influence the choice of pictorial illustrations or of words to be included in the dictionary. Equivalence is a lexicographic problem due to the lack of one-to-one meaning correspondences between words in different languages; finding appropriate translational equivalents is a difficult task for makers of bilingual

dictionaries, since they often face situations in which only a partial equivalence exists between words or in which there is no equivalent for a given word due to cultural and other differences between langauges. The lexicographic definition, or explanation of meaning, presents three difficulties to lexicographers: circularity, explaining *obscurum per obscurius*, and hyperonymic regression. The Collins CO-BUILD is given as an example of a monolingual English dictionary that avoids the problems of explanation of meaning in an original way. This paper concludes with observations on how pragmatic competence, as one part of linguistic competence, must be used in the interpretation of dictionary definitions, especially of the type of Collins COBUILD: a comparison is made between dictionaries that rely heavily on human pragmatic knowledge, and those constructed for computational use that must make their pragmatic component explicit.

Lexicology

89–405 Miller, George and others (Princeton U.). WordNet: an electronic lexical reference system based on theories of lexical memory. *Revue Québecoise de Linguistique* (formerly *Cahier de Linguistique*) (Montreal, Canada), **17**, 2 (1988), 181–213.

This paper describes WordNet, an on-line lexical reference system whose design is based on psycholinguistic theories of human lexical organisation and memory. English nouns, verbs, and adjectives are organised into synonym sets, each representing one underlying lexical concept. Synonym sets are then related via three principal conceptual relations:

hyponymy, meronymy, and antonymy. Verbs are additionally specified for presupposition relations that hold among them, and for their most common semantic/syntactic frames. By attempting to mirror the organisation of the mental lexicon, WordNet strives to serve the linguistically unsophisticated user.