Language description and use

Descriptive studies of particular languages
English

89–535   Algeo, John (U. of Georgia). The tag question in British English; it's different, i'n'it? *English World-Wide* (Heidelberg, FRG), **9**, 2 (1988), 171–91.

Tag questions in English vary across national, regional and social boundaries. Hitherto grammarians have focused on the grammar and semantics of tag questions and ignored their pragmatic functions. But their primary function is to signal relationships between participants in a language event. The complexity of English tags is reflected in the twelve types of tag elements distinguished in the literature and these are contrasted with the invariant structures of other languages. Four kinds of prag-matic meaning can be distinguished for tag questions: informational, confirmatory, peremptory and aggressive. The first two are politeness signals involving minimum social control; the last two are impoliteness signals and are characteristic of British English, initially confined to lower middle-class usage but now spreading upwards. Their function is to restrict responses and establish the superiority of the speaker to the addressee.

89–536   Nehls, Dietrich (U. of Stuttgart, FRG). Modality and the expression of future time in English. *IRAL* (Heidelberg, FRG), **26**, 4 (1988), 295–307.

Although it has been claimed that there are particular nuances of meaning among the various verb forms with future reference in English, opinions differ as to where these differences lie. Moreover, expression of futurity is not only a matter of chronological division of time. The various expressions of future time in English express different degrees of prob-ability on a five point scale ranging from the highest degree, expressed by the simple present, to the lowest degree, expressed by will plus the progressive infinitive. Text types, speech acts, pragmatic con-texts and semi-modal constructions such as *is to, be due to, be likely to*, must also be taken into consideration.

89–537   Pickett, Douglas. The sleeping giant: investigations in business English. *Language International* (Amsterdam), **1**, 1 (1989), 5–11.

Rejecting the term 'register' to denote accurately the language of business, a new term 'ergolect' is coined to cover work-related language determined by subject matter and situation. The ergolect of business English has been taught since the sixteenth century and is the doyen of EFL fields, often concentrating on written forms but with an oral dimension also. It is a mediating language between the general public and specific business and its lexical development proceeds by a variety of poetics whereby everyday words are imagistically extended to cover unfamiliar concepts. Six gradations of distancing are noted from the 'general' to the 'opaque' and comparisons are made with other ESP fields and the business lexis of West European languages. It is asserted that the mechanism for English is peculiar to the genius of the language and that the business ergolect is by its nature more compounded of general lexis than other ESP fields. An ergolect hardly operates at all at the level of grammar, only special lexis and typical transactions characterise it [examples].

French

89–538   Cadiot, P. De quoi 'ça' parle? A propos de la référence de 'ça, pronom–sujet. [What's 'ça' all about? The reference of 'ça' as subject pronoun.] *Français Moderne* (Paris), **56**, 3/4 (1988), 174–92.

Ça (and its elided form *c'*) in structures such as NP_1, ça être NP_2; NP, ça être ADJ; NP, ça V (…) does not have a clear-cut antecedent. Its apparent immediate antecedent can be of almost any category and is 'exteriorised' by the use of *ça*. In contrast with the personal pronouns it is rather a 'pragmatic controller', able to establish a direct relation with the context of discourse, verbal or non-verbal, selecting whatever is relevant to what is to be said; rather than anaphora one should speak of 'topic maintenance'. Examples are *Le président, c'est Mitter-rand* = The (person who has been elected) president

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is Mitterrand; *Le panaché, c'est Madame* = The shandy is (for) you, Madam; *Capri, ça n'est pas fini* = (What is happening in) Capri hasn't finished; *Les enfants, ça m'intéresse* = Children (in general) interest me. The use of *ça* in talking of the weather (*ça pleut*) and with vague reference (*ça gaze? ça y est, ça barde!*, etc.) is discussed in the light of its function in the structures mentioned above.

89–539 Leach, Patrick (U. of Leeds). French intonation: tone or tune? *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* (London), **18**, 2 (1988), 125–39.

An analysis in terms of tunes is proposed. Within utterances consisting of a single rhythmic group, two or three points (onset, [pre-final] and final syllable) are identified as intonationally relevant, with semantic contrasts realised by the total configuration of pitches perceived at those points. Seven major tunes (with variants) are identified on this basis, four with a final glide (high mid–low, low mid–high, high low–mid, low high–mid) and three with a final level pitch (high mid low, low mid high, low high mid). The onset and final syllables may also carry an accent, traditionally known as *accent d'insistance* and *accent d'intensité* respectively. The onset may be preceded by one or more pre-tune syllables, typically associated with minor word classes, which hover around the mid pitch but which are attracted towards the onset pitch. The onset is typically associated with the initial syllable (beginning with a consonant) of a word belong to a major word class.

Russian

89–540 Paducheva, E. V. Напечие как кванторное слово. [The adverb as a quantitative modifying description of time.] *Серия литературы и языка* (Moscow), **48**, 1 (1989), 26–37.

There is a large group of adverbs (and adverbial phrases), such as *vcegda, obichno, kagda-nibyd*, linked with the expression of quantification. Words which show an exact quantity, such as *dva* or *tri*, are excluded from this study. The various meanings conveyed by the frequentative adverbs *vcegda, inagda, nikagda, obichno, chasto* and *redko* are studied in detail. *Vcegda* is first considered and three meanings are ascribed to it: (a) when it conveys the continuity of some lasting situation; (b) when a situation repeats itself; and (c) when it expresses universal characteristics of a repeated situation or theme.

These meanings are considered in terms of quantification: (a) expresses a universal quantification of a moment of time, (b) a quantification for a moment of time, with the describing of some sort of event and (c) a universal quantification at first hand in a situation. The semantic qualities of the other five adverbs are also assessed and similarly three meanings can be seen in these and other adverbs of quantification.

The synonomy of *vcegda* and *kakoi-nibyd* is considered. The conditions which exist when *vcegda* can be substituted for *kakoi-nibyd* and vice versa, are formulated. However, interchange is not always possible, particularly when *vcegda* enjoys the meaning designated in (a). Lastly, the syntactic vagueness of adverbial quantification is considered.

Interpreting

89–541 Woll, Bencie (U. of Bristol). Report on a survey of sign language interpreter training and provision within the member nations of the European Community. *Babel* (Budapest), **34**, 4 (1988), 193–209.

This study reveals the need for action in developing adequate interpreting services for the deaf in the European Community. One advantage for European countries is the possibility of developing cooperative work across national boundaries, so that those countries just beginning to look at the problems can benefit from the progress made elsewhere, including accessing interpreting expertise and financial support via the European Community, and learning from foreign language interpreting services. A number of outline proposals are suggested here, some of which stand independently, and others of which can only be developed as part of a long-term programme. (1) European working party on interpreting for the deaf; (2) model training programme for trainee interpreters, and

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those involved in training interpreters in member countries. The model course would serve both as a guide for the establishment of training courses in each country, and for the specific purposes of awarding a European qualification in interpreting for the deaf and/or in interpreter training; (3) model training programme for deaf interpreters – this should be developed as a priority. Training should focus on two areas of skills: training deaf people as intermediate interpreters at international conferences, and as intermediate interpreters for deaf with poor language skills in either sign language or spoken language. Such a training programme could also lead to a European qualification in interpreting. (4) European sign language interpreters' association and register.