

**NEW TRENDS AND METHODOLOGIES IN APPLIED ENGLISH
LANGUAGE RESEARCH. DIACHRONIC, DIATOPIC AND
CONTRASTIVE STUDIES**

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Investigators in English Linguistics will certainly welcome this volume, which compiles a selection of some of the best and most representative papers presented at the *First ELC International Postgraduate Conference on English Linguistics (ELCI)* by young researchers (practically all of them had recently read their doctoral dissertations, or were on the point of doing so, according to the information supplied in the volume), held at the University of Santiago de Compostela in 2008. The work was then published just a year afterwards, so that the topics dealt with are still hotly-debated and within the main trends of scientific research in the areas covered. The work, therefore, offers its readership a stimulating panorama of what will certainly become some of the orientations within this field in forthcoming works and research tendencies.

Language does not exist in a vacuum, and cannot be understood independently of its speakers, of its users. The work reviewed addresses one of the keystone notions within linguistics, as is *variation* –the focus of attention in authors such as Chambers (1995/ 2003), Labov (1972), Gumperz and Hymes (1972), Hymes (1962), or Gumperz (1955)– with a view to introducing its readership to some of the most recent and influential perspectives of analysis and research in applied linguistics.

Three main perspectives of analysis are addressed, namely, diachronic, diatopic and a combination of comparative and contrastive approaches. Accordingly, the

volume is structured into three different major sections, –namely, Part I, which focuses upon Diachronic Studies; Part II, upon Diatopic Studies; and finally, Part III, upon Contrastive Studies.

Part I, therefore, embraces five different studies, which share a diachronic orientation. Thus, the paper that opens the volume, by Faya-Cerqueiro, draws on the historically verbal origin of the use of *please* as a courtesy marker, and also analyses its status in the nineteenth century. The corpora used for the study have been the electronic data bases of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* and *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* of the *Chadwyck-Healey Literature Collections*.

Teo Juvonen takes the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC)* to analyse the persistence of the S-Genitive in Late Middle and Early Modern English in the correspondence genre. As is well known, this type of material has been widely used by authors such as Nevalainen, Taavitsainen or Rissanen, mainly because private letters reflect the state of the actual realisations of the language at a concrete period, better than their literary counterparts.

Rodríguez-Puente's essay brings the reader to the twenty-first century, and studies the effects of lexicalisation, grammaticalisation and idiomatisation upon phrasal verbs with *get*. The definitions of these processes and also of phrasal verbs themselves are critically examined, with a view to establishing a proper relationship between the two. The study focuses upon a selection of phrasal verbs formed with *get* as a lexeme. It is emphasised that an adequate coverage of phrasal verbs in English must take into account their morphological, syntactic and semantic features. Three different types of phrasal verbs come to be distinguished, on the basis of their level of lexicalisation.

Chao-Castro analyses the uses of the dual-form adverb *short/shortly* in the eighteenth-century. An initial diachronic survey of the word formation processes of dual form adverbs leads her to conclude that the Late Modern English period has tended to be overlooked. The evidence provided by the *Century of Prose Corpus (COPC)* points to the combination of two different processes of word-formation being involved in the origin of this dual form: conversion and derivation.

The paper that closes this first part, by Ruano-García, dwells upon English regional dialect variation during the Early Modern English period, an aspect that has been overlooked so far. Concretely, his main focus of interest is the Yorkshire lexicon. He aims to determine which words were peculiar of this area and other northern counties, and so to distinguish between regionalisms proper, on the one hand, as contrasted to other words of more widespread usage but which were equally non-standard, on the other hand. This database consists of non-literary texts, such as wills and other probate documents.

Part II (*Diatopic Studies*) focuses upon the analysis of several morphological and phonological features in the following geographic varieties of English: Standard English, Modern Scottish English, Galwegian English, and Black South-African English. Corresponding to the first aspect, Dahak's contribution, "Vowels in Inter-tonic Syllables: A Corpus-based Study" shows that the presence of full vowels in unstressed syllables in Standard English is constrained by certain morphological, phonological and isomorphic traits. These constraints are most effective if combined. Her study is carried out on the basis of a computerised corpus extracted from several pronunciation dictionaries (most importantly, Jones et al., 2006; Wells 1990/2000; Merriam Webster; and also *The Online Etymology Dictionary*).

Ole Schützler's paper, "Unstable Close-mid Vowels in Modern Scottish English", analyses processes affecting the phonemes of the lexical sets FACE and GOAT (Wells, 1982; Cruttenden 2001; Jones, Roach, Hartman and Setter 2006), which have undergone changes in their realisation from Early Modern English onwards. Concretely, the author addresses the phonemes /e/ and /o/ as more or less diphthongal monophthongs. Those relevant aspects concerning both the extent of variation of these phonemes in Scottish English, and also the impact of sociolinguistic and phonological factors on that variation, are dealt with.

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In turn, it is the vowels of the lexical sets CHOICE, LOT and THOUGHT that are analysed by Katrin Sell, and this time in the diatopic variety of Galwegian English. The starting point of her discussion is the assumption that Hiberno-English has become increasingly influenced by both British and American English, particularly among young speakers, as was suggested by Van Ryckegem (1997), and also by Trudgill (1995). In what has been termed as 'the Dublin vowel shift', (Hickey, 2004) these vowels tend to have a lower, unrounded realisation if compared to British English. The author seeks to find out whether the Dublin vowel shift has spread as far as the West of Ireland, concretely, Galway City.

The last paper of this section, by Lize Terblanche, deals instead with the extent of morphological productivity in Black South-African English, concretely, of certain suffixes involved in nominalisations or grammatical metaphors (such as *-tion*, *-ment*, *-ity*, *-er*, and *-(e/a)nce*). Three different forms are discussed, namely, realised productivity, expanding productivity, and potential productivity. Two corpora of South African Black English have been used for the study, namely, the *Tswana Learner Corpus* (Van Rooy and Schäfer 2002) and the *Xhosa Spoken Corpus* (De Klerk 2002).

Part III is devoted to the field of Contrastive Studies, in the context of which a number of aspects of morphology and syntax are analysed in a variety of languages. It may be emphasised that some of these languages are not commonly found

in general studies of this kind, such as Bulgarian, Swedish or Italian. Particular problems that native speakers of these languages, and also of German, may have to face when learning English are studied in detail. Therefore, the general orientation of all four papers in this section is of a very practical nature, which will certainly help and be of interest not only for researchers but also for teachers.

The first paper in this part, by Viktoria Börjesson, “Reinforcing and Attenuating Modifiers of Adjectives in Swedish Advanced Learners’ English: A Comparison with Native Speakers”, addresses the use of adjective modification in corpora of both native speakers and non-native speakers of English in both oral and written texts. It shows how the use of these corpora, particularly those of advanced non-native learners of English, may contribute to substantial improvements in materials as well as in teaching-learning methodologies. Four different corpora have been used, including the *International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE)* and the *Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage (LINDSEI)*, as well as corpora of native conversational Swedish.

Svetla Rogatcheva dwells upon the problems that German and Bulgarian learners of English as a second language have to face when learning the past and the present perfect, as these tenses reflect aspectual traits basically unknown in the mother tongues of these speakers. The ICLE corpus and the Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage (LOCNESS) have been used. The author concludes that the differences in the use of these tenses observed, on the one hand, between British and American native language users, and, on the other hand, between those native speakers and learners of either variety whose mother tongues lack such aspectual distinction, do not only rely on the influence of each respective L1 but also upon exposure to the target language.

In our view, the main theoretical interest of Susanne Schneider’s paper, which has an overall cognitive orientation, and which is entitled “Progressivity in English and Italian: A Typologically Guided Comparative Study”, has to do with the notion of *meta-category*, introduced by the author in a previous work (Schneider, 2006). Here such a notion is applied to cover a comparison of the expression of categories of tense and aspect in English and Italian. The notion of metacategory is shown to make possible parallel descriptions of the various ways in which definite prototypical meanings are encoded in different languages.

The paper that closes both this section and also the volume under review, Beatriz Tizón-Couto’s “Complement Clauses in a University Learner Spoken English Corpus: Issues Behind Compilation and Analysis”, sets out to compile a database of conversational English spoken by degree students of English and Translation Studies at the University of Vigo, Galicia. The questions that she seeks to answer in her paper concern essential aspects of language acquisition, such as the underuse,

overuse, misuse or avoidance of certain types of verbal complementation. For the author, such a compilation will certainly become a useful means to improve the teaching and learning of English as a second language, in so far as its use will help learners assimilate those features and come as close as possible to the realizations of native speakers. Her research is based upon the Vigo Corpus of Learner Spoken English (VICOLSE) as well as the British National Corpus (BNC).

Because of the heterogeneity and large range of topics dealt with, the work will certainly be of interest to a vast number of researchers in linguistics. This is shown not just by the three different parts that complete and structure its contents. In our view, an important merit of the work is that it succeeds in offering interesting contributions both in contents as well as in methods of analysis and research.

Though the contents of the book are diverse, we should like to emphasise that a recurrent methodological trend underlying practically all the papers of the volume under review has to do with *corpus analysis*. This is, indeed, a useful and powerful tool and has its function in many branches of linguistic research, supplying the researcher, as it does, with representative samples of authentic data. There is one more sense, in which this insistence on corpus linguistics places this work within the mainstream tendencies in present-day linguistics. Many of the papers presented in the volume testify to the importance acquired by this relatively recent discipline. Thus, the research described in these articles has been based on great compilations of texts of diverse types and genres, a tendency that has become paramount in Spanish and international forums of investigation in linguistics (Hornero *et al.*, 2008) such as the American Association for Corpus Linguistics (AACL), the American Association of Applied Corpus Linguistics (AAACL), or, within our frontiers, the Spanish Association of Corpus Linguistics (AELINCO). This procedure allows the contextualisation and application of the hypotheses entertained to actual representative manifestations of language use (Biber, 1998; Sinclair, 1996). The work under review, then, is welcome both for its in-depth theoretical contributions and for its successful application of up-to-date empirical methods of research.

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