

# *Studies of particular languages*

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## ENGLISH

- 78-47**    **Aronson, Howard I.** English as an active language. *Lingua* (Amsterdam), **41**, 3/4 (1977), 201-16.

The attempt is made to show that English is evolving away from the nominative construction in the direction of what Klimov has called the 'active' construction, wherein verbs are not classified for transitivity. A typological classification is proposed opposing languages with verbal classification for transitivity (nominative and ergative constructions) to languages lacking such classification, but having nominal classification for personalness or animateness (languages such as English and Dakota).

- 78-48**    **Lodge, K. R.** A note on personal reference in colloquial English. *UEA Papers in Linguistics* (Norwich), **4** (1977), 38-45.

The article suggests some additions to the Halliday and Hasan (1976) model for the semantic distinctions and overt markers of the personal reference system in English, with the suggestion that the original is only satisfactory for written English and that it ignores interesting features of colloquial English. The emended system incorporates as parameters notions of endophoric and exophoric reference, as well as 'same' or 'other' with regard to the social group of the speaker and addressee. It is suggested that the rather simple dichotomy of 'intimate' and 'formal' as a way of accounting for second-person pronoun usage needs further research and consideration with regard to the variety of utterances produced in different social contexts.

- 78-49**    **Muehl, Siegmur and Muehl, Lois B.** Comparison of differences in dialect speech among black college students grouped by standard English test performance. *Language and Speech* (Hampton Hill, Mddx), **19**, 1 (1976), 28-40.

Eighty black students enrolled in a pre-freshman-year college programme were divided into four standard English ability groups based on standardised test scores. Group dialect samples were obtained by asking the students in each of the groups to translate orally a standard English reading selection. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of these dialect translations showed differences among the groups in dialect facility that were positively and significantly related to group

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rankings in standard English ability. Initial differences among the groups in reading ability and geographical background did not appear to account for the differences in dialect facility. Comparing the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis in the present study with findings in language development studies suggested a developmental hypothesis to account for the group differences in both dialect and standard English communication skill for these black students.

**78-50 Shumaker, Nancy Worrell.** The semantics of the English 's genitive. *American Speech* (New York), **50**, 1/2 (1975) [publ. 1977], 70-86.

A corpus of prenominal genitives from a literary source, excluding noun-attributives, is classified according to the ways in which they can be paraphrased, disambiguating on the basis of context. Thirteen types are discussed, with a fourteenth category, miscellaneous constructions. The thesis that genitive constructions and *have* sentences are related is examined by discussing how many types paraphrase with *have*. The alteration often produces a change of meaning, or linguistic oddity, if not unacceptability. A transformational relationship from *have* to 's genitive is therefore rejected in favour of deriving them from the same underlying source, with the variants partly dependent upon the presence of a definite or indefinite subject.

The meaning of the genitive construction in general is of an abstract relationship between modified noun and head noun whose precise nature is to be inferred as appropriate by the addressee. Each of the paraphrase types carries its own less abstract meaning, in groups of intermediate generality.

## FRENCH

**78-51 Boswell, C. W. G.** Prefixes in contemporary French. *Modern Languages* (London), **58**, 1 (1977), 15-18.

The most discussed aspect of prefixation in French in recent years has been the problem of deciding exactly which morphemes, bound or free, should rank as prefixes. No clear grammatical or semantic role is reserved for prefixes in contemporary French. A small but significant number of examples from current journalese are identified which contravene the rule which states that prefixes cannot alter the word-class of the base to which they are attached: . . . *des obstacles 'antifoule' entre le terrain de football et les tribunes* shows *foule* converted from a noun to what is functionally, if not morphologically, an adjective. The process is still largely restricted to journalese but is spreading to technical vocabularies, which are in turn diffused through advertising: *antibrouillard, antivol*. A more reasonable definition might therefore be to define a French prefix

as a bound morpheme affixed in initial position to a base which is capable of independent existence as a word (a free morpheme) and which does not generally alter the word-class of that base.

- 78-52 Combe-McBride, Nicole.** Un exemple d'approche notionnelle dans le cadre du français fondamental. [A notional approach to Fundamental French.] *Français dans le Monde* (Paris), **129** (1977), 8-14.

A grammar may be seen as the sum total of possible statements which can be derived from a given corpus within a given context. Here the concept of place is taken and the different ways in which it can be expressed using the lexical items comprised in *français fondamental* stage 1 are listed and analysed [examples]. [Tables.]

## GERMAN

- 78-53 Folsom, Marvin H. and Rencher, Alvin C.** Zur Frage der sprachlichen Unterschiede in der BRD und der DDR. [Are there linguistic differences between the FRG and the GDR?] *Deutsche Sprache* (Munich), **1** (1977), 48-55.

Whereas most studies of the linguistic differences between the two German states are concerned with the creation of new words or semantic changes, these two studies try to approach the question from a different point of view. Twenty different grammatical phenomena (*Variablen*) are analysed statistically. The results show that the length of sentences is the same for novels and detective stories in the FRG and in the GDR. The same holds for the occurrence of the subjunctive, the genitive and the rest of the analysed phenomena. As far as grammar is concerned there is no difference between the German language(s). Whether there are other features of statistical significance is something for further research to find out. However, such findings seem to be improbable on the basis of these studies.

- 78-54 Ibanez, R.** Umkehrbarkeit der Teilsätze in Konditionalgefügen. [Reversibility of clauses in conditional constructions.] *Folia Linguistica* (The Hague), **10**, 3/4 (1976), 217-22.

The author is concerned with the linear ordering of the protasis, e.g. *wenn du schmatzt*, and the apodosis, e.g. *vergeht mir der Appetit*, of conditional sentences. This sentence is grammatical even if the order of protasis and apodosis is reversed: *mir vergeht der Appetit, wenn du schmatzt*. In conjunctive conditional sentences the protasis is marked by *wenn*. The same reversibility does not always

work with non-conjunctive conditional sentences. These can be called semi-reversible. Reversibility cannot of course be applied to elliptical conditional sentences where the apodosis is missing. There are also conjunctive conditional sentences with *dann*, *so* and *und* in the protasis which are also reversible.

- 78-55 Sommerfeldt, K. E.** Zur semantischen Bedingtheit konkurrierender Attributformen in der deutschen Sprache der Gegenwart. [On the semantic conditioning of competing attribute forms in modern German.] *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung* (Berlin), **30**, 2 (1977), 149-59.

The author wants to investigate the linguistic forms of nominal attributes according to their meaning and assign them to certain functional-semantic fields. The following groups of adjectives were chosen: derivations from proper names, *Goethesch*; from persons, *väterlich*; from geographical names, *thüringisch*; from materials, *hölzern*; derivations from other objects, *gestreift*; and from abstract nouns designating academic disciplines, etc., *literarisch*, *sprachlich*. The semantic conditions were studied in which these adjectives can be replaced by the following constructions: noun+noun in the genitive, noun+noun governed by a preposition, and a compound noun. Adjectives derived from proper nouns can usually be replaced by a genitive construction or prepositional phrase with *von*: *Goethes Werke*, *der Roman von Hesse*. Derivations from persons can also be replaced by a genitive construction or phrase with *von* or *durch*: *das Buch des Vaters*, *vom Vater*; *die Empfehlung des Arztes*, *durch den Arzt*. Derivations from geographical names are generally replaced by a prepositional phrase with *aus*, *in* or *nach*: *Käse aus Frankreich*, *Kirchen in Erfurt*, *der Bus nach Perleberg*. Derivations from materials can be replaced by a prepositional phrase with *aus* or a compound noun: *Tasche aus Leder*, *Ledertasche*. Derivations from other objects can be replaced by noun+prepositional phrase with *mit*: *Tapete mit Streifen*. Derivations from abstract nouns designating academic disciplines, etc., can be replaced by noun+noun in the genitive or a compound noun: *die Ausdruckskraft der Literatur*, *die Sprachbildung*. Which construction is used depends largely on the semantics of the head word and the attribute.

## SPANISH

- 78-56 Manteca Alonso-Cortès, Ángel.** En torno al 'se' impersonal. [On impersonal 'se']. *Revista Española de Lingüística* (Madrid), **6**, 1 (1976), 167-80.

Generality and regularity in the grammar require the derivation of impersonal *se* sentences (both VS and SV word-order types) from an underlying semipassive

(middle-voice) structure. This solution avoids problems such as the postulation of direct-object agreement rules, output constraints, etc. Some surface semi-passives require (con)textual information in order to be semantically interpreted (*se repara(n) zapatos*), but this fact can be handled directly by conversational rules.

## RUSSIAN

**78–57 Thompson, Irene.** Russian word order: a comparative study. *Slavic and East European Journal* (Urbana, Ill), 21, 1 (1977), 88–103.

Russian and English word order differ fundamentally, yet most textbooks do not deal adequately with the problem. There are many sentences in Russian where word order marks grammatical relations, though this function is usually fulfilled by morphological markers, leaving word order free to express information structure. The study is designed to test the hypothesis that American students of Russian use word order differently from native speakers. Contrastive analysis predicts that Americans would use the same word order for different tasks, while Russians would adjust it. An alternative hypothesis predicts that Americans, aware of the freedom of Russian word order, would generalise the rule and produce more arrangements than native speakers. Two groups were selected: one of American advanced students and language specialists, the other of native speakers. Sentences of different types were chosen, and each word was printed on a separate card. The subjects were presented with each sentence as a jumbled pack of cards and asked to sort them into a meaningful sentence. [The word orders selected appear in an appendix.] Americans produced more word orders per sentence than Russians, overgeneralising the freedom rule. However, they remained tied to the English practice of placing subject before predicate, inverting only 19 per cent of the time as opposed to the Russians' 47.5 per cent. [The sentences are discussed individually.] It is suggested that the English speakers treated the arrangement of Russian words into sentences as a purely syntactic device while Russians treat it as a communicative device. Since it is essential for communicative purposes, it must be taught from the beginning, as it is not learned through mere exposure to the language, even over long periods.