Language description and use

Descriptive studies of particular languages

French

95–118 Arrivé, Michel (U. of Paris X, Nanterre). Un débat sans mémoire: la querelle de l'orthographe (1893–1991). [A controversy without memory: the struggle over spelling (1893–1991).] *Langages* (Paris), **114** (1994), 69–83.

This article surveys over 100 years various episodes in the interminable French feud over spelling reforms. It stresses the paradoxical nature of the controversy, as far as the question of collective memory is concerned: this debate about memory is a debate with no memory. Indeed, the same antagonistic arguments are being used again and again over the years in a sort of endless repetition. This contribution shows how this attachment to spelling is an essential part of the French collective linguistic memory.

German

95–119 Primus, Beatrice. Sprachnorm und Sprachregularität: das Komma im Deutschen. [Speech norms and grammatical regularity: the comma in German.] *Deutsche Sprache* (Berlin, Germany), **21,** 3 (1993), 244–63.

This paper shows that the use of the comma in German is based, in its essential aspects, on a simple grammatical regularity. This result challenges the widely held opinion about the arbitrary nature of the DUDEN-conventions regulating the use of the comma.

Slavonic languages

95–120 Corbett, Greville G. (U. of Surrey). Systems of grammatical number in Slavonic. *Slavonic and East European Review* (Cambridge), **72,** 2 (1994), 201–17.

The expression of grammatical number varies from relative simplicity in some languages to great complexity in others. Even in languages where the main patterns are straightforward, there are often isolated examples of more interesting types. Accordingly the author first sets up a general model of the morphological means by which numbers can be signalled. This then allows him to characterise the range of variation found within Slavonic and to uncover the regularities within the diversity. In particular, he considers the possible relations between the inflectional root, the different stems and the sets of inflections. While in Slavonic number is signalled primarily by means of inflectional morphology, there are interesting examples of stem alternation, with instances of derived plural stems and of derived singular stems, and occasional examples of suppletion.

Lexicography

95–121 Baker, Mona and Kaplan, Robert. Translated! A new breed of bilingual dictionaries. *Babel* (Budapest, Hungary), **40,** 1 (1994), 1–11.

This paper describes the development of a new range of bilingual dictionaries which are based on translating the explanations in monolingual Cobuild dictionaries into the user's mother tongue. These dictionaries have been designated by Cobuild's Editor-in-Chief, John Sinclair, primarily to address the needs of language learners. The philosophy which underlies the design reveals important assumptions about the nature and limits of equivalence. Moreover, the development and implementation of the editorial policies have raised a number of issues which are of immediate concern to scholars of translation and to applied linguists. These include, for example, the nature and boundaries of the units

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of language and hence of the unit of translation, as well as the practical question of handling new genres in translation. This paper concentrates on the treatment of equivalence in the range of dictionaries under discussion.

95–122 Biber, Douglas and others (Northern Arizona U.). Corpus-based approaches to issues in applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics* (Oxford), **15,** 2 (1994), 169–89.

This paper illustrates the use of corpus-based analytical techniques to address a range of issues in applied linguistics. Two main strengths of the corpus-based approach are identified: text corpora provide large databases of naturally-occurring discourse, enabling empirical analyses of the actual patterns of use in a language; and, when coupled with (semi-)automatic computational tools, the corpus-based approach enables analyses of a scope not otherwise feasible.

These strengths are illustrated with respect to three areas of applied research: (1) English grammar; (2) lexicography; and (3) ESP and register variation. Throughout, the paper argues for the importance of a variationist perspective, comparing the patterns of structure and use across registers, and it shows how analysis of large corpora provides the empirical foundation for such a perspective.

Two general points are discussed in relation to the illustrative analyses. First, corpus-based analyses frequently show that earlier conclusions based on intuitions are inadequate or incorrect – that is, the actual patterns of use in large text corpora often run counter to our expectations based on intuition. Second, corpus-based analyses show that even the notion of core grammar needs qualification, because investigation of the patterns of structure and use in large corpora reveals important, systematic differences across registers at all linguistic levels.

95–123 Ducroquet, Lucile. Are bilingual dictionaries useful linguistic tools? *Language Learning Journal* (Rugby), **9** (1994), 48–51.

The author carried out a study of two well-known bilingual dictionaries with which she was dissatisfied, making a comparison between the two based on a list of 78 words she would expect to find in dictionaries covering a very general range of language. Words in four areas were considered: information technology, general business, parental responsibilities/leisure activities, and general medical, looking at whether the words were included or not and at accuracy of translation.

A summary of the findings shows similarity in performance of the two dictionaries, but there is cause for concern at the high proportions of incorrect/incomplete and missing entries. The study would seem to indicate that the dictionaries are not as useful as they should be, and that both choice of words and their presentation seem to be arbitrary.

95–124 Fourcin, Adrian (University Coll., London) and Gibbon, Dafydd (U. of Bielefeld, Germany). Spoken language assessment in the European context. *Literary and Linguistic Computing* (Oxford), **9,** 1 (1994), 79–86.

The increasing scope of work in the field of speech and linguistic engineering is gradually leading to the future introduction of robust techniques for real-time multilingual operation. The 'Speech Assessment Methods' ESPRIT project 2589 (SAM) is directed towards the definition and application of multilingual standards to assist in the assessment, evaluation, cross-comparison, and further advance of these developments. The SAM group involves collaboration between 26 laboratories in eight countries, six within the EEC and two from EFTA. The work is concerned with the establishment of databases, speech and language descriptive methods, and quantitative tools for the assessment both of speech recognisers ('input') and speech synthesis ('output') systems. Although the present activity involves only the eight languages of the present partners it is also conceived so as to facilitate the introduction of other member states' languages. If appropriate decisions are not made now, the languages of Europe will be catastrophically disadvantaged relative to English language forms, when the speech technology developments which are merely foreshadowed now become a reality in the next century. Standard European databases are already available on compact disk for five languages and a much larger data-gathering exercise has just been completed. Common workstation facilities

using a standard configuration (SESAM) are being used in the laboratories of the project. These provide a reference for the application of a comprehensive range of software packages designed for input and output assessment in addition to the provision of supporting linguistic analysis software. Common methods of linguistic standardization have been evolved and a common computer compatible phonemic notation (SAMPA) has been introduced for European languages. A structured perspective for standards and resource-oriented themes in future speech and spoken language work is outlined.