Language description and use

Descriptive studies of particular languages

French

92–478 Guilbaud, Daniel (Macquarie U., Australia). 'La réforme de l'orthographe': spelling dissension. *Babel* (Victoria, Australia), **26**, 3 (1991), 15–8.

The authorities in France have proposed a number of spelling reforms, to be taught in all schools from September 1991. These entail, in certain words, removing hyphens (*passepartout*), adding hyphens (*cent-vingt-et-un-mille*), removing circumflex accents (*abime, aout*), changing accents in verb paradigms (*céderons*), moving the dieresis (*aigüe*), Gallicising spellings (*exéma*) and plurals (*matchs*), regularising single and double consonants (*bonhommie*) and compound plurals (*après-midis*), removing anomalies (*ognon*). The proposals have, however, aroused strong opposition, and their future is unclear.

The author briefly mentions certain inconsistencies in the proposals, but his main point is a socio-political one: French speakers, in France and elsewhere, are not willing to let governments dicate their way of spelling, which has strong cultural and emotional associations and is linked with personal freedom. Previous reform attempts have polarised opinions along political lines, and none since 1830 has been successful [historical details]. It is also unrealistic to expect that the reforms would significantly contribute to solving France's acute problems of education and literacy or to arresting the decline of French as a world language.

Translation

92–479 Hartley, Anthony F. (Brighton Poly.). Terminology, technical writing and translating. *UEA Papers in Linguistics* (Norwich), **31/2** (1991), 55–63.

Following a definition of professional, as opposed to academic, translation, this article provides details of a course at Brighton Polytechnic designed to train professional translators working from French to English on technical texts. Students are introduced to the practices and requirements of professional translating, of which there are three essential components: terminological work and knowledge of a specialist area, learning how to access knowledge in specialist areas, and learning and using effective translation strategies.

Specialists in other disciplines select a French text which a team of students translates. They establish the purpose and readership of the text, and they assess the final draft provided by the team. A computer specialist is also involved who assists with searches and specific queries. Teamwork enables editing, revision, and, because the text is long, substantial glossary production. Students acquire knowledge of the resources available to the translator and develop skills which can be applied to any technical text. They learn to make decisions concerning the choice or rejection of a word or expression, and also to justify those decisions.

Lexicology

92–480 Anderson, Anne H. and others (U. of Edinburgh and U. of Glasgow). The HCRC Map Task corpus. *Language and speech* (Hampton Hill, Mddx) **34**, 4, (1991), 351–66.

This paper describes a corpus of unscripted, task-oriented dialogues which has been designed, digitally recorded, and transcribed to support the study of spontaneous speech on many levels. The corpus uses the Map Task (Brown, Anderson, Yule, and Shillcock, 1983) in which speakers must collaborate verbally to reproduce on one participant's map a route printed on the other's. In all, the corpus includes four conversations from each of 64 young adults and manipulates the following variables: familiarity of speakers, eye contact between speakers, matching between landmarks on the participants' maps, opportunities for contrastive stress, and phonological characteristics of landmark names. The motivations for the design are set out and basic corpus statistics are presented.