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SLJN

NEWSLETTER

no. 20 March 1999

Contents:

1. SLIN and HEL Conferences and Seminars
2. An annotated bibliography on phrasal verbs, Part 1 (R. Bacchielli)
3. Jack Aitken (1921-1998): a tribute (M. Dossena)
4. An interview with Norman Blake
5. More subscribers' e-mails

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Editor's Note

Let me start with a happy announcement which crowns many hopes and expectations: a SLIN website, cleverly prepared by Richard Dury and Marina Dossena with the precious help of Maurizio Gotti (Bergamo University) is working now with the heading *SLIN: Storia della Lingua Inglese, English Historical Linguistics in Italy*. Our Group, Our Conferences, Our Links. The site address is: <http://www.unibg.it/anglistica/slin/home2.htm>. Please visit it and contribute ideas!

1. SLIN and HEL Conferences and Seminars

§ We are all eagerly waiting for the **9th SLIN National Conference** to take place at **Suor Orsola Benincasa Institute, Naples, on May 13-15, this year**, dealing with English Historical Pragmatics. On Thursday 13, at 10.30, the Conference will be opened by a tribute to Thomas Frank, followed by Andreas Jucker's lecture headed "English Historical Pragmatics: Problems of Data and Methodology". Axel Hübler and Laura Wright, the other two guest-speakers, will lecture on Friday morning and afternoon respectively: the titles are "From Body Language to Embodied Language: Changes in the Expressiveness of Conversation during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" and "On the Construction of some Early Modern English Courtroom Texts". Four sessions including Saturday morning will be devoted to listening to and discussing some twenty papers given by Italian colleagues. A number of posters, additionally, will be briefly illustrated by the authors and shown in the Institute's premises. Late on Saturday morning 15, the usual business workshop will conclude the Conference. A trip is being organized for Saturday afternoon and advice for spending the following Sunday out will be provided as well. It must be remembered that the month of May is the "Monument period" in Naples, offering free visits

of the most renowned buildings, which, on the other hand, requires early booking of hotel accommodation. Here are the ones suggested by the local organizers: Hotel Britannique, Corso Vittorio Emanuele 133 (£ 150,000 per night: tel. 081. 761 4145; fax 660457), Hotel Mercure Angioino, Via Depretis 123 (£ 160,000: tel. 081.552 9500; fax 552 9509); Hotel Pensione Ruggiero, Via Martucci 72 (£ 115,000: tel. 081. 761 2460/4717; fax 66 0362/3536); Hotel Pinto Storey, Via Martucci 72 (£ 130,000: tel. 081. 68 1260/7536/0384/4314; fax 667536), Hotel Ausonia, Via Caracciolo 11 (£115,000: tel. 081. 664536; fax 682278); Hotel Canada, Via Mergellina 43 (£ 150,000: tel. 081. 68 1594/0952; fax 682018); Hotel College Europeo, Via Mezzocannone 109 (£ 80,000: tel. 081. 551 7254; fax 5522262).

§§ 3rd International Conference on Middle English (Dublin, 1-4 July 1999) includes plenary lectures being given by Julia Boffey, Angelika Lutz, Matti Rissanen, and John Scattergood and some fifty papers on various topics linked with the general subject "Language and text". Participants are required to be registered by 5th April to enjoy a favourable price - £140 - which includes lunches on Friday and Saturday and be accommodated at University College Dublin in four-room flats for £26 daily. Applications should be sent to **Third International Conference on Middle English c/o Incentive Conference Ireland, 1 Pembroke Place, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, Ireland. Tel. +353 1 661711. Fax +353 1 6671713. E-mail: english@incentive-conf.ie.**

§§§ 11 ICEHL will be held at Santiago de Compostela University (Northern Spain) on 7-11 September, 2000. The deadline for receiving abstracts (from 250 to 400 words) in 6 copies supplemented by a bibliography is **15 October, 1999**. Proposals for workshops are welcome. Plenary lectures will be given by Douglas Biber, Laurel Brinton, Santiago G. Fernandez-Corugedo, Raymond Hickey, Chris McCully, Frans Plank, Irma Taavitsainen, Ingrid Tiekens-Boon and

Anthony Warner. For further information contact the organizing committee chaired by **Teresa Fanego, 11 ICEHL, Dept. Of English, Facultade de Filoxia, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, E-15704 Santiago de Compostela, SPAIN. Fax +34 981 574646. E-mail 11icehl@usc.es.**

WWW <http://www.usc.es/ia303/11icehl/11icehl.htm>.

§§§§ 32nd Annual Meeting of Societas Linguistica Europaea is being held at **Ljubijana University on 8-11 July, 1999**, dealing with "Linguistics and Language Studies: exploring language from different perspectives". Papers, workshops and round tables can be made the object of proposals along with applications to be sent by 15 March to **SLE Conference, Department of Translation and Interpreting, Faculty of Arts, Askerceva 2, 1000 Ljubijana, Slovenia. Fax +386 62 221-310. E-mail mojca.golob@ff.uni-lj.si**

§§§§§ Fifth Conference: **ESSE-2000** will take place at Helsinki University on **August 25-29, 2000**. The Conference fee is set at c. FM800 (=ECU140). The academic programme Committee is chaired by Matti Rissanen (e-mail: matti.rissanen@helsinki.fi) while the Local Organizing Committee also includes Terttu Nevalainen and Irma Taavitsainen, e-mail **ESSE5-2000@helsinki.fi**. Postal address: Department of English, P.O. Box 4 (Yliopistonkatu 3), 00014 University of Helsinki.

§§§§§§ As announced in the previous issue of the *NL*, **XIX AIA Conference** will be held at Milan University on **September 21-23, 1999** under the title "The Economy of literature, language and culture in English-speaking countries". Further information may be obtained by contacting XIX Convegno AIA, Sezione di Anglistica, Università degli Studi di Milano, Piazza S.Alessandro, 1 -20123 Milano. Fax: 02-86339.351.

§§§§§§§§ SHEL 1 (Studies in the History of the English Language) will take place on May 28-30, 2000 at UCLA, Los Angeles, US under the conjoined effort of Professors Robert Stockwell and Donka Minkova with the purpose of emulating in America what is done in Europe by ICEHLs. Expressions of interest and working titles can be sent to the following e-mails:

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Stockwel@humnet.ucla.edu

ACurzan@u.washington.edu

One-page abstracts in three copies should be sent to the organizers by January 15, 2000, unidentified except by the cover sheet.

2. An annotated bibliography on phrasal verbs, Part 1 (Rolando Bacchielli)

* Here is a major scholarly effort Professor Bacchielli has produced for this *Newsletter* gathering and classifying a great number of bibliographical sources in one of his favourite nearly life-long research fields. The second Part will appear in the June issue.

An essential bibliographical guide to the synchronic and diachronic study of verb-particle combinations ("phrasal verbs") in English

The state of the art

The verb-particle construction in Modern English is an extremely complex one to analyse and describe coherently in synchronic terms, but its origin and diachronic development is even more problematic, if anything because the research conducted so far does not cover all the

written production handed down to us and also because, except for some indirect evidence, we have no prosodic support for the texts studied. Moreover, the range and importance of verb-particle combinations in the spoken language of the early stages of development is completely beyond our reach. But even today, with the precious help of the computer and the vast corpora made available recently, the linguistic community, characterized by diverging theoretical doctrines and methodological approaches, has not been able to produce a unified theory of phrasal verbs. On the other hand, since English has become a world language, educational needs are more and more compelling.

Terminological problems

Even though the literature dealing with "phrasal verbs" is already considerably large and varied, we have to admit that "phrasal verbs" have not yet been given a thorough and exhaustive treatment either in descriptive, or in historical terms. The scholars that in the last two centuries have been concerned with them have used different approaches, different criteria of analysis and classification, and, accordingly, different terminology. The terminology we have inherited, therefore, does not live up to the tasks and needs of a coherent and reliable description. A quick, informative survey of the terms in use, in any case, is indispensable. The main sources for the description of and debate about terminology are: Bolinger (1971), Sroka (1972), Hiltunen (1983), McArthur (1989). The first term that is worth considering is "phrase", which was first used by Wilkins (1668) in his criticism of verbal compounds and later adopted by Lowth and Buchanan to refer specifically to V + P combinations; "compound verbs" was introduced by Maittaire (1712); "group verbs" by Sweet (1892); "phrasal verbs", now the winning term, according to L.P. Smith (1925) was first coined and reluctantly adopted by Henry Bradley (1904); "compound verbs"

by Kruisinga (1911); "verb-adverb combinations" by Kennedy (1920); "merged verbs" by Aiken (1933); "verb-adverb locutions" by Roberts (1936); "separable compounds" by Curme (1947); "poly-word verbs" by Stevick (1950); "separable verbs" by Francis (1954); "post-particle verbs" by Marchand (1960); "two-word verbs" by Taha (1960); "discontinuous verbs" by Live (1965); "particled verbs" by Scott (1968); "adverbially particled and prepositionally particled verbs" by Mortimer (1972); "verb-particle constructions" by Frazer (1974). But various other terms crop up here and there: "miscellaneous compound verbs", "multiword verbs", "three-part verbs", "verb-particle sequences", "two- and three-word verbs". After Mitchell's syntagmatic analysis (1958) the distinction into the three categories: "phrasal verbs proper", "prepositional verbs", and "phrasal-prepositional verbs" has become conventional, even though generativists (Dikken 1992), on theoretical grounds, have now dropped any such canonical categorization. By and large in current linguistic literature the favourite term with publishers and dictionary-makers, especially on this side of the Atlantic, is "phrasal verbs", while "verb-particle constructions / combinations / compounds", not completely faultless, prevail in academic circles.

As to phrasal derivatives (playback, get-up, spin-off, etc. see below) very few terms have been proposed: "converted verb-adverb combinations" (Lindelöf 1937), "noun-particle compounds" (Adams 1973), and, relative to Italian usage, "termini frasali inglesi" (Bacchielli 1986). Everything considered the most reasonable solution seems to be "verb-particle derivatives".

In the matter of terminology we cannot ignore the terms coined to refer to an age-old problem of word-order (see below), that of the "dangling preposition" (source not located, probably first used in the U.S.A.), "deferred preposition" (Charnley 1949), "preposition at end" (Fowler 1923), "preposition stranding" (Maling & Zaenen 1885),

"prepositional passive" (Körner 1944), "postposed preposition" (Quirk et al. 1972).

Wilkins, J. (1668), *Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*, London

Maittaire, Michael (1712), *The English Grammar*, London

Sweet, Henry (1892), *A New English Grammar: Logical and Historical*, London

Bradley, Henry (1904), *The Making of English*, Macmillan

Kruizinga, E. (1911), *A Handbook of Present-Day English*, Groningen

Kennedy, Arthur G. (1920), *The Modern English Verb-Adverb Combination*, California, Stanford University Press

Smith, Logan P. (1925), *Words and Idioms: Studies in the English Language*, London (Reprinted 1943 and 1948)

Aiken, Janet R. (1933), *A New Plan of English Grammar*, New York

Roberts, M.H. (1936), "The antiquity of the Germanic Verb-adverb locution", *JEGP* 35, 466-81

Curme, George O. (1947), *Principles and Practice of the English Grammar*, New York

Stevic, E.W. (1950), "The deferred preposition", *American Speech*, 25, 211-14

Francis, W.N. (1954), *The Structure of American English*, New York

Taha, A.K. (1960), "The structure of two-word verbs in English", *Readings in Applied English Linguistics*, 130-6

Live, Anna H. (1965), "The discontinuous verb in English", *WORD* 21: 428-451

Scott, F.S. et al. (1968), *English Grammar. A Linguistic Study of its Classes and Structures*, London, Heinemann

Mortimer, Colin (1972), *Phrasal Verbs in Conversation*, Longman

Fraze, Bruce (1974), *The Verb-Particle Construction in English*, New York, Academic Press

An outline of synchronic description:

Verb-particle constructions are the most resourceful and advanced form of development of the English language and of the whole I.E. family of languages, from whatever angle one tries to consider them: typologically, syntactically, semantically, or lexically. Their striking success can be explained with the variety and flexibility of their structure and functions, with the expansion of forms (new verbs and particles and new combinations) and their sense development (conversion, polysemy, synonymity). Nonetheless they have never been given a thorough and exhaustive treatment based on the broadest possible material and on a unified theory of description. The reasons for the delay in their description can be attributed first and foremost to the Latin-based model of language that the grammarians of the past had unflinchingly adopted: they were unable to go beyond word boundaries and see that there could be groups of words so closely associated that you could not anatomize them into single items; moreover unravelling the "orthographic word" into its grammatical, functional, semantic and lexical layers was beyond their reach. Another obstacle was their confused notion of "particles" which they did not consider worthy of systematic treatment. The development of linguistic sciences in modern times has allowed the passage from the parts-of-speech approach to new linguistically based analyses and more recently to corpus- and collocation-based approaches. We cannot fail to say however, in passing, that didactic

description in the meantime, with its approximations, has hardly been conducted in full agreement with linguistic description.

The idea of taking phrasal verbs as single units developed little by little starting from the 16th century. Bullokar (1586), for instance, was the first to distinguish adverbs from prepositions. He also pointed out that some prepositions may also be used adverbially (an overlap of functions) and that in the compounding of prepositions with verbs, whether they precede or follow them, semantic changes can occur. Miège (1688) in comparing English and Latin verb compounds pointed out that while in Latin prepositions (= prefixes) precede the verb, in English they follow it. But it was Maittaire (1712) who first developed the idea of verb and particle forming a group that could not be dissociated. In his comparisons with Latin, Greek and Hebrew he identified features that are distinctively English. He was concerned with the positional variation of particles, with oppositions of prefixed and postparticled verbs, with the conversion of particles into verbs and, surprisingly enough for his age, with phrasal derivatives. Thanks to the observations made by the grammarians above, "the phrasal verb gradually finds its way into English grammar" (Hiltunen 1983, p. 384).

With Sweet (1900) homogeneous distributional criteria were established which allowed to draw a clear dividing line between "verb-adverb" and "verb-preposition" combinations. Not only did he focus his attention on the degree of cohesion between verb and particle to identify the two categories above, but also made resort to the criterion of stress to further distinguish them.

With Kennedy (1920) we finally get to a general but pinpointed overview of all the problems connected with the linguistic analysis, both descriptive and historical, of phrasal verbs. Even though he failed in giving indications as to whether and when a verb-particle combination is a compound, he laid the foundations of contemporary studies of phrasal verbs.

Smith (1925) is so decidedly concerned with the semantic unity of V and P that he considers irrelevant whether the particle is an adverb or a preposition. He also takes notice of the fact that there are phrasal verbs with two particles. His line is further pursued by Jowett (1951), but neither of them succeeds in reconciling semantic unity with syntactic function.

Roberts (1936), notwithstanding his historical perspective, with his identification of the various positions of verb, particle and object, gave a notable contribution to the synchronic description of verb-particle constructions.

Anthony (1954) has the merit of basing his inquiry on a corpus of material, thus paving the way for corpus-based analyses, while Anastasijevic (1954) with his study of adverbial extensions debates the problems of lexical function, transitivity/intransitivity and, for the first time, register. Mechner (1956) on the contrary concentrates on patterns of verb-particle collocations taking into consideration 8 verbs and 27 particles.

Mitchell (1958) adopts formal syntactic criteria and leaves out semantic considerations. He makes a definitive categorization into "phrasal verbs (proper)", "prepositional verbs" and "phrasal-prepositional verbs" now generally adopted. As a consequence the term "phrasal verbs", first proposed by Bradley to refer to all kinds of V + P combinations and later adopted by Smith to refer only to those combinations that constitute semantic units, remains ambiguous, because in current practice it is used as a general term for V + P combinations, while in specific literature it can be referred either to all idiomatic combinations, or only to verb-adverb idiomatic combinations. So the terminological problem is left unsolved.

Dietrich (1960) establishes the criteria for the identification of adverbial and prepositional functions with particles that can perform either function.

Almost contemporary to the analysis above is the study of "the dangling preposition" which has been the object of a heated debate from the times of Dryden. Fowler (1923), a staunch prescriptivist, is a great surprise with his defense of this commonly frowned-upon construction: there are sound historical reasons for doing this, because it is a time-honoured construct that dates back to Anglo-Saxon times. Volbeda (1926) is valuable for the rich material he provides. Charnley (1949) and Stevick (1950) enlarge on the problem. Pence (1949) decidedly supports Fowler's viewpoint, while Quirk et al. (1972) give us certainly the most synthetic and effective treatment.

For a general description of the patterns that phrasal verbs fit into, we now have Palmer (1965)'s study which is commendable, because, besides taking into consideration Mitchell's syntagmatic relations, also deals with idiomaticity (not a fixed parameter, but a cline) and phonetical features. He enlarges Mitchell's categorization into four classes: phrasal verbs without object, phrasal verbs with object, prepositional verbs, and phrasal-prepositional verbs and points out the possibility of forming a fifth category for idioms like: take care of, make fun of, a category that so far has attracted very little attention (Aarts 1982 and Bacchielli 1986, n. 43). Palmer also deals with prepositional particles that become adverbial by elision of their object (He turned over [the page], He hung about [the place]), but he forgets completely about decidedly idiomatic forms like: lie to, push to, come to (The ship lay to [the moorings], She pushed the door to [the jamb]). This topic is further enlarged upon in Bacchielli 1986, p.35. By and large, Palmer has the merit of pointing out the weaknesses of the multiple criteria devised by contemporary linguistics to arrive at a close-cut distinction between idiomatic (phrasal verbs proper) and non-idiomatic forms (combinations).

Bolinger (1971)'s unconventional approach is chiefly semantic. He deals with the prosody of phrasal verbs, the dual function of the particle, its aspectual force, but intentionally omits a systematic

analysis of verb-preposition combinations. His inquiry is stimulating and provocative, particularly because he draws attention to various problems ignored by contemporary linguistics and to marginal usages never observed before.

Sroka (1972), originally a doctoral dissertation, is an important source of information and speculative insights. He touches upon terminological problems and makes a survey of all the works dealing with verb-particle combinations down to 1972. His description suffers from too much preoccupation with theoretical issues.

Quirk et al. (1972)'s authoritative study based on both semantic and syntactic criteria and Cowie & Mackin (1975)'s detailed and systematic categorization are certainly the most exhaustive and useful treatments. Both try to consider the elusive parameter of idiomaticity, but they leave the problem unsolved altogether.

In the face of the irksome problems of the phrasal system left unsolved by both descriptivists and diachronists, the present author, given the eclectic approach pursued (1986, chapt. VII, 49-56 and 1992, p.104ff.), in the conviction that one way or another something must be done to make phrasal verbs more accessible to the wide learning community, has enlarged upon the four basic values and functions of the particle: extensive, integrative, substitutive, and generative, a kind of analysis that can help disentangle the complex bundle of patterns that phrasal verbs fit into.

The OED second edition, also on CD-ROM now, supplies an enormous bulk of material historically arranged and treated, but with lots of gaps and recordings that in various cases should be considerably antedated. On the whole, as to classification, this precious lexicographic monument does not take into account the results of contemporary linguistic research on phrasal verbs.

A breakthrough can now be expected from the advent of the computer which has recently revolutionized lexicography. Ronald Mackin in 1950 laid the foundations of corpus-based linguistic research

(cp. the computerized Oxford Corpus of the English Language) and cooperated with Cowie (1975, vol.I) in the compilation of the first corpus-based dictionary of phrasal verbs in which also collocates are given, i.e. words which typically and normally combine with phrasal verbs. This has led to the most advanced stage of lexicographic description, that of collocational linguistics by which every dictionary entry is described in its grammatic, semantic and situational collocation verified on an extremely large linguistic database of material. Nonetheless there are problems that the computer does not help to solve: the computer, in fact, cannot recognize idiomaticity, which can only be identified and evaluated by the human mind. We know only too well that idiomaticity is basic in discriminating real phrasal verbs from their corresponding free combinations and that unfortunately idiomaticity is not a fixed-value parameter but a cline, so that the categorizations of certain forms and the boundaries between categories cannot be drawn in a clear-cut way.

In this panorama of descriptive endeavour Dikken (1992)'s advanced and most innovative inquiry is an offputting contrary voice especially to educational linguists: its theoretical frame requires unshakeable faith in generativism.

In the last twenty years or so, after the widespread realization of the importance of describing phrasal verbs for educational purposes, every great publishing house has made a point of issuing their own dictionary of phrasal verbs. The 17 dictionaries listed below differ from each other in many respects. By and large we can say that they have not always adopted the same lexicographic policy and that their practical descriptions and categorizations are not always strictly in line with the theoretical principles declared at the beginning. But since theory and practice are difficult to reconcile, there are cases when editors have intentionally avoided statements of principle. The most conspicuous discrepancy between these dictionaries is in the selection of verbs (some do not treat be- and have- particle combinations at all). The particles

selected vary in number from 16 to 31 (some include "home" and "as", too; others even "open" and "shut" presuming they behave like adverbs, but, on the other hand, do not consider "fast", "still", "far", etc. and only few of the prefixed adverbs of the type "away", "abroad" are entered), but the theoretical bases for their selection are not given. Some dictionaries deal only with idiomatic phrasal verbs and forget completely about their corresponding free combinations. Often, in fact, literal meanings are not given, evidently the compilers did not realize that literal meanings, that in any case must not be given for granted with foreign students, are essential to understand the transferred and metaphorical senses that originate from them. To get an idea of how these dictionaries can vary from one another, one should compare the different treatments of the meanings and patterns of "look over". The most extensive, detailed and systematic description of phrasal verbs can be found in Cowie (1974) and Pye (1997). Other shortcomings that can be noted are: 1) the absence in the definitions of the Romance prefixed or single-word synonyms with which phrasal verbs are historically, culturally and psychologically associated (e.g. *tolerate* for *put up with*); 2) a general disregard for phrasal derivatives. This is a serious fault not only because they are a further expansion of the base verb-particle forms, but because they are more and more numerous in contemporary English and are often more difficult to explain than their parent base forms.

To conclude to this point, we have to acknowledge, on the other hand, the fact that educational work has stimulated research.

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3. Jack Aitken (1921-1998): a tribute

* Professor Aitken's sudden death is certainly a loss not merely for all Scots scholars but for the scientific community at large. In fact, his vindication of the language status of the Scottish variety had nothing arrogantly nationalistic about it and his passionate argument in favour of it never surpassed a level of balanced, objective assessment. The following affectionate portrayal by Marina Dossena would be shared, I trust, by many like me who met him in person - a kind, attentive white-haired and -bearded elderly gentleman.

(N.P.)

A year ago the scientific community of Scottish scholarship was saddened by the news of Adam Jack Aitken's death. As previously and quite recently in the case of David Murison and Ossi Ihalainen, historical dialectologists found themselves forced to continue without yet another major example to follow both from the scientific and the human point of view.

It had been a very special pleasure and an honour for me to meet Professor Aitken at the 1997 Aberdeen Conference on Languages of Scotland and Ulster: all his comments were appreciative and helpful, as

he truly believed in encouraging young researchers through guidance and a positive attitude.

While phonology was the area of interest which had possibly given him the widest popularity, since he outlined the "Scottish Vowel Length Rule", or "Aitken's Law", as other scholars would afterwards call it, lexicology had been one of his major research interests; as a matter of fact, Jack Aitken succeeded William Craigie as the editor of DOST (the Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue); Craigie himself had been one of James Murray's co-editors in the early days of the OED, so this connected Prof. Aitken to what is possibly the greatest lexicographical enterprises in recent times. In addition to this, his 'Introduction' to CSD (the Concise Scots Dictionary, a useful synthesis of DOST and the Scottish National Dictionary) is a short but thorough outline of the history of Scots and of its relationship with the history of English.

As regards the convergence and the divergence of Scots and English in Scottish Standard English, Jack Aitken also made the useful distinction between 'overt' and 'covert' Scotticisms; although the label of 'Scotticism' itself had been in disparaging use in grammars since the eighteenth century, Jack Aitken used it for the ordinary linguistic identification of lexical and morpho-syntactic features in Scottish Standard English.

I heard from some Edinburgh friends and colleagues that Prof. Aitken passed away in what many people would describe as an enviable way: quietly, virtually painlessly, at his writing desk - almost signalling to us that his legacy is in his research. What follows is a very incomplete list of his most significant publications that might be most easily accessible to Italian readers.

(Marina Dossena)

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4. An interview with Norman Blake apropos his own editing of Vol. 2 of CHEL

* What follows is an ample discussion of aims and procedures, trends and tools of any systematic, truly historical treatment of the English language as lie at the basis of the ongoing six-volume publication of the *Cambridge History of the English Language* by one authoritative editor, Professor Blake, in a recent interview. For permission of reprinting it here I am specially indebted.

Professor Norman Blake, co-editor of the *Cambridge History of the English Language*, of which he is also the editor of the second volume (1066-1476), is here interviewed by Maria Pilar Navarro Errasti (Universidad de Zaragoza). The text consists of extracts from the full interview published in *Miscelanea* (Universidad de Zaragoza) Vol. 15 (1994), republished here by kind permission of the Editor. The full version can be obtained from the *Miscelanea* website (see the below).

—The main questions will be about the publication of the *Cambridge History of the English Language*, as you are more popular now because

of that big volume. Thus the first question will be, why did you think of writing a book like this?

BLAKE: Well, I think the first answer to that is that there is no comprehensive history of the English language. Most of the books about the history of the English language are actually student text-books, which are one-volume and which cover quite a lot of ground. Many of them actually spend, perhaps, most of their time on the Old and Middle English period and not enough on the more modern periods, particularly on the development of English abroad; so that to have a comprehensive history of the English language would bring a lot of the writings that other people have done together in a complete set of volumes so that people would be able to have access to an authoritative and also fairly complete history of the language. The second thing, perhaps, is that the history of the language is a subject that needs to be improved from the attitude of teachers of English, both in universities and in schools, and producing a large edition with six volumes in itself tends to alter people's attitudes. They tend to think that the history of the language must be important because there is such a heavy set of volumes which show how important the history of the language is.

—Was this publication also meant to fill a gap in the bibliography on the history of the English language?

BLAKE: Yes. There are a lot of people working on particular aspects of the language; but if you wanted to know something, say, about place names in the 17th century in England you might find it difficult to know precisely where to go to. By having the consolidated history of the English language in six volumes, it should, in the future, give you the first place to go, so that you can read the chapter, or the part of the chapter about what you may be interested in. And then, there is, of course, an extensive bibliography in each of the volumes. In the bibliography of Middle English that I worked on, I think the bibliography runs to 70 pages; that gives a lot of information. Naturally the volumes will become out of date and there are no plans as yet to

produce a second edition because the first edition is not even complete. But the possibility always exists that even if we did not produce a second edition that was completely revised, we might produce a second edition which had a new bibliography.

How did the editorial team decide to divide up the whole subject matter into the different volumes?

BLAKE: The main debate that we had really, was whether we would do a history of the English language where the language was divided up into periods or whether the language was divided up into topics, so there might be a history of English syntax, a history of English phonology, and so on. But these books would be quite independent and therefore you would not get the sense of a continuous, chronological development and a lot of the information that you might have about the Anglo-Saxon period would have to be repeated in each period because, if you want to take aspects like sociolinguistics and other modern attitudes towards language into account, you have to provide a certain amount of historical, cultural background, and that might have to be repeated in every volume if we had decided to do it by topic rather than by period.

—From the point of view of teaching. Do you think it is better to teach the history of the English language taking into account the different periods, Old English, Middle English, etc., or rather the different fields, morphology, syntax, phonology, etc.?

BLAKE: Well, I think that depends upon how English is taught within the University in question. If you were doing a course which was mainly linguistic and you had courses in syntax, phonology or whatever, you might want to teach the history of the English syntax, the history of the English phonology, in part because you were teaching the theoretical aspects of syntax or phonology. But, if, as is generally true in England, people study the literature in a historical way, so they study Old English literature, they study Middle English literature, they study Shakespeare and early Modern English literature, and so on, then it makes more sense in a way to tie the history of English to the period

because people can then use the literature they are reading as a support for the history of language and the history of language as a support for the literature, and it makes perhaps more sense to them to look at it in that way

—Going back to the History of the English Language, in which way can it be considered innovative?

BLAKE: I think it will be innovative in the way that a lot of histories of the language have tended to be rather technical in the sense that they have shown that this sound has changed to this sound and this sound has changed to that sound, or this syntactic feature has been replaced by that syntactic feature. Now, because we have a much bigger book, or series, it is possible for us to try to put these changes within a historical and sociocultural context so that people will not just think of, for example, the Great Vowel Shift and certain vowels being changed into some other vowels. The whole question of why and how it happened and various stages at which it happened, there is more time in which this can be developed and so we hope it will sort of make people more attuned to studying language as a cultural and historical phenomenon and not just a series of linguistic changes, as it were, in isolation. It is not innovative in the sense that other people have not looked at this, because clearly this has been looked at by individual scholars and things have been written about this or that, but it has not been put in a whole framework and I think it will alter the overall teaching of the English language or the history of the English language in the universities because it will tend to make people sort of... pay more attention to this. Perhaps in some ways it may have gone too far in that way if you think of a History of the English Language like Baugh's that tends to be much more about attitudes to English rather than about sociology of English. It may be for example that we have tended to neglect too much attitudes towards English and the attitudes of people who are writing about the language as distinct from people who are

using the language, and it may be that we have not quite attained that balance quite correctly, but that remains to be seen.

—*It is a fact that we have emphasized the study of the Old English and the Middle English language as the language in those periods is more difficult. But, what about early Modern English and late Modern English? The teaching of those periods has been more neglected. Do you think we should emphasize the teaching of those periods as well?*

BLAKE: Yes. I think the problem is that people who are interested in English are often medievalist and they have therefore studied Old and Middle English. Therefore there is a lot that has been written about Old and Middle English. People who study literature are often not interested in the language and therefore they have not studied, for example, the language of the 18th century. If you write about Dr Johnson or something of this sort you are often not very interested in the background; and the medievalists who are often teaching the history of the language are often more interested in the medieval period and they encourage their students to do historical topics which are concerned with Old and Middle English, and so one does need to think about making people or encouraging students to take topics in Early Modern or later Modern English and this, I think, has not been done because people who study Modern English are often sociolinguists who are interested in the language synchronically as it were in the last twenty or thirty years. We are not very interested in 19th-century English or 18th-century English, so there is a big gap and certainly we hope that the Cambridge History will encourage people to fill that gap because there is a volume on early Modern English, and that will certainly cover the period up to about 1700. But the Modern English volume tends to be written by people who are perhaps more interested in twentieth century English than in 19th or 18th century English. So I do not think that we will necessarily give full coverage to those centuries as far as the history is concerned.

—*What level of knowledge of the History of the English Language would you expect to be good for a foreign student?*

BLAKE: I would expect them to have read one of the standard text books and to know that sort of information that is contained in there. If they read Professor Fernández's book or one of the books written by English or American scholars, like Barbara Strang, that is not necessarily going to help them to speak English better but it will give them some indication about what lies behind English speech and the way in which people speak in England today.

—*What do you think about Barbara Strang's History of English?*

BLAKE: I think it is actually a very dense book and it is a very difficult book for students to read and get something out of it. I do not think it is actually a very good book for a university course. The students in our university do find it extremely difficult to read.

—*And what about Professor Mitchell's Guide to Old English?*

BLAKE: I think it is a very good book. It makes the subject much more alive for students and it gives them a wider range of information to deal with and I find it is quite a good book to teach.

—*Do you think it may be difficult for foreign students?*

BLAKE: No. Why should it be more difficult for foreign students than for British students? It is a very good book because it has texts and a glossary, so they do not need a dictionary. However not having a dictionary has a disadvantage because the glossary is obviously connected only to the texts that are being read, so they do not see the word as it might be used in other contexts because they will then just use this book.

Now obviously from a teaching point of view that is very good because the students have all the information that they need immediately. But they are not encouraged to look beyond the book, to go to dictionaries or other sources to supplement what they get from the book.

—*But perhaps that is enough for them.*

BLAKE: Oh, yes. I agree entirely. That is the book we use for our own students.

—*What book do you use for Middle English with your students?*

BLAKE: We use a variety of different books. We use the early Middle English book by Bennett and Smithers and then we use separate editions for Chaucer, Piers Plowman, Sir Gawain, etc. So we make the students buy individual editions of a variety of different texts. Our students complain that they have to buy too many books and it may well be that we have to come back to a book like Burrow's but we want to encourage the students to read all of Piers Plowman so we give them an edition of Piers Plowman; and we want them to read more Chaucer than is found in Burrow's book.

—*Are you in favour of using computers in research?*

BLAKE: Well, I think there is no reason why you should not use the technology available. I mean, it is a bit like saying you should not use printed books because they used to be manuscripts. There is no reason why you should not use printed books. I mean, computers is a different form of a printed book; in a way it gives you different sorts of information. We produced concordances, or used to produce concordances by hand, now we can produce concordances by computer. Why not exploit those sorts of possibilities when they exist?

—*I remember Chomsky said "Computers are good for linguistics; the problem is that linguists always ask computers the wrong question." Do you think that is true for historical linguistics as well?*

BLAKE: Well, I do not know, because I do not think they have actually been used enough so far, but I think always one has to be careful using computers. They do not provide you with answers; they provide you with data and they will answer the question you are asking. But they might not necessarily provide you with the right answer because you might not be asking the right question.

Additional reporting: Jenny Shields

electronic journal: *Miscelánea. A Journal of English and American Studies. Revista de estudios ingleses.* This is an annual bilingual (but mostly English) journal of English and North American language and literature produced by the Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana of the University of Zaragoza in Spain and currently edited by Maria Dolores Herrero Granado. The home page is at:
<http://fyl.unizar.es/MISCELANEA/MISCELANEA.html>.

SLIN members will probably find something of interest in each number; for example Vol 15 (1994) not only contains the interview with Prof. Norman Blake, a long extract of which is published in this NL, but also an article Pilar Garcés Conejos and Julia Fernández Cuesta entitled "*The Battle of Maldon y St Edmund: una aproximación pragmática desde la teoría de la cortesía lingüística*". Vol. 18 (1997) contains an article by Belén Méndez Naya "Subject Clauses in Old English: Do They Really Exist?" and Vol 19 (1998) has Elena Seoane Posse on "The Passive as Style Marker in Early Modern English: Evidence from the Helsinki Corpus".

The web-site contains a summary of all the articles and a link that allows downloading of a packed version of the whole article. The file just has to be unpacked and 'Bob's your uncle'!

(Richard Dury)

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