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NEWSLETTER

no. 27 June 2001

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1. SLIN Conferences and Seminars

I am happy to let you know that the provisional programme of **10 SLIN Conference** being held at Pavia University, Collegio Ghislieri, on **13-15 September, 2001** is now available. Here it is:

THURSDAY 13 September

14.30 Official opening and greetings

15.00 Jeremy SMITH (Glasgow) - Supply and Demand. Print and Protestantism revisited.

16.00 Patrick LEECH (Bologna) - Plain-style controversy reconsidered: a survey of work on the "plain style" movement of seventeenth-century England.

16.30 *Coffee Break*

17.00 Richard DURY (Brescia) - The abandonment of *thou*: the role of standard English.

17.30 Rolando BACCHIELLI (Urbino) - The standardization of a new type of verb form in Modern English.

18.00 Giuliana RUSSO (Catania) - The power of standard language: William Cobbett's *A Grammar of the English Language*.

FRIDAY 14 September

9.30 Gabriele STEIN (Heidelberg) - Early lexicographical indices of English standardization.

10.30 Antonio BERTACCA (Parma) - Pronunciation in some 17th century grammars.

11.00 *Coffee Break*

11.30 Giovanni IAMARTINO & Alessandra VICENTINI (Milano) - "More is too much when fewer will serve": James Howell as a spelling reformer in 17th century England.

12.00 Elisabetta LONATI (Milano) - "The Reformation of Science amounts to little more than the Reformation of Language": eighteenth-century encyclopaedias and the standardizing of English.

12.30 Susan KERMAS (Lecce) - The role of homophones in the standardisation of English orthography. Recent trends.

13.15 LUNCH

15.00 David HART (Roma III) - The Expression of deontic modality in the

East Midland dialect of the 14th century, with particular reference to Chaucerian dialogues.

15.30 Nicola PANTALEO (Bari) - Dialect and formality restraints of deontic modality in a handful of late-medieval religious texts.

16.00 Marina DOSSENA (Bergamo) - *On the border*: patterns of converging usage of *suld* and *should* in Older Scots, late Middle English and Early Modern English?

16.30 *Coffee Break*

17.00 Maurizio GOTTI (Bergamo) - The codification of *shall* and *will* as second person future auxiliaries in early English grammars.

17.30 Roberta FACCHINETTI (Verona) - The pragmatics of CAN in Early Modern English.

18.00 Massimo STURIALE (Catania) - Early Modern standardization of English marginal modality.

20.30 **SOCIAL DINNER**

SATURDAY 15 September

9.00 Laura PINNAVAIA (Milano, Cattolica) - The effect of standardisation of the non-standard variety of *parlante* or *polari*.

9.30 Luisa FODDE (Cagliari) - From Federal English to English-Only legislation: Attitudes towards standardization and bilingualism in the United States.

10.00 Maria Luisa MAGGIONI (Milano, Cattolica) - Standardizing new standards: the codification of "New Englishes" in the history of the English language (1901-1999).

10.30 *Coffee Break*

11.00 **WORKSHOP**

13.00 *Conference close*

The local organizer Prof. John Meddemen, whom I wish to thank here on your account, is sending to all people concerned a fully informative letter with details of accommodation, meals and other organizational facts. So let me wish that many of you will participate as it is customary for us on such occasions.

2. HEL and other (English) linguistics conferences and seminars

(Reminders and datings)

§ **The sixth Cardiff Conference on *The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*** will be held on **July 19-23, 2001** in the **Faculty of Philology, Santiago de Compostela**. Papers including those dealing with modern translations of medieval texts will be given in English, French and Spanish. For information apply to the secretary's e-mail: Rosalynn.Voaden@asu.edu.

§§ **34th SLE (Societas Linguistica Europaea) Meeting** will be celebrated at the **University of Leuven, Belgium**, on **August 28-31, 2001**. The conference heading is "Language Study in Europe at the turn of the millennium: towards the integration of cognitive, historical and cultural approaches to language". Please contact **Bert Cornillie**, Department of Linguistics, Blijde-Inkomstraat 21, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium. Phone: 0032 16 324765. Fax: 0032 16 324767. E-mail: SLE2001@arts.kuleuven.ac.be.

§§§ **An International Conference on the English Language in the Late Modern Period (1700-1900)** will be held on **29 August - 1 September, 2001** at the **University of Edinburgh**. Invited guest speakers are: John Beal, Dick Bailey, Marina Dossena, Manfred Gorch, Lynda Mugglestone and John Wells. Information is obtainable from the Conference Organizers **Charles Jones** and **Derek Britton**, LMEC, Department of English language, University of Edinburgh, David Hume Tower, George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9JX. E-mail: Charles.Jones@ed.ac.uk

§§§§ **PALC (Practical Applications of Language Corpora) 2001**. (Department of English language, Lodz University (Poland), 7 to 9 September, 2001). The plenary speakers are: **Guy Aston**, **Michael Oakes**, **John Osborne**, **Wolfgang Teubert**. Registration forms should be sent back to PALC 2001 Organizing Committee by **15 July, 2001** by fax (+48 42 639 02 20) or e-mail: corpora@krvsia.uni.lodz.pl. Relevant information may also be obtained from the Conference website: www.uni.lodz.pl/palcra.

§§§§§ International Conference on "Modality in Contemporary English", 6-8 September 2001, University of Verona.

The Conference aims at fostering interaction among scholars from various theoretical backgrounds but with a common interest in English modality, with specific interest to present-day use. The key-note speaker is Professor emeritus F. R. Palmer.

Contacts:

- Prof. Roberta Facchinetti for all that concerns the Conference's scientific organization (far@chiostro.univr.it). Faculty of education, University of Verona, Via S. Francesco 22, 37129, Verona, ITALY
- For practical information *ENDES - Iniziativa per comunicare*, Via San Giusto, 2, 37121 Verona, Tel. 0039-045-8015702, Fax. 0039-045-8043387, <http://www.endes.it>, namely either Stefania Fazzi (e-mail: stefania.fazzi@endes.it), or Annachiara Caputo (e-mail: annachiara.caputo@endes.it). Details on accommodation, fees, and social events are also obtainable from the site http://www.univr.it/cla/conferences/modality/modality_index.htm

§§§§§§ The 12th ICEHL (International Conference on English Historical Linguistics) will be celebrated at Glasgow University on 21 to 26 August, 2002. Proposals including 300/500-word abstracts for 20-minute papers should be forwarded by 15 September, 2001 to any member of the Organizing Committee, the first of whom is Jean Anderson: J.Anderson@arts.gla.ac.uk

Further general information is provided at the following websites:

www.gla.ac.uk/general/index.html

www2.arts.gla.ac.uk/SESLLL/EngLang

www2.arts.gla.ac.uk/SESLLL/EngLang/news.htm/ICEHL12

§§§§§§§ Organization in Discourse II: the Historical Perspective (Turku, Finland, August 7-11, 2002), organized by Risto Hiltunen,, Department of English, University of Turku.

An advanced notice has been posted at

www.utu.fi/hum/engfil/oid2002.html

For inclusion in the mailing list write to: oid2002@utu.fi

(New entries)

§ 13th Euro-International Systemic Functional Workshop on Text and Texture, 16-19 July, 2001 at Université de Bretagne Occidentale (Brest, France). Papers will deal with any aspect of language relating to the textual metafunction, including thematic and information structure, cohesion, the nature and construction of text and texture, from a synchronic or diachronic point of view.

Contact: David Banks (david.banks@univ-brest.fr), Faculté des lettres et Sciences Sociales, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, 20, rue Duquesne, BP 814, 29285 Brest Cedex.

§§ 2CERLIS (Centro di Ricerca sui Linguaggi Specialistici) Conference which will take place at Bergamo (Italy) University on 19-20 October, 2001, focusing on the theme of conflict and negotiation in the language of specialized texts. The keynote speakers are Professors Chris Candlin, Vijay Bhatia and John Swales.

For further information contact the CERLIS office c/o the Dept. of linguistics and Comparative Literature at the University of Bergamo (Via Salvecchio 19, 24129 Bergamo, Italy), For further contacts:

Fax: ++39 035 246443

e-mail: cerlis@unibg.it

website: www.unibg.it/cerlis/home.htm

§§§ The 13th International Conference of SEDERI (English Renaissance Linguistics and Literature) will be held at the University of Vigo (Spain) from 21 to 23 March, 2002, organized by the Spanish Society for English Renaissance Studies. Participants wishing to offer 20-minute papers on English Renaissance linguistics and/or literature are invited to submit a 200-word abstract both in printed and in electronic format, the deadline being 31 October, 2001. The relative addresses are:

- SEDERI 13, Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Francesa y Alemana, facultade de Filología et traducción, Universidade de Vigo, Campus As Lagoas Marcosende, e-36200 Vigo, Spain

- sederi13@uvigo.es

For more information please visit the conference site:

www.uvigo.es/webs/h04/sederi13

§§§§ **ICOME 4** (Fourth International Conference on Middle English) will take place at the University of Vienna, Austria, on **4-7 July, 2002**, organized by Dieter Kastovsky, Nikolaus Ritt, Herbert Schendl (first circular). The conference will cover all aspects of the study of Middle English Language and Texts, thus providing a common forum for scholars from disciplines such as historical English linguistics or Middle English culture and literature.

Speakers are invited to submit brief (roughly two pages) summaries of their talks in advance, which will be distributed to all participants. More details will be given in the second circular, to be sent out later this year.

Contacts:

- e-mail: icome4@anglistik@univie.ac.at

<<mailto:icome4@anglistik@univie.ac.at>>

- fax: +43 1 4277 42499;

- regular mail: ICOME4, c/o Nikolaus Ritt,
Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik,
Universität Wien, Uni-Campus AAKK, Hof 8,
Spitalgasse 2
A-1090 Vienna
Austria

(Errata corrige)

Please take note of the correct dates:

International Conference on Historical Lexicography and Lexicology
University of Leicester, **15-17 July 2002**

Papers (20 min) are invited on any subject in the fields of historical lexicology and historical lexicography. Suggestions for one-hour and half-hour sessions (roundtables, demonstrations, linked papers) are also invited. Five-minute notes and queries are included in the program. Proposals should be forwarded by **29 march, 2002** to e-mail: jmc21@le.ac.uk
Please also consult the Conference site: www.le.ac.uk/ee/jmc21/hll.htm

3. Contributions (A. Bertacca)

SOME REMARKS ON THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE: socio-cultural history or history of linguistic structures?

0. This is a summarized and revised version of an article which I have just sent to Prof. Martin Kayman for publication in *The European English Messenger*, and which was prompted by Mufwene's 'Population Contacts and the Evolution of English' (*The European English Messenger* IX/2 (2000), pp. 9-15).

The purpose of my article is to offer a completely different view of the history of the English language. In fact, whereas for Mufwene contact is everything that matters in linguistic evolution, my opinion is that contact is clearly the means through which individual changes are spread but that the linguist's primary task is to investigate the origin of these changes (that is, why variants are created in the language). If we neglect this - which in my opinion is the (historical) linguist's primary task - we are not researching in the history of the language but in socio-economic-cultural history (cf. Mufwene's "embedding language evolution in ethnographic ecologies situated in specific socio-economic historical contexts", p. 13), which clearly is something completely different.

1. Regarding the first section of Mufwene's paper ('Narrowing the franchise'), I agree that "genetic linguists should not disfranchise pidgins and creoles as not genetically related to their lexifiers (p. 9), their argument being that "these varieties are contact-based and not mutually intelligible with presumably the more legitimate offspring that, say, colonial English vernaculars are" (p. 10). It seems reasonable to claim that pidgins and creoles are somehow (and more or less deeply) related to their lexifiers from the genetic point of view; consequently, as Mufwene argues, mutual intelligibility is not an argument in favour of genetic unrelatedness. However, what is certainly more attractive for the linguist than the question of (un)relatedness is to define what changes these pidgins and creoles have undergone; this could be interesting, for instance, from the typological point of view and could greatly help us to understand how these varieties tend to develop (apart from the trivial statement that pidgins usually - though by no means always - undergo morphological simplification), and whether in their evolution there are common changes

which result in 'universal' features (or even whether the changes themselves - totally or in part - could be classified as 'universally' typical of pidgin and creole development).

2.0. The second section of Mufwene's paper ('Old English as a colonial product') is more controversial.

He asks whether the Germanic invaders of England in the 5th century spoke Old English, and whether their dialects were mutually intelligible and typologically identical (p. 10).

The first is apparently a rhetorical question since there was no Old English as such in the fifth century (cf. Mufwene's subsequent question, "Isn't OE likely to have originated in the contacts that the newcomers had among themselves across tribal and/or dialectal lines?", p. 10). Therefore, there seems to be nothing 'provocative' in the claim that "The birth of Old English is an England-based linguistic development, a colonial product like American, Australian, and New Zealand Englishes" (p. 10). It is beyond doubt that what is traditionally called 'Old English' did not exist on the continent before the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes migrated to Britain. Actually, there is nothing strange in the fact that these cognate populations had contact among themselves as well as with the native Celts.

The second question is not easy to answer, and I think it probably interests genetic linguists only. However, as the available philological evidence suggests, most probably the different varieties were still mutual intelligible; moreover, and this is by no means a marginal point, from the typological point of view they were clearly quite identical (e.g., they were still inflecting dialects although the loss of inflectional markers was well under way, more or less regularly, in all dialects).

2.1. Next, the assumption that "Old English as the new colonial language was supplanting the Germanic vernaculars brought from the European continent" and that "English could be identified as the vernacular of the new, wider England" (p. 10; emphasis original) cannot be accepted. In fact there was no such common vernacular (that is, spread all over England) and, more in particular, even if it ever existed it did not supplant the Germanic vernaculars that the invaders had brought from the continent. Indeed, the dialects spoken in later centuries were nothing but the natural evolution of those earlier vernaculars, unless one sees language change as the static, sudden - and therefore unrealistic - temporal succession of

different 'états de langue'.

The consequence of Mufwene's (undemonstrated and undemonstrable) assumptions is that "the development of OE is reminiscent of that of creole vernaculars and their other colonial kin, such as American and Australian Englishes", but unfortunately there was no creole-like situation in England in those centuries, just as there was no creolization in Middle English (as Mufwene himself admits; p. 14). The role that the Celtic dialects (the substratum) played on the structural development of the Germanic vernaculars was demonstrably quite irrelevant.

2.2. Turning to linguistic issues, I must first of all reject the claim that "It is, however, not clear why experts have generally not considered contact an *unmarked* factor in the evolution of English in England" (p. 11; emphasis added), an obvious exception being the lexicon, "where external influence is too obvious to ignore" (p. 11), but, as for instance Thomason & Kaufman argue, "lexical influence [...] can in no way demonstrate serious influence of one language on another's structure" (1988: 304). Also in the case of English the considerable number of loanwords confirms that there was no serious influence on its structural development; languages constantly - more or less extensively - borrow lexemes from other languages but usually do not seem to suffer particularly from this foreign influence. In fact, loanwords generally fill gaps, and when synonyms result, they usually acquire different (pragmatic, social, stylistic, etc.) senses. More importantly, we should investigate what happens to these foreign lexical items (that is, to what extent they remain 'foreign' and to what extent they are adapted to the morphosyntactic and phonological rules of the borrowing language), or why languages borrow morphemes and morphological rules only very rarely.

I must once again reject the totally unjustified assumption that "The high percentage of French lexical items in the English vocabulary actually makes it difficult to deny the role of French in the actuation of the Great Vowel Shift" (p. 11). Similar claims are quite common (e.g., Bailey & Maroldt 1977, Diensberg 1998), but, as I have argued elsewhere (Bertacca 2000), they are totally unjustified; in this case, moreover, Mufwene does not even provide one example to substantiate his assumption, and this reduces linguistic research to impressionism and slogans.

He also defines "shocking" that Thomason & Kaufman dismiss influence of Old Norse and Norman French on some grammatical changes

that affected English (p. 11), but unfortunately he does not specify which of them are due to that influence. I fully agree with Thomason & Kaufman (1988: §§ 9.8.6, 9.8.8) that the main morphological changes in English were the result of internal processes and that, for chronological reasons, it cannot be claimed that "French has had a disruptive influence on English in the sense of having promoted simplification or denaturing" (1988: 313). In short, it seems safe to argue that those changes would have taken place even without contact; indeed, in some relevant instances (e.g., open-syllable lengthening, loss of final unstressed /ə/, displacement of southern *-eth* by northern *-es* in the third person singular present tense) the innovations are so late as to exclude Norse influence or, given their northern origin, Old French influence. Furthermore, when English came into contact with Norman French most of those changes in English which are typically ascribed to contact with the latter (e.g., loss of inflections) had already taken place (roughly in late Old English), and the loss of inflectional markers had been going on since Germanic times.

Remarkably, Mufwene "favour[s] the extended meaning of *external influence*" (p. 11; emphasis original), that is, it should not be "limited to only those cases where structural features external to a language are adopted" (ibid.), but rather it should be extended to those "where xenolectal characteristics favour some native variants" (ibid.). Quite obviously, if native variants are selected the role that contact plays does not seem to be particularly relevant, and we can safely claim that selection simply implemented the language's drift.

If we want to make linguistics as scientific as possible, we must ask *why* these changes took place, or, more in general, *why* certain changes take place more often than others in a language, or even in the languages of the world, and *why* yet others are much less common. As Jespersen aptly pointed out over a century ago, "any linguistic change should primarily be explained on the basis of the language itself" (1894: 173), and according to naturalness theories, "Social factors are constitutive for language", but this "is different from reductionism in the sense of total reduction of linguistic facts to extralinguistic facts that determine them, because extralinguistic facts only constrain the possibilities of universal language faculty and are the bases of universal linguistic preferences" (Dressler *et al.* 1987: 12). Consequently, we cannot help distinguishing between internal and external causes of change, and I think former are highly responsible for the evolution of languages and should be the first and most important issue that we take into consideration.

Consider, for instance, English inflectional morphology. Typically, most loanwords have been integrated into its structure and now have *-s* plural encoding; for example, most Latin nouns in *-us* (e.g., *virus*) have regular *-es* plural, about ten have a double plural form (e.g., *fungus* ~ *fungi*) and only six of them still retain their etymological plural form (e.g., *stimuli*). The other foreign lexical items behave similarly (Quirk *et al.* 1972: §§ 4.75-4.84), exceptions being rare and being steadily being reduced: compare, for instance, *kibbutz*, with its etymological Hebrew plur. *kibbutzim* only, in Quirk *et al.* (1972: § 4.8) with *kibbutzim* ~ *kibbutzes*, in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1987, s.v. *kibbutz*). A reasonable prediction, based on the principles of Natural Morphology, is that in the future evolution of the language more and more of these (as well as of native) nouns will be regularized. The only possible exception may be nouns of Greek origin such as *haxis*, *thesis* (sing. /-s/, plur. /-i:z/), etc., which still have their foreign plural, because their phonological structure with final /-s s/ makes the addition of regular /z/ quite impracticable, the resultant phonetic realizations (e.g., [ˈhɛ s s z]) being highly cacophonous. The only regularized plural form is in fact *metropolises*, clearly because of the different phonological structure of the last syllable. Remarkably, as Quirk *et al.* write, "foreign plurals often occur in technical usage, whereas the *-s* plural is the most natural in everyday language; cf.: *formulas* (general) ~ *formulae* (in mathematics), *antennas* (general and in electronics) ~ *antennae* (in biology)" (1972: 181).

It seems tenable to conclude, therefore, that there are internal reasons why certain lexemes are regularized whereas others are not. On the contrary, I cannot accept the claim that contact determines these changes, and even less acceptable - if at all - is the idea that chance plays a role.

2.3. Actually, there must be a reason - which certainly is not a sociolinguistic one, and which anti-functional linguists unfortunately refuse to consider - why Germanic strong verbs in the long run become weak whereas only very few weak ones shift to the opposite group (is this not a nice example of drift?), or why English /i:/ and /u:/ (as in ME *time* and *house* respectively), diphthongized in Great Vowel Shift times and the same present-day English phonemes are undergoing the same type of change; and there must be a reason why, on the contrary, ME /_:/ did not diphthongize in Great Vowel Shift times and the same phoneme is not undergoing diphthongization today (notice that present-day English /_/ <

ME /ɛ/ (as in *made*) is not the outcome of the diphthongization of the latter, but of its later stage /e:/). Principles such as articulatory ease and perceptual ease are by no means unjustified. The fact that, for instance, undiphthongized /i:/ is today not very common even among RP speakers, whereas diphthongal allophones have been much more common for a long time is certainly not due to chance or to the necessity of grammar to change. There is no doubt that the monophthongal and the diphthongal allophones have different social status, and that the steady adoption of the latter into 'more careful' types of speech is contact-induced, but this is definitely something that is - logically as well as chronologically - later than the 'natural' diphthongization of /i:/; notice that "In Standard Scottish English, this vowel generally does not have the length characteristic of RP and is not, *therefore*, subject to the same tendency to diphthongization" (Gimson 2001: 106; emphasis added). Consequently, I cannot accept the claim that "even though language change within the system is non-functional, there may nonetheless be speaker functions and speaker behaviors involved as some form of input to change" (Milroy 1999: 188). Unfortunately this does not help us to understand the deep dynamics of linguistic evolution, since "Explanation of language change MUST include functional explanation!" (Dressler 1985: 272; emphasis original). We cannot accept the claim that "all language-states are equifunctional, change cannot 'improve' a language state, or 'meet needs' that are not already met (again, except in the trivial case of new lexis)" (Lass 1997: 366; for the opposite view, see, e.g., Vennemann's claim that "Language change is language improvement", 1993: 322).

No doubt these phenomena can be explained, and simply reducing them to contact with foreign languages (or, even worse, to mere chance) amounts to ignoring linguistic reality and to the rejection of further investigation beyond the mere descriptive stage. In many respects Mufwene's position is similar to Lass's or to Milroy's; the latter, for instance, has claimed that "language changes are essentially arbitrary and contingent", and "teleological notions (speakers change language for a purpose or language changes because of an inevitable drift towards some future desired state) are not demonstrably true on the basis of any firm knowledge or logical reasoning and not necessary relevant to arguments about change" (1999: 185).

The most important aspect of all this is that historical linguistics should first of all investigate *what* variants are created in a language and *why* they are created, and - only after - why one option prevails over the

other(s). The origin of variants and their diffusion are two completely different issues, and the primary function of historical linguistics is to investigate the former.

3.0. In the third part ('The ecology of linguistic contacts'), Mufwene argues that in "indigenized Englishes local ecologies have favoured particular features, including downright structural importations from substrate languages" (p. 12), and suggests that such an ecological explanation should "be extended to the evolution of English since OE, factoring in influences from Celtic languages, Old Norse and Norman French". Apart from the (not trivial) fact that in the case of Old Norse and Norman French, foreign influence is an example of superstratum rather than of substratum, once again no linguistic items exemplifying such an influence are provided. Mufwene's reasoning is based on the assumption that "It seems misguided to dismiss contact as a factor providing an ecological explanation to the evolution of language" (p. 12), but unfortunately similar statements have no theoretical status and no explanatory nor predictive power; moreover, the total dismissal of the role of internal factors in historical linguistics means that without contact there would be no language change, a position which is hardly tenable.

4.0. The fourth part ('Contact at the level of idiolects') begins with the statement that "all language evolution is contact-induced, except that contact is situated at the level of idiolects" (p. 13). Of course contact is to be expected "at the level of idiolects", i.e. at the level of *parole* and certainly not at the level of *langue*, but, even more important, if we do not consider, first, what linguistic items (phonemes, morphemes, etc., and not only lexemes) are borrowed in every specific 'ecology' and, secondly, what their function is in that particular 'ecology', we reduce historical linguistics to socio-cultural history, a research area which, unfortunately, has nothing to do with linguistics (notice also the idea of "embedding language evolution in ethnographic ecologies situated in specific socio-economic historical contexts", p. 13). As a famous linguist said once, linguistics has nothing to say about the Battle of Hastings!

4.1. Mufwene also writes that "languages change not because speakers want to change them but rather through exaptations that take place in the communicative acts of their speakers, as these accommodate each other, fail to meet some target sounds, forms, or constructions, or adapt forms

and constructions to new communicative demands" (p. 13). As is well-known, in biology 'exaptations' refers to "unplanned or spontaneous adaptations that typically have nothing to do with the original function of an organ" (p. 15 n. 4), and Mufwene remarks that "Many adaptations that constitute linguistic changes are *accidental* developments of the same kind" (p. 15 n. 4; emphasis added), but no examples are provided in this case either. Contrary to Mufwene's opinion, I think that language change is triggered by deep motivations such as, for instance, perceptual and articulatory ease, iconicity, "regularity preferences" (Mayerthaler 1987: 37), etc. Regularity preferences, for instance, are dynamically motivated by 'strain toward consistency', based on the fact that "the perceived world is one geared to constancy, which in languages influences encoding strategies at the word level" (Edmondson 1985: 125). As Mayerthaler points out, "the notion of 'object constancy' is known from the theory of perception and, of course, uniform encoding facilitates the constant perception of objects" (1987: 49). In linguistic terms this is known as 'one meaning, one form' (or 'Humboldt's universal', etc.), a principle which is "an attractor for natural languages" (Mayerthaler 1987: 58 n. 15), as the above-mentioned regularization of English irregular plurals (§ 2.2) undoubtedly confirms.

4.2. Only superficially - that is, if we do not take into account the linguistic system as a whole, a system "où tout se tient", and its dynamics - "the distinction between internally and externally-motivated change becomes purely sociological" (p. 13); consequently, I reject the claim that "From the structural point of view, the distinction is useless, since the only contact that matters is that of idiolects, regardless of whether or not they contain xenolectal features" (p. 13). Again, this amounts to a total disregard of linguistic reality: how could English have absorbed foreign items without contact with idiolects containing such "xenolectal features"? (And how can any language do so, without contact?) I firmly believe that if we want to study linguistic structures and their diachronic evolution, the distinction between internally- and externally-triggered changes is basic; indeed, whereas sociolinguistic factors (from the mere changes in the social status of variants to the much more relevant cases of deep contact with foreign languages, or invasion, etc.) are highly unpredictable and may bring about structural imbalance, systemic factors can be predicted and usually reduce markedness.

Directionality towards less markedness is typical of natural, internally-

triggered change; however, owing to the well-known tendency of each component of grammar to increase its own naturalness, markedness reduction on one level or on one parameter (any natural change being "a local optimization", Mayerthaler 1987: 51) usually brings about markedness increase on another. Consequently, through changes of this type the naturalness of the linguistic level where "a local optimization" takes place is increased and markedness reduced. More precisely, those changes which are "generated from within [the system - AB] rather than through borrowing from without" (Bailey 1977: 10) and which, as a rule, first occur in unguarded speech or in slips of the tongue, can be characterized as natural or 'unmarked'.

On the other hand, in the case of interlinguistic contact relevant questions must be raised: e.g., 'to what extent are xenolectal features accepted/acceptable?', 'how are they integrated into the borrowing system?', 'what imbalances do they create in it?', etc. For instance, as Görlach has remarked, "the adoption of the French phoneme /ɔ̃/ makes the English phonological system symmetrical in the subset concerned: /d = ɔ̃ - ɔ̃ = ɔ̃/" (1986: 337), and the adoption of the French diphthong *oi*, as well as that of /ɔ̃/, was justified by the fact that they "fill gaps in the series of *i*-diphthongs" (1986: 337); in other words, in all these cases the adoption of foreign items was functionally very well motivated.

4.3. Finally, arguing that "there are no restructuring processes that in kind are specific to changes induced by contacts of languages but cannot be induced by contacts of native varieties" amounts, at least as far as English is concerned, to disregarding historical evidence. Just to give an example, as Kastovsky has repeatedly - and aptly - pointed out, present-day English inflection is totally word-based in native lexemes, whereas Greek and Latin loanwords still have the stem-based inflection typical of the donor languages: compare, e.g., *boy*; *boy-s* with *strat-um* : *strat-a*, etc. On the other hand, "Native word-formation is always word-based; non-native word-formation is partly word-based, partly stem-based" (Kastovsky 2001: 220); compare, e.g., *sing* : *sing-er* on the one hand with *examine* : *examination* and *navig-ate* : *navig-able* on the other. As is well-known, semiotics establishes epistemological priority of words (= primary signs) over morphemes (= secondary signs); consequently, word-based morphology is semiotically more highly valued. Moreover, since words are free morphemes, the word-based type is morphosemantically and

morphotactically more transparent than the stem-based one; therefore, since "Morphotactically more transparent sign combinations are easier to process and to separate into their constitutive elements" (Dressler 1985: 319), the part of present-day English word-formation using native items (as well as the inflection of native words) is by far more natural than the stem-based type using foreign ones and, as can only be expected, also more productive. Another relevant fact is that, whereas in native word-formation applying productive rules there seems to be no allomorphic variation – which is limited to relics (i.e., lexical items based on no longer productive rules) such as *length* (vs. *long*) – non-native word-formation is to a considerable extent subject to the application of morphonological rules which can result in considerable allomorphy: e.g., *electric* : *electricity* (with softening), *impress* : *impression* (with fusion), *divide* : *division* (with stem allomorphy), strong suppletion in *sun* : *solar* (cf. *sun* : *sun-ny*), etc.

This typological mix in present-day English morphology is undoubtedly the outcome of extensive lexical borrowing from foreign languages (mainly classical and (Old)French), and clearly disposes of Mufwene's assumption. Remarkably, it is self-evident that, whereas the native processes are morphologically and semiotically the most natural ones, those which were introduced into English through contact with foreign languages are the least natural ones.

5. Conclusions

As can be seen from this article, my approach to the HEL is quite divergent from Mufwene's. What characterizes my position is the belief that:

i) of course "languages do not change on their own or in abstraction" (Mufwene 2000: 13), but rather because speakers – unconsciously but purposefully (that is, they aim to improve the system they use) – change them. On the other hand, also the claim that language change is random or accidental is untenable and, as Samuels aptly asked, "if everything is random, why profess to study the subject at all?" (1987: 257-58).

ii) Social factors can have a role in the spread of structural variants and in their eventual adoption by the wider community, but the triggers of change are the natural processes which take place in communication and in the everyday use of language. Only in the lexicon can the individual's innovation be due to sociolinguistic factors, but here, too, a careful analysis will show that neologisms are not casual or accidental, but rather that certain rules are preferred over others for typological or system-internal reasons. Moreover, as some sociolinguists openly admit, "past

circumstances of transmission cannot easily be reconstructed" (Weinreich 1953: 375), since "we have so little precise knowledge of social conditions in the periods when the important changes took place" (Samuels 1987: 249). Consequently, the analysis of embedding (in particular of what Mufwene calls "ethnographic ecologies", p. 13) and, more importantly, of evaluation is inevitably superficial and, since for the past it must rely on written records only, it is necessarily not comprehensive.

iii) If the linguistic structure is totally neglected in favour of non-linguistic factors no fruitful research can be done. The primary concern of historical linguistics should be the analysis of linguistic systems, in particular of what variants come into being, and the latter inevitably bears on markedness, which demonstrably plays a fundamental role in language acquisition, language use, slips of the tongue, speech disturbances, etc. Since languages are systems of verbal signs, complementary to all this is a semiotic metatheory (as has been mentioned above, though only in passing), which can greatly improve the explanatory power of (historical) linguistics. For instance, given its iconic character, it is by no means casual that additive marking of morphological categories (i.e., affixation) is diachronically – and synchronically in cross-linguistic distribution – preferred over non-iconic encoding (e.g., umlaut in inflection, or conversion in word-formation), and, even more so, over anti-iconic encoding (i.e., subtractive), as changes in English morphology (but not only) clearly demonstrate.

iv) In historical linguistics the rejection to explain change and its dynamics reduces our subject, at best, to mere description, which, although laudable, is unsatisfactory. Contrary to what sociolinguists and anti-functional linguists claim, explanation is possible (of course in the sense that "no total or complete explanations are possible, at most only partial explanations can be offered", Dressler 1985: 261) and reasonable predictions can be made; however, as naturalness theories underline, predictions in linguistics can only be probabilistic and not deterministic. We know quite well that the interference from extralinguistic factors, and especially from sociolinguistic ones, is so strong as to make it impossible to apply the laws of exact sciences to languages. Consequently, also the application of deductive-nomological theories to language change (e.g., Lass 1980, 1997, etc.) is inappropriate. Determinism is useless in linguistics as it is in all other human institutions, and the theories of relativity and quantum physics have demonstrated that also microscopic phenomena are intrinsically not deterministic, so that only probabilistic

predictions can be made about their temporal evolution. According to the theory of complexity, this is due to the fact that systems with non-linear evolution are unstable; metaphorically we can thus equate languages with non-linear systems owing to interference from extralinguistic factors.

v) It is obvious that "We cannot take it for granted that the working assumptions of older scholarship are all justified" (Mufwene 2000: 14), but this applies to research in all fields and at all times. In scientific research most claims are bound to be demonstrated (partly or totally) fallacious; that is the only way research progresses. Otherwise there would be no scientific advancement or revolutions.

vi) Finally, Mufwene says that his essay "is a combination of provocative observations" (p. 9), since he questions some established positions and raises "some issues on the role of contact in language evolution and on the nature of language transmission" (p. 9). However, from the linguistic point of view I take his observations to be 'provocative' in quite a different sense. Indeed, I think they have no bearing on relevant questions (for instance, how languages change and, above all, why they change the way they do). In historical linguistics this is the crux of the matter. Socio-economic-cultural issues belong to a totally different field and – of course without meaning any disrespect for them – they are peripheral to linguistics.

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Notes

Elsewhere (Bertacca 2000) I have already rejected Bailey & Maroldt's claim that Middle English was a creole; the fact that already in the Middle English period the language had lost most of its inflectional markers has been attributed - unfortunately too often - to the various contacts that the English had (with the Vikings, the Normans, etc.), but the question "Why has English lost most of its inflectional markers?" must be asked and answered. In fact, if we disregard similar questions, our research remains superficial and incomplete and we do not understand what motivates language change. The mere description of what happened, however sophisticated it may be, is not enough, and contact is only one part of the picture.

(Antonio Bertacca)

4. Reviews and bibliographical information

Marina Dossena has kindly suggested to re-publish here two interesting reviews on as many late publications having appeared in the latest issues (9 April, of *The Linguist Network*, which I wish to thank for kindly allowing me to replicate here.

Görlach, Manfred (1999). *English in Nineteenth-Century England: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 338 pp. (*Linguist*, vol. 12-485; rev. by Gerard van Erk)

Studies of the relatively recent past of English may, at first glance, seem unnecessary. We assume that English Standard English, at least had largely assumed its present form two centuries ago, making the English of 1850 too recent, and too similar to what we speak today, to be worthy of interest. Manfred Görlach's *English in Nineteenth-Century England: An Introduction* is, by turns, a refutation of that stance and a partial confirmation of the presumptions that give rise to it. The 338-page book divides neatly in two.

The first half contains Görlach's description of the language and linguistic attitudes of 19th-century England; the second half is a collection of 19th-century texts that illustrate those linguistic features and attitudes. Chapter 1, "Introduction," describes why Görlach feels an accessible book on 19th-century English (in England) is necessary: the sociolinguistic foundations of present-day English result from 19th-century social factors, and these factors and their linguistic consequences can profitably be compared to other Englishes and to the standard languages of other urbanized countries. He briefly surveys major sociocultural developments of the period, existing research, historical (17th-18th c.) background, urbanization and education, grammar books, and the rise of the standard. The shaping of the language by prescriptive grammarians, rather than by literary or social elites, is a theme that Görlach introduces here and continues through the book.

Chapter 2 deals with regional and social varieties, touching on attitudes, written vs. spoken English, regional variation, dialect literature, Cockney, sociolects, modes of address, and linguistic change. The emphasis in this chapter is on the attitudes toward these varieties, rather than on description. Chapters 3 to 6 deal with strictly linguistic concerns:

spelling and pronunciation (ch. 3, 44-64), inflection (Ch. 4, 65-68), syntax (Ch. 5, 69-91), and lexis (Ch. 6, 92-138). The relative length of each chapter reflects the importance attached to each topic by Görlach. It also illustrates the degree of divergence in each area between 19th-century (Standard) English and what preceded and followed it.

Chapter 3 is divided equally between spelling and pronunciation. Görlach highlights the increasing prestige of standard spelling, and the research potential of surviving letters and diaries by those who "spelt in a wayward manner, basing their homemade conventions more or less on the way they spoke" (45). The majority of this section, however, is concerned with spelling reform, and is thus perhaps of more interest to students of the history of linguistics than to students of English. The pronunciation section socially situates the rising stigma attached to h-dropping, g-droppin', Whales/Wales levelling, and particular vowel sounds in after or due, as well as briefly touching on variable stress in polysyllabic Latinate words. The brevity of the chapters on inflection and syntax, especially inflection, may remind the reader of Monty Python ("Chapter 4 — there is NO chapter 4!"), but this distribution is sound. Görlach points out that the "major problems of English inflectional morphology had long been settled" (65) by this point, at least in the standard variety. He touches on the continuing concerns of grammarians over comparatives and superlatives (candidest), pronouns (It's me), and irregular tense formation (wrote/written). The syntax chapter discusses the gulf between the concerns of grammarians and actual use. It briefly describes the continuing decline of *be*-periphrastics (I am arrived), the subjunctive, and inverted conditionals (Had I known), and details prescriptive concerns over "double negatives," concord of number (There is nine of us), may/can, shall/will, and that/which. Görlach perhaps reveals his identification with 19th-century prescriptivists here by describing such remnants of variability as "problem areas."

Chapter 6, on lexis, begins with a brief history of 19th-century lexicography and a useful discussion of slang: its association with Cockney, its spread by writers like Dickens, and contemporary attitudes toward it. Görlach follows this with a summary of new lexical items from Scots and American English, French, "Neo-Latin/Greek internationalisms," and language-internal processes like compounding and the newly-popular derivational suffixes *-ism* and *-ize*. Semantic shifts are situated with respect to sociohistoric issues like industrialization and Victorian prudery. Chapter 7 examines some of the genres ("text types and styles") making up 19th-century (mostly written) English, with an

emphasis on the upper end of the market: religion, legal language, philosophical exposition, journalism, advertising, recipes, book dedications, speeches, letters, literary language, poetic diction, and plays.

Chapter 8 is an extremely modest set of provisional conclusions (two paragraphs). Chapter 9 (165-285) will be the most appealing to data hounds, consisting as it does of over 100 samples of 19th-century writings that discuss or exemplify the language of the era. The texts are presented under four headings: "On language, grammar and style," "On dialect," "On literature and criticism," and "On history and culture." The chapter is particularly strong on texts illustrating linguistic attitudes and upmarket genres (if "Letters from Queen Victoria" qualifies as a genre). Sociolinguists, dialectologists, and social historians will be more interested in the working-class letters, urban crime ballads, and parodies of dialect writing — in fact, virtually everything on dialect and history/culture. Chapter 10 (286-302) annotates the texts of Chapter 9.

The book accomplishes much in its first eight chapters, and clearly signposts the reader to other useful work (especially Mugglestone 1995, Bailey 1996, and Romaine 1998). The style of 19th-century writing on language shines through in Görlach's own prose, which is erudite and engagingly curmudgeonly, although post-structuralist readers may be disturbed by his unproblematic use of terms like "social climber." The tone occasionally turns prickly, especially in the brusque dismissal of (competing?) research strategies and books. *English in Nineteenth-Century England* is clearly a product of the same research that led to Görlach's *An Annotated Bibliography of 19th-Century Grammars of English* (1998). Görlach's immersion in the prescriptive work of the period informs everything here, and is responsible for the book's three main strengths and one major weakness. For many, the book will be most useful for its description and situating of the language attitudes of the era. Any student of contemporary (English) language attitudes would gain perspective from a careful reading of both Görlach's writing and the texts, and the book would pair well with Crowley (1989) in a course on such attitudes and the construction of the standard.

The 82 very brief exercises included, reminiscent of those in early pedagogic grammars, would contribute to student learning, if adequately fleshed out and supported in a classroom setting. The book's thorough description and exemplification of the increasingly-codified Standard English of the 19th century is another strength. Görlach takes pains to situate the language with respect to the major currents of the century, be

they social, economic, technological, or philosophical. The reader's potential jumping-off points for further research on any one aspect are rich and varied.

The book's third strength is the scope and quality of the collected texts. Anyone with enough interest in earlier English to have read this far will enjoy the apocalyptic warnings of W.H. Savage (173-174), the threatening letter from Durham (201), the playbill from Varney the Vampyre (221), How To Cook A Husband (254), or George Eliot's mock-zoological description of Silly Novels By Lady Novelists (224).

On the debit side, Görlach appears to have read so many 19th-century prescriptivists that he has absorbed their view of what constitutes a suitable object of linguistic study. Standard and literary English are covered, and covered well, but the vernacular of the other 97% of the population of 19th-century England receives short shrift. This is especially true of the first half of the book, which describes the features of the standard language, but only attitudes toward the non-standard. Information on non-standard varieties is available, sometimes even from prescriptivist works themselves (Poplack et al. in press). Sociolinguists and dialectologists will glean some clues to earlier regional or working-class English from the texts, but most readers will receive a top-heavy picture of 19th-century English. Within those parameters, however, this is a very satisfying book, a sturdy roast beef-two-veg look at Standard English. As such, it sheds needed light on an important and often overlooked stage in the codification of what has become the target language for much of the 21st-century world.

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Fischer, Olga, Ans van Kemenade, Willem Koopman and Wim van der Wurff (2000) *The Syntax of Early English*, Cambridge University Press, hardback, xviii, 341 pp. (*Linguist*, vol. 12-988; rev. by Robert McColl Millar)

This intriguing book appears at a significant time in the development of the means by which the earlier history of English may be analysed. Although transformational / generative linguistics has been employed since the 1960s as a means to illuminate linguistic change in English, it would be true to say that most of the summative work on the development of English syntax has been carried out by scholars whose work is embedded in more traditional models: most notably Mustanoja (1960), Visser (1963-73) and Mitchell (1985). The title of this book would suggest that this book is an attempt to redress this lack. If it does not achieve that, it provides (at the very least) fresh insights in the analysis of long-discussed cruxes.

The book consists of nine sections. The first three act as a factual and theoretical introduction to what are six ostensibly separate but actually inter-related studies of specific aspects of early English syntax. The first chapter introduces the reader to the theoretical basis of the book: the principles and parameters model, providing an engaging introduction to the language acquisition and Universal Grammar theories which underpin it. It also presents information on the central points which the book will discuss and on how the texts which they have analysed have been used. Chapters 2 and 3 are parallel to each other, dealing with Old English and Middle English syntax respectively. Chapter 2 discusses morphology and case assignment; word order; some (main) clause types; subordinate clauses and preposition stranding. Chapter 3 follows a similar pattern, concerning itself with morphology and case assignment; word order; clause types and subordinate clauses. In comparison with the other chapters, these sections are not theory 'heavy'.

Chapter 5, dealing with the Verb-Second Constraint and its loss, and Chapter 6, dealing with Verb-particles in Old and Middle English, are

essentially two parts of the same argument. Chapter 5 introduces the topic, discussing the various patterns to be found in the language diachronically, and comparing the evidence with that to be found in other Germanic languages, thereby posing the question of whether Old English was a Verb-Second language, or not, and whether there are different types of Verb-Second order possible. The conclusion is reached that topicalization in Verb-Second is asymmetric. A subject with which van Kemenade is particularly associated (as shown in van Kemenade 1987 and elsewhere), the role of personal pronouns in element order and their possible clitic status is then discussed.

Proper space is given to Susan Pintzuk's views (as found in Pintzuk 1991 and elsewhere), based on ideas of phrase structure variation. It is the conclusion of the book, however, that her views demand there to be too substantial an indeterminacy for her arguments to work, and that they are based on only a partial understanding of the corpus. Nevertheless, her insights over the role of negation in the process of change are taken on board. Developments after the Old English period are then discussed. Particular attention is given to the fact that the Verb-Second constraint appears to fall away in the written evidence during the fourteenth century, only to stage something of a revival - possibly for stylistic reasons - during the course of the Renaissance. The tentative explanation for this change of singular importance is that the 'relevant specifications for agreement inflection on the finite verb were lost' (pp.135-6). Chapter 6 essentially continues the argument, deepening it and bringing it forward chronologically. It deals with the problem of the loss of object-verb word order in considerable depth because the fact that OV order and VO sometimes appear almost side-by-side in texts from the period might bring in to question the authors' views on the essentially synchronic nature of 'grammar' change. Whilst again demonstrating some of the apparent advantages (and flaws) of the work of scholars such as Pintzuk, the chapter argues fairly convincingly that whilst OV order may well be the dominant surface order apparent in Old English, evidence from the positioning of pronouns in relation to particles demonstrates the underlying VO order expected from a minimalist framework-based analysis.

Chapters 7 and 8, dealing with changes in infinitival constructions and the history of the 'easy to please' construction respectively, also form something of a unit, although on this occasion it is the first, rather than the second, chapter which deals with the broader topic. Whilst dealing with a range of infinitival constructions and their relationship both to clause

structure and the meaning of the verb, Chapter 7 discusses the Accusative and Infinitive construction in English, demonstrating that although Latin influence is entirely possible, cognate evidence of a similar Dutch construction's loss demonstrates that there must also have been language (or 'grammar') internal factors present in English capable of encouraging its adoption and spread. It concludes that these grammar-internal factors might include the presence of object-control verbs in, and of passive infinitives as a major spur for the spread of, constructions of this type in English, but not Dutch. Chapter 8 follows on from these arguments, demonstrating that the spread of the 'easy to please' construction during the Middle English period appears to be the result of a combination of the development of the possibility of preposition stranding - made possible, in part, by some of the processes discussed in relation to element order change - and the development of a passive infinitive. One of the points which makes this chapter particularly satisfying is its willingness to come to terms with the nature of linguistic diffusion during the Middle English period.

Chapter 9 discusses a particularly thorny problem: is there any possibility of a rapprochement of ideas between those who believe in the gradualist model of linguistic change put forward by proponents of grammaticalization, and those, including the authors of this book, who believe that each individual is responsible for grammar-change during her own learning process, and therefore not part of a greater cline? The chapter deals with two case studies of supposedly archetypal examples of grammaticalization in English: the development of near-modal meaning for *have* to, and Jespersen's cycle of negation, as originally discussed in Jespersen 1917.

Rather than being an example of semantic bleaching alone, the book argues that the development is intrinsically connected to the change towards surface VO order, and that both semantic and syntactic factors were brought to bear in its development. In the discussion of the cycle of negation, the general conclusion appears to be that whilst semantic bleaching must have been a factor in the pattern of change found for negation in English, the course of the development 'is narrowly restricted at each stage' (p. 318). The chapter concludes by making the claim that semantic bleaching should be divorced from the grammaticalization process, instead relating the process to 'adjacency to and cliticization to the finite verb' (p. 319). What is often considered to be part of the grammaticalization process is, in their view, 'the stuff of synchronic

grammars as acquired by the learner' (p. 319).

The book is concluded with an excellent bibliography and index. This book is amongst the most coherent discussions of central 'problems' in the processes of change in the syntax of English yet published. Whilst some readers may have a few qualms about their assumption that all 'grammar change' is based upon purely synchronic language learning processes, and the book's downplaying (although, happily, not avoidance) of issues such as language and dialect contact as factors in linguistic change of any sort, it is extremely difficult to question the overall arguments made.

A few concerns - more philological than linguistic - might be raised, however. It would have been pleasing if the book had paid more attention to the nature of the texts being analysed and their provenance (although on occasion the fact of Northern 'radicalism' in these matters is touched upon). A minor criticism might be that it is not entirely plain for whom the book is being written. In their preface the authors suggest that the book 'is suitable as a textbook for a specialized undergraduate course' (p.viii). I am not certain if it could be used in that way in most University systems, although it certainly would be useful as foregrounded secondary reading for students with a considerable background in synchronic syntactic analysis. I mentioned at the beginning of the review that there was a need for a work which married the philological expertise of a scholar such as Bruce Mitchell with post-Chomskian linguistics to produce a summative historical syntax of the English language. This book is not such a work; it does go a long way towards its eventual production, however.

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