Introduction

Pages ix–xiii of
English Historical Linguistics 2006. Volume II: Lexical and Semantic Change : Selected papers from the fourteenth International Conference on English Historical Linguistics (ICEHL 14), Bergamo, 21–25 August 2006
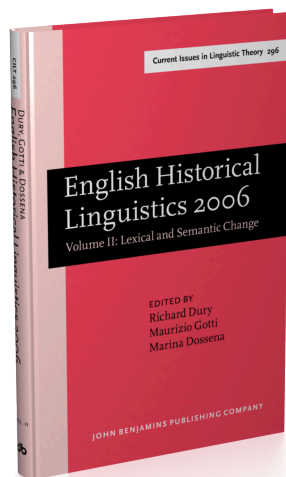Edited by Richard Dury, Maurizio Gotti and Marina Dossena
[**Current Issues in Linguistic Theory**, 296]
2008. xiii, 264 pp.

John Benjamins Publishing Company

Introduction

A discipline-wide conference-series like the International Conference on English Historical Linguistics (ICEHL) is a meeting place for everyone, where a wide range of papers are given, and the 14th edition (held in Bergamo on 21–25 August 2006) was no exception. The editors of this selection of papers therefore can make no specious claims to monographicity: this is the necessarily-varied pick of the papers in the areas of lexis, lexical morphology and semantics, with excursions into neighbouring sociolinguistic areas of pragmatics and stylistics. There are of course areas of thematic unity within the variety and above all a basic similarity of methodology: almost all these studies include the statistical analysis of corpora, in a mainstream empirical approach that is very much bottom-up, proceeding from data to theory. All the papers, in addition, were found by the editors to contain methodology or theoretical applications or conclusions that are new and interesting.

The volume opens with Andreas Jucker's conference plenary, a fine survey of studies of politeness in the history of English. These all support the hypothesis of a change in English politeness culture from positive (approval of the addressee) to negative (allowing freedom of action). Defining terms, Jucker rejects the focus of Watts (2003) on the semantics of use of the word 'polite' and argues that we should instead describe and categorize the linguistic phenomenon of polite language behaviour. The first group of studies he assesses are those on pronouns of address in Chaucer: here Jucker insists on the important 'retractability' of pronoun-choice, unlike the situation in modern European languages, before illustrating the way Chaucer's' usage is based on varying interactional status. In the following section, he shows how pronoun use in Shakespeare had evolved and (correlated with the analysis of terms of address) reveals a growing culture of negative politeness. The same tendency is also indicated by historical studies of speech act formulas. The paper ends with indications of increasing positive-politeness 'camaraderie' in public interactions, suggesting some possible reversals of the historical trend.

Honorific address terms also crop up in the second paper, a study by Belén Méndez-Naya of the intensifiers *most* and *right*. This study (using the ME and EModE sections of the Helsinki Corpus) highlights the vague category division between comparative and intensifier uses of the two terms ('the/a most efficient assistant') that accounts for the way that *right*, originally an intensifier, is later found in a few comparative uses; and the way that *most*, originally a comparative, spreads into intensifier uses in very similar environments to *right* – intensifiers belonging to those expressions that lose force through use and so are cyclically replaced.

Another uncertain boundary is that between maximizer and booster functions ('most true', 'most odious'), thanks to another common cyclical process: the hyperbolic use of 'maximum degree' modifiers to mean 'a very high degree': both words behave typically as maximizers but are found with scalar adjectives in a substantial minority of cases.

That most mercurial of intensifiers *bloody* (the one with the widest collocational range, the only one functioning as both maximizer and minimizer) is also the most etymologically mysterious. Stefania Biscetti attempts to throw some light on the mystery. Dismissing previous etymologies with the help of a large ad hoc corpus, she stresses the significance of the earliest intensifier attestations in the collocation *bloody drunk*. Typically, she argues, frightening 'bloody Papists' had been seen as ferocious, 'bloody drunk' – the force of adverb strengthened by associations with communion wine and abhorrent claims of transubstantiation. So *bloody* starts its life as an intensifier in *bloody drunk*, after an evolution of meaning from 'cruelly' to 'frighteningly and abhorrently drunk' and then to 'very drunk'. Its unique taboo connotation thus appears to come from its connotations of 'sinful, abhorrent'. Finally, *bloody*, used with more and more collocates and endowed with great syntactic freedom, widens its pragmatic scope to become a focus marker affecting the illocutionary force of the utterance.

The following paper takes us to the level of discourse in Lilo Moessner's statistical investigation of English scientific texts in the seventeenth century. While previous studies have placed the moment of important changes in the second half of the century, Moessner's multivariant analysis reveals that in her texts the shift to more informational and elaborate and less 'persuasive' texts actually starts in the first half of the century, while the move to less narrative texts must occur after 1700. Within the genre, Moessner then identifies two main text types: argumentative and narrative, with the first being replaced by the second as the dominant type during the century. A closer look at the statistics reveals more variation: core and peripheral members of each type, and different text-types within the same text: the story is not therefore of replacement of one type by another, but a predominance of argumentative texts in the first half of the century, of narrative texts in the second.

The second group of papers opens with Lucía Loureiro-Porto's study of the evolution of the now-obsolete *need* v.1 ('compel') and *need* v.2 ('be necessary'). Using a large ad hoc corpus of ME and OE texts she shows how *need* v.1 was more common until 1350, after which it disappears, and, in the same period, *need* v.2, previously found only sporadically, increases greatly in frequency. By looking at the trend of increasingly frequent passive and non-affirmative uses of *need* v.1, the author convincingly demonstrates how the two verbs had become syntactically and semantically close in this crucial period. Additional clarification of the process of confluence is offered through analysis of the evolution of modal meaning using the

categories of 'Force Dynamics' and a newly-proposed sequence of metaphorization of root modality. The results confirm the author's view of *need* v.1 and v.2 as best seen as two manifestations of the same verb.

The concept of 'rivalry', touched on in this paper and in the later paper on the suffix –*able*, is at the centre of Minoji Akimoto's meticulous study of 'verbs of wanting'. The coexistence of OE verbs *hope* and *wish* with *desire* (from French) and *want* (from Norse) led to a situation of rivalry from about 1500 and to consequent semantic and functional expansion or reduction of the individual verbs. Using various corpora ranging from Middle to Present-day English, the study reveals a basic story of the functional and semantic restriction of *desire* and the expansion of *want* (especially *want to*, after 1800), with *wish* losing in one pattern but gaining in another. In addition, by taking into account all the patterns of complementation, Akimoto is able to give us a detailed diachronic picture of the syntactic changes associated with all the four verbs.

Semantic variation and evolution are the subject of Heli Tissari's study of *respect*. This is a corpus-based, cognitive-linguistics investigation of related social emotion concepts centring on 'respect', through the analysis of phraseological units ('lexical bundles' – and there are many of them including *respect*), in particular of the metaphorical and metonymical relations between them. The various meanings involving reasoning ('seeing' as a metaphor for 'understanding') coexist with those involving sociability ('seeing' as a metaphor for 'considering valuable') in a metonymical fluidity of uses involving physical, metaphysical and metatextual attention, ill-represented in the OED's distinctions of meaning. These reasoning meanings are predominant in sixteenth-century correspondence, while the deferential-regard meanings become predominant in the following century.

The following paper is a bold attempt by Manfred Markus to lay foundations for Middle English phraseological studies – an enterprise as interesting as it is arduous since, though speakers undoubtedly possess an extensive phraseological lexicon, it is difficult to list its elements. The focus of the paper is on the survival of West Germanic models of fixed phrases in the EME period, phrases later for the most part replaced by French calques. Using a corpus of prose texts from both the Early and Late ME periods, Markus identifies a series of prepositional phrases in the early texts where the choice of preposition is similar to Modern German, and where the singular noun, in an archaic pattern, is not preceded by an article. Another analysis identifies twin formulas linked by *and*, while a third looks at complex predicates with general verbs like *do* and the rise of phrases with *make* from about 1300.

Borrowing is the subject of the last group of papers, starting with a statistical presentation by Philip Durkin of patterns of borrowing, without focussing on any forms in particular. The paper starts with valuable information about the revised

etymologies of the third edition of the Oxford English Dictionary. More specifically, OED3 now traces 'dual etymologies', where (for example) Latin or French could equally well have been the source of early uses of the word. The new tagging of the etymological entry also allows much easier collection of data and Durkin provides statistics to show how 1530 is a significant turning point after which Latin loans become much more frequent than French loans (a trend continuing into the eighteenth century). The same set of figures also show that new French loans remained about the same number each decade through the seventeenth century, with no significant peak in the 1650s despite contemporary complaints of French influence.

The last three papers concentrate on the borrowing of affixes from French. The first focuses on the necessary documentary 'spadework' required to reconstruct the history of use. In the case of *disseisin* (dispossession of land), the object of study of Rod McConchie's paper, much background information will lie in Anglo-Norman and Latin texts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, documents rarely digitized and little studied by linguists. McConchie argues that in a trilingual administrative system, attested use of words in Latin and Anglo-French provide a strong supposition of their availability for code-switching and borrowings in English. Taking into account the related terms *seisin* and *reseisin* and making use of historical documents in Latin and French, the author is thus able to substantially revise the OED accounts and provide considerably earlier uses in Latin texts written in England.

Carola Stein and Achim Trips examine deverbal adjectives in *–able* in French and English. Dismissing the claim that the free morpheme *able* played a part in the success of the suffix in Middle English, they test the accounts of the historical dictionaries in a corpus-based analysis. The data confirm the early adoption of the suffix with native bases, showing that the earliest loans had been analysed and the suffix identified as such. In order to explain this part of the story, the two authors then formulate a new word-formation rule for the suffix based on the event structure of the base verb, valid for both present-day English and French, and then show that this can also be applied successful to the earliest historical examples in both languages. The two rival OE suffixes soon disappeared because ME speakers borrowed not only the suffix but the word-formation rule at an early stage and were thus able to produce new formations with the same semantic structure as direct French loans.

The volume ends appropriately with another suffix: a semantic study by Lucia Kornexl of the female *–ette* suffix added to personal nouns. The idea that this exemplifies a universal transfer of diminutive markers to 'female' is called into question as standard English famously lacks a productive system of diminutive affixes. In addition, the suffixal status of female *–ette* is far from clear. The first English

formation is *suffragette* (1906), which was probably made not by derivation but on analogy with (partially-analysed) earlier loans (like *coquette*) of females appreciated or denigrated from a male chauvinist point-of-view. The few formations found in dictionaries are strongly lexicalized, and most are obsolete or of restricted use. Recently, however, new formations (like *punkette* or *ladette*), found in dictionaries and in the blogosphere, have apparently taken up the 'defiant' or anticonformist connotations of the first formation.

An overview of the papers stimulates some reflections. First of all, language is a phenomenon of such complexity that no one methodology can hope to capture it. Most of the papers here adopt the approach of corpus linguistics, some of them using corpora to collect examples that then form the basis of a process of reasoning about change and its probable causes. Others make statistical analyses of linguistic elements using large corpora or smaller well-selected corpora going beyond codified standard usage – diaries, letters, courtroom proceedings – to reveal unsuspected aspects of change, including (in the case of less standard texts) evidence of language change 'from below' (cf. Elspaß *et al.* 2007). In this volume, large corpora are used in most of the papers and the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence Sampler* is used in three of them, and another uses an ad hoc corpus of texts chosen as closer to speech than literary and other formal texts. Secondly, as shown by Deumert & Vandenbussche (2003) – and, as we saw above, exemplified here in the paper by Stein & Trips – it is important to go beyond English as a self-contained system in order to see it in the context of other European languages, languages that interact with it and share many parallel developments. But the editors and referees selected all the papers as containing an interesting contribution to historical linguistic investigation. As the reader will now discover.

Bergamo, January 2008   The Editors

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