Language description and use

Descriptive studies of particular languages

English

94–497 Ahulu, Samuel. How Ghanaian is Ghanaian English? *English Today* (Cambridge), **10,** 2 (1994), 25–9.

Linguists have long been divided about whether the characteristics of 'Ghanaian English' should be viewed as errors in relation to British Standard English or be accorded the same legitimacy as the British standard. It is important for teacher-trainers, textbook writers and curriculum designers to know which forms to promote as the educational target. It is debatable whether educated Ghanaians are willing to accept a local form of English, British Standard English having traditionally been held in high esteem in Ghana. It is the language of official publications and standard works of reference, and many Ghanaians would not compromise the role of English in the country even for socio-political reasons. Others strongly believe that there are some indigenised conventions which could or should be codified and accepted as 'Ghanaian Standard'. A third group resents the privileged position of English in Ghana and sees its use as an imposed phenomenon. This group is calling for the adoption of a national indigenous Ghanaian language.

It will be highly problematic for the education system if each ethnolinguistic group in Ghana is to create its own variety of English. Borrowing is a major process by which (modern) English is creating and expanding its vocabulary, and the use of loan-words from the Ghanaian language does not necessarily make one a speaker of 'Ghanaian English'. There is hardly a justification for identifying a distinctive 'Ghanaian' variety of English on the basis of relatively few lexical modifications which occur as registers in the repertoire of educated Ghanaians, and some of which are already filtering into Standard English. Grammatical divergence in English usage in Ghana has many features in common with other post-colonial Englishes, such as those of India and Nigeria. It may be more helpful educationally as well as linguistically to see them as constituting a common route by which users of English as a second language deal with the complexities of Standard English than to see them as varieties of the English language.

French

94–498 Ball, Rodney (U. of Southampton). Language and spectacle: new (or not so new) styles of writing and the media. *Francophonie* (Rugby), **8** (1993), 17–22.

A breakdown of the former clearcut division between the written and spoken language is currently taking place in French. It is becoming increasingly difficult to determine which items properly belong to the written, and which to the spoken, varieties, and there is a far greater degree of acceptance of neologisms. The media – TV, radio, advertising and journalism – have contributed to these developments and also to the greater awareness of, and readiness to discuss, language change. People working in the media act as initiators and organisers of the language spectacle.

94–499 Eloy, Jean-Michel (Délégation Générale à la Langue Française). La langue française, objet de politique linguistique. [The French language as an object of linguistic politics.] *French Review* (Baltimore, Md), **67,** 3 (1994), 403–13.

The history of the French language has always been closely tied to political developments. The first French text (Strasbourg oaths, 842) marked the founding of the French state; the accession in 987 of Hugh Capet, the first French-speaking king, began an 800-year dynasty; later landmarks included the ordinance of Villers Cotterêts (1539) imposing the French language in legal matters, the *Académie Française* (1635), and the *Rapport de Barrère* (1791) which sought to outlaw *patois*. In recent times French has lost to English its place as the main international language, but still benefits from an internationalist tradition which is reflected, for example, in its full use by children of immigrant groups.

The second part of the article briefly describes the language work of various official bodies in France, including the *Académie*, which has only 'moral'

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authority, the *Conseil Supérieur*, chaired by the Prime Minister, which studies and pronounces on major political issues, and various research bodies. The work of the writer's own organisation, the *Délégation Générale*, includes creating French names for international technical terms, and proposals for spelling reform.

Translation

94–500 Ballard, Michel. Le nom propre en traduction. [Proper names in translation.] *Babel* (Budapest, Hungary), **39,** 4 (1994), 194–213.

The proper name is certainly the most enduring vestige of the text's cultural identity in translation since it is frequently directly transplanted into the translated text and is among the elements that lend it its 'foreign flavour'. However, this is not always the case, and on occasion proper names have to be translated by law of usage, or because the translator is in doubt as to which course of action should be taken (or is even at a loss how to render the meaning or connotative effects created by the use of proper names).

The treatment of the problem proceeds in three steps: firstly, an account of the definitions provided by linguists; secondly, an investigation into such general principles of translation as can be derived from the observation of current practice; thirdly, an exploration of the frequently overlooked relation between proper names and meaning.

Without being heterogenous, the approach is double: it deals both with the problem of proper names such as it appears to professional translators and such as it can be (inadequately) perceived by beginners. The study is based on corpus and error analysis and largely draws on the literature of translation studies.

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