

## *Studies of particular languages*

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**ENGLISH** See also abstracts 74-75, -78, -83/4, -89

**74-90 Tiffen, Brian.** The intelligibility of African English.  
*ATEM Newsletter* (Blantyre), 2 (1973), 2-5.

In Africa, where English is the lingua franca, intelligibility is vital. Varieties of African English are more uniform than might be expected: they are mostly tonal, non-stress languages, so African learners are likely to have similar difficulties (stress being confused with high pitch, and not reducing unstressed vowels). When Africans teach English they tend to Africanise the language and uniform 'dialects' tend to appear. Nevertheless, differences across the continent are wide enough to give rise to comprehension difficulties [examples]. Reasons for the lowering of standards of spoken English include the large increase in secondary school provision, fewer expatriates to provide a native-speaking model, and the influence of non-standard forms.

To improve the present situation a pronunciation model is needed. If native (local) pronunciation is taken as the model, communication difficulties will arise whenever the listener has a different mother tongue from the speaker; on the other hand, the attainment of native-speaker proficiency is unrealistic and unattainable outside an English-speaking environment. Even if intelligibility is taken as the only criterion, severe problems of definition arise. Research is needed to find out which pronunciation features are essential for intelligibility, and which features will cause problems for the learner (this will depend in turn on his mother tongue). In the absence of any local models, RP is probably the best guide. [Intelligibility problems with Nigerian English are briefly described.] [References.]

[The rest of this issue is concerned with the teaching of spoken English, particularly in Malawi.]

## GERMAN

**74-91 Bormann, Werner.** Die Position der deutschen Sprache. [The position of the German language.] *Monda Lingvo-Problemo* (The Hague), 5, 13 (1973), 18-34.

German is the mother tongue of about 90 million people in the two German states, Austria, Switzerland, in border regions of adjoining countries, as well as of separated minorities [figures given]. The standard educated language in these areas is virtually uniform as the use of regional dialects is declining. Urbanisation and an educational policy which attaches growing importance to German as a school subject are furthering the trend towards standardisation. The position of German as a foreign language has declined steadily, especially since 1933, from a high point in the nineteenth century. A report tabled in the West German Parliament in 1967 shows that German ranks behind English and French in terms of importance in the world and behind several other languages in terms of the number of native speakers.

According to figures supplied by the Goethe-Institut and the Berlitz School of Languages, German is studied by roughly the same number of adults as French and Russian, and only English is studied by more people. A similar picture emerges when the relative importance of foreign languages taught in schools is considered, although German is often taught as the second rather than the first foreign language [figures given] and a general overall decline of foreign-language learning is observed in many countries [specified]. The exposure to German of foreign workers and their families living in West Germany is a new factor. The importance of German in international and supranational organisations and at conferences has been growing in recent years [details given]. The West German Foreign Ministry has for some time now concentrated more on cultural exchange and information than on teaching German abroad; the aims of the Goethe-Institut and the Austrian Kulturinstitut are tending in a similar direction. Literary translations from and into German balance out [figures supplied]. German is one of a group of languages holding second place in the flow of culture in the world.

- 74-92 Kaufmann, Gerhard.** Zu den durch „als“, „als ob“, „wie wenn“, „als wenn“ eingeleiteten Komparativsätzen. [Comparative clauses introduced by ‘als’, ‘als ob’, ‘wie wenn’, ‘als wenn’.] *Zielsprache Deutsch* (Munich), 3 (1973), 91-111.

Ninety-six examples from newspapers, plays, anthologies, novels and scientific literature show that statements in standard German grammars do not completely cover modern usage in these ‘as if’ clauses. Clauses with *als* alone (verb in present or past subjunctive) are three or four times as frequent as *als ob* clauses (verb usually but not solely in past subjunctive), whereas *wie wenn* or *als wenn* clauses are comparatively rare. The verb in the indicative occurs almost only with *als ob* and *wie wenn*. The distinction between use of the present and past subjunctive in ‘as if’ clauses is not readily discernible – both may occur in the same ‘as if’ clause.

The relationship between the ‘as if’ clause and the rest of the sentence has been variously described as a combination of comparison and condition, unreal condition, hypothetical comparison or conditional parallel. There are three main types: (1) the subject and verb are the same in the main clause and the (understood) conditional clause; (2) *x*’s behaviour is compared with *y*’s in an hypothetical situation; (3) there is a comparison between an actual and an hypothetical situation.

*So* or similar elements frequently precede the ‘as if’ clause. An ‘as if’ clause is often used instead of a *dass* clause to express plausibility. Isolated *als ob* clauses are usually intended as an ironic or derogatory commentary.

## FRENCH *See also abstract 74-82*

- 74-93 Haden, Ernest F.** The determiners in French. *Linguistics* (The Hague), 3 (1973), 31-41.

The determiners studied are the definite and indefinite articles, the possessive and demonstrative adjectives, the partitive articles, and the zero determiner. The principles applied are that a difference in

## STUDIES OF PARTICULAR LANGUAGES

form marks a difference in function, but that one form may have more than one function. The point of departure is a quotation from *Le Petit Prince* (St Exupéry), which exhibits nine different functions of the determiners under study. Each function is analysed, with additional illustrations, into a seven-point scale of definiteness, ranging from -3 through 0 to +3. The points on this scale are as follows: (1) the denominalised noun (-3 degrees of definiteness), manifested by a zero determiner. (2) The formal omitted partitive (-2 degrees) after *de* derived from a preceding form (e.g. *avoir besoin de...*), regardless of the derivation of *de*. (3) The unidentified noun (-1 degree), characterised as [-identity]. This point has three subdivisions: (a) [+numeral], manifested by a numeral, including the stressed *un(e)*; (b) unmarked, manifested by the indefinite article; (c) [+quantity], manifested by *de* plus the definite article (the *partitif*). (4) The generic (0 degrees), marked [+totality], manifested by the definite article. (5) The identified noun (+1 degree), marked [+identity] and manifested again by the definite article – an example of the same form fulfilling two functions. (6) The personalised noun (+2 degrees), marked [+person], and manifested by the possessive adjectives. (7) The noun with deixis (+3 degrees), manifested by the demonstratives. Mapping of the English determiners on this scale demonstrates that the determiners in the two languages perform functions along different axes.

**74-94** **McA'Nulty, J.** La dérivation de quelques prépositions de Français. [The derivation of some French prepositions.] *Cahiers Linguistiques* (Quebec), 2 (1973), 111-31.

Two classes of preposition exist in French: those of constant meaning, operating as predicates in deep structure and incapable of prepositionless paraphrase, and those which appear to have a variety of functions and can be paraphrased in a non-prepositional surface structure. The first class ('circumstantial' – *circonstanciel*) form a referential paradigm; the second ('non-circumstantial') do not possess true semantic content.

The hypothesis is posed in the form: (1) non-circumstantial

prepositions do not operate at the level of semantic structure. (2) Such prepositions are derived from the semantic structure, and their surface functions are defined by the operations which derive them. The variety of functions of a particular preposition arises from the variety of these operations. (3) Similarly, ambiguity is the product of convergent operations on two or more distinct semantic structures. (4) Prepositions are so ordered that a preposition of higher order is selected as the term of an operation unless it has already been selected by a preceding operation, e.g. in the case of nominalisation, *de* precedes *par*, *par* appearing in such an operation only if *de* is already present. (5) The problem then arises why some verbs require a prepositional complement when the unmarked position (direct object) remains unfilled. (6) Any verb at the semantic structure level has a maximum of two nominal associates (arguments), since French recognises only two unmarked functions (subject; direct object).

The hypothesis is applied to the following problems: the choice between *dire* and *parler*; complex predication; adjectival predication; causatives; the passive, and identification. It emerges that the terms 'subject', 'direct object' and 'indirect object' are not clearly definable at the level of surface structure.

## SPANISH

74-95 **Jordan, Pablo G.** La forma 'se' como sujeto indefinido en español. [The form 'se' as an indefinite subject in Spanish.] *Hispania* (Wichita, Kan), 56, 3 (1973), 597-603.

A description is given of different uses of the form *se*. One use is under consideration: the so-called reflexive-passive. [Detailed consideration of the view of three authors on this construction: Gili Gaya, Lapesa and Martin Alonso.] The three fundamental elements of the construction are: (a) impersonality, (b) active voice, and (c) *se* as subject. Both Lapesa and Martin Alonso refer to these elements but neither offer it as the underlying structure of the 'reflexive-passive' in all its guises. Alonso distinguishes between (1) *se cantaron hermosos himnos* (passive) and (2) *se desea informes*

## STUDIES OF PARTICULAR LANGUAGES

(impersonal subject). The verb–noun concordance of the first example is misleading: *se* is the subject, *cantaron* the active verb, *hermosos himnos* the direct object. *Se* can and often does have a plural value; also, the third-person plural verb-form sometimes has an impersonal function. Two factors account for the previous interpretations of this construction as a passive: (a) historical considerations, and (b) the concept of concordance found in a few instances (cf. (1) above) applied more extensively.

**74–96** **Mansilla-García, M.** El subjuntivo, escollo de la sintaxis verbal: análisis contrastivo de los usos del subjuntivo en las oraciones subordinadas sustantivas en español y en inglés. [The subjunctive: a problem in the syntax of the verb. A contrastive analysis of the use of the subjunctive in Spanish and English noun clauses.] *Español Actual* (Madrid), **24** (1973), 11–19.

[Part I of this article is abstracted in *Language-Teaching Abstracts* **6**, 4 (1973), no. 73–255.]

Whilst the subjunctive is moribund in English, some of its uses in Spanish are increasing in frequency. This expansion particularly affects some stylistically governed (as opposed to syntactically governed) usages in noun clauses. [Four categories are isolated; many examples.] Switching between indicative and subjunctive occurs in the sentence argument of predicates of negation or doubt. In most cases in all four categories, both American and British English equivalents of the Spanish sentences fail to show the subjunctive. Although the subjunctive paradigms are obsolescent, the modality may nevertheless be shown by the use of modal auxiliaries, preterite indicatives, etc.

**74–97** **Obaid, Antonio H.** The vagaries of the Spanish ‘s’. *Hispania* (Appleton, Wis), **56**, 1 (1973), 60–7.

This article surveys the variety of allophones of ‘s’ in contemporary spoken Spanish. Examples are given of the widespread aspirate

articulation of this consonant (e.g. *pasar*: [pahar]). The author considers that the intervocalic and final weakening or loss of the phoneme of 's' is indicative of a general aversion to sibilants in contemporary Spanish speech which is similar to that historically evinced by French. He adduces other examples of consonantal erosion in spoken Spanish and urges phonologists and teachers to take note of these evolutionary changes and include examples of them in course materials.