

Language description and use

DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES OF PARTICULAR LANGUAGES ENGLISH

86–263 Jones, Larry B. and Jones, Linda K. Discourse functions of five English sentence types. *Word* (Miford, CT), **36**, 1 (1985), 1–21.

Certain English sentence constructions which have a number of grammatical properties in common also have similar functions in written discourse. Clefts, pseudo-clefts and rhetorical questions all highlight theme in discourse; extraposition sentences and sentences containing sentential adverbs often mark author comments. Discourse function, then, provides a useful criterion for classifying these sentence types in English. Clefts, pseudo-clefts and rhetorical questions form a single functional class in discourse, while extraposition sentences and sentences containing sentential adverbs comprise another functional class. Thus discourse function is another parameter for the linguist to consider in establishing a typology of grammatical constructions.

86–264 König, Ekkehard (U. of Hannover, FRG). On the history of concessive connectives in English. Diachronic and synchronic evidence. *Lingua* (Amsterdam), **66**, 1 (1985), 1–19.

The development of concessive connectives in English is based: (a) on a process of strengthening through which a conditional or concessive conditional connective combined with an emphatic, factual particle; (b) on the use of conditionals, specifically irrelevance conditionals in factual contexts and a reinterpretation through which this contextual feature of factuality came to be associated with the connectives themselves; (c) on a process of bleaching involving such notions as 'spite', 'unthoughtfulness', etc. originally only applicable to human agents or experiencers; and (d) the pragmatics of negation or, more generally, the conventionalism of conversational implicatures carried by assertions of co-occurrence or co-existence of two facts.

It has been suggested that the relevant semantic changes have not only occurred in English but also in a variety of other languages. The fact that many different sources led to the same result is one reason for the wide variety of concessive connectives available in many languages today. By revealing the essentially derived nature of concessivity this paper offers an explanation for the relatively transparent etymology and the late acquisition of concessive connectives.

FRENCH

86–265 Ettinger, Stefan. *Frequenzuntersuchungen zu einer Grundgrammatik des Französischen.* [Frequency studies towards a basic grammar of French.] *Linguistik und Didaktik* (Munich, FRG), **41** (1980) [publ. 1985], 71–78.

Frequency studies of the lexis of French have been successfully undertaken for some years, and they are being increasingly employed in the fixing of pronunciation. It is surprising that no such studies are to be found for grammar or syntax. In the few theoretical contributions that address themselves to grammatical frequency two main preoccupations are to be found: (1) doubts as to the necessity for and the possibility of performing frequency analyses for grammar and (2) the problem of delimiting grammatical items in frequency studies. The latter scepticism is not held to be justified as there are sufficient grammatical items in French which are interchangeable. Hence the use of a particularly frequent form by no means makes communication more difficult or even impossible. Furthermore, frequency studies of grammar are important with respect to grammatical progression, to the distinction between spoken and written language and to that between active and passive language knowledge, even though in comparison with vocabulary grammar is much more limited. In a frequency study of the subjunctive in French, the author demonstrates which subjunctive forms are particularly frequent and hence which would be indispensable in a basic grammar of French. The chosen corpus consisted of a dozen crime, spy and cowboy novels which as a rule contain numerous dialogues. The most frequent verbs in the subjunctive were those expressing volition, making up about 50 per cent of all attested subjunctive forms. A smaller group of subjunctives, those of concession, follows, while three further groups – likewise following the grammatical categories of Klein/Strohmeyer – make up a far smaller percentage. A comparison of these results with the treatment of the subjunctive in several school and university textbooks brings out considerable discrepancies. The author holds it to be desirable to extend the study to cover other grammatical items with the help of a larger corpus.

RUSSIAN

86–266 Giraud-Weber, M. *Устранение подлежащего в русском предложении.* [The omission of the noun in the Russian sentence.] *Серия литературы и языка* (Moscow), **43**, 6 (1984), 551–6.

The Russian language is rich in sentences without a subject. The majority of these can be classified as ‘impersonal’ constructions and are of long standing. However, there are some which should rather be classified as ‘elliptical’, having arisen from a transformation, or from the omission of a noun in the nominative case. The pressure to economise in words is seen as a distinctive element in the process; omission of the subject occurs when it is clear from previous information or from the situation that naming it or even replacing it by a pronoun are superfluous. However, it is unacceptable to classify all such structures as ‘impersonal’.

While a change in the grammatical structure of the sentence will not occur when

the eliminated subject is animate, the elimination of an inanimate subject can lead to structural change, with the neuter form of the verb preferred to agreement with the eliminated subject. Attention is drawn to the frequent omission of *дело* or *история* as the subject of such structures as *кончилось тем, что...* and in *шло к концу*. Where a verb is commonly associated with a particular noun (*melt-snow*, *heal-wound*, *flow-water*) the omission of the noun is common: with *дым* it is most frequently omitted. The concept of functional shift is illustrated in relation to spatial, temporal and quantitative expressions, with comment on, for example, *шеatroв в городе два*.

LEXICOGRAPHY

86–267 Dagenais, L. (U. of Montreal.) Le problème de la description sémantique en lexicographie. Les vocables français: 'permettre', 'défendre', 'autoriser', 'interdire'. [The problem of semantic description in lexicography. Four French vocables.] *Cahiers de Lexicologie* (Paris), **46**, 1 (1985), 57–107.

A description is given of the inductive procedure which an explanatory combinatorial dictionary relies on to define the words (lexemes) it contains. This presentation is based on 18 French lexemes grouped under four vocables, that is, five lexemes in *permettre*, three in *défendre*, four in *autoriser* and six in *interdire*.

This article is divided into three parts: (1) the Adequacy principle: quotation and brief illustration of the procedure adopted to retain or to reject the components of a definition; (2) the complete dictionary articles of the four French vocables: *permettre*, *défendre*, *autoriser* and *interdire*; (3) a discussion of two points: (a) the kind of arguments which decisions are based on as to whether to keep apart or fuse two senses into a single lexeme; and (b) the components appearing in the definitions, with explanations and examples.

86–268 Geeraerts, D. (Catholic U. of Louvain). Les données stéréotypiques, prototypiques et encyclopédiques dans le dictionnaire. [Prototypical, stereotypical and encyclopaedic data in dictionaries.] *Cahiers de Lexicologie* (Paris), **46**, 1 (1985), 27–43.

In an attempt to line up lexicographical theorising with the most recent developments in theoretical semantics, a rational reconstruction of the choice of semantic information to be incorporated in dictionaries is given on the basis of two interacting sets of factors. On the one hand, a tripartite distinction between prototypical, stereotypical, and encyclopaedic data (based on the well-known work of Rosch and Putnam) provides a theoretical framework specifying the types of concepts that can be described lexicographically. On the other hand, a set of three functional-pragmatic approaches to lexicography (related to Habermas' three knowledge-constitutive interests) specifies the practical considerations that determine the choice among the three theoretical perspectives. The three components of each set of factors do not correspond in a one-to-one fashion but combine in various ways in the actual constitution of dictionaries.