

Descriptive studies of particular languages

French

91–258 **Bottle, Robert T. and Tekfi, Chaffai** (City U., London). Readability of French scientific texts. *Journal of Documentation* (London), **44**, 4 (1988), 339–45.

The readability of three French scientific journals is examined using the Farr–Jenkins–Paterson simplification of the French reading ease formula. The results show a relative decrease in readability with

time. The results also suggest that these changes are due to changes in style or linguistic factors rather than subject characteristics.

Translation

91–259 **Tabakowska, Elżbieta**. Lexical markers of subjective modality and translation equivalence in English and Polish. *Multilingua* (Amsterdam), **8**, 1 (1989), 21–36.

This paper is based on the assumption that the notion of equivalence, crucial for translation theory, should be defined from a functional point of view. One of its elements is ‘attitudinal equivalence’, i.e. rendering the original author’s attitude towards the propositions that make up his text. Such epistemic commitment, or ‘subjective modality’, comes as a result of the interpretation of objective evidence, an appeal to the modal attitudes of other persons (including the real or potential recipient of the message) and, finally, the degree of the author’s own personal involvement.

Thus, while on the level of ‘objective modality’ some lexical markers of modality might be regarded as free variants, when seen as expressions of

‘subjective modality’ they will be found to occur in complementary distribution. Hence difficulties in interlinguistic translation: items ‘equivalent’ in one respect may differ in respect of other parameters.

As an illustration, four English modal qualifiers (*perhaps, probably, apparently* and *surely*) are analysed and compared first with their Polish ‘prototypical’ dictionary equivalents and then with translation equivalents attested in a Polish translation of an English history book. The two lists are shown to differ: in each particular case equivalents are chosen according to the translator’s evaluation of the original author’s epistemic commitment, i.e. prevalence of one out of the three main aspects of subjective modality.

Lexicography

91–260 **Good, Colin**. Lexicography and linguistic theory: with special reference to German. *New German Studies* (Hull), **15**, 2 (1988/9), 81–109.

There is no consistency between different monolingual German dictionaries, or even within the same dictionary, in the way semantic information is given, as shown by sample extracts, mainly from *Wahrig, Wörter und Wendungen, Mackensen* and the East and West German *Duden*. Problems arise in distinguishing literal and figurative meanings; sense and reference (i.e. linguistic meaning and additional, ‘encyclopaedic’ information); paradigmatic features (synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy) and syntagmatic features (combinatory characteristics); de-

notation and connotation. There is inconsistency in what counts as two separate entries or only one (polysemy and homonymy) and in style and usage labelling, and a naive approach to problems of pragmatics and ideological bias.

Although there are no ideal solutions in these areas, lexicographers should develop a theoretically rigorous approach and make use of progress in linguistics. The use of componential analysis, and the work of Wiegand’s group, are cited as positive examples.

91–261 Tribble, Chris. Computers, corpora, language teaching: a practical introduction to the use of concordancing in language teaching and learning. *Die Neueren Sprachen* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany), **89**, 5 (1990), 465–75.

This article gives an introduction to the language teaching (LT) potential of the combination of personal computers, concordancing software and machine-readable texts. It describes what concordancing is and what sorts of computer facilities and text data-banks you need in order to be able to use concordancing in LT. Examples of the sort of language feature that can be investigated using a concordancer are given, and actual class materials are presented. In a final section further areas where concordancing has considerable LT potential are discussed.

Lexicology

91–262 Knowles, Frank (Aston U., Birmingham). Language and IT: rivals or partners? *Literary and Linguistic Computing* (Oxford), **5**, 1 (1990), 38–44.

This paper presents a partly historical but mostly thematic survey of the sometimes collaborative, sometimes confrontative interaction of language with information technology. The linguistic foci commented on range from the learning of foreign languages, through computational linguistics (including machine translation) and automated dictionaries, to the concept and practicalities of a computerised environment and its associated software desiderata for the purposes of document generation. Contrasts are drawn between the 'symbol-processing' approach and the AI paradigm, neither able to cope satisfactorily with the vagaries of natural, rather than artificial, language. Discussion of 'mind and productivity tools' for writers is directed at underlining certain logistic and ergonomic benefits IT can offer to human beings who, in their turn, need not – yet, or indeed ever – surrender their intellectual autonomy to the hardware and software they make use of for laudable professional purposes. The hope is that man and machine can come to be clearly recognised as well-suited partners rather than sparring competitors or – better – rivals in the language arena.

91–263 Knowles, Gerald (U. of Lancaster). The use of spoken and written corpora in the teaching of language and linguistics. *Literary and Linguistic Computing* (Oxford), **5**, 1 (1990), 45–8.

The paper investigates the contribution that can be made by the use of corpus materials. Some spoken and written corpora are described briefly, and the IBM/University of Lancaster Spoken English Corpus is described in some detail. Following a discussion of the basic tools required for corpus work, the effect of the corpus is assessed for research and teaching. The major point here is that the distinction is blurred, since students are able to find things out for themselves at an early stage. The conclusion turns to the future for corpus-based work.