BOOK REVIEWS


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This volume is a selection of seventeen articles based on three plenaries and fourteen section papers presented at the 16th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics held in Pécs, 23–27 August 2010, marking the thirtieth anniversary of the series of conferences. Following the tradition of the publications from earlier ICEHL conferences, the editors’ choice from among the four plenaries and over 120 section papers offers the reader some samples of the wide spectrum of research in English historical linguistics. The chronological span of the data stretches from Proto-Germanic to Present-Day English. Methodologically, the articles range from a traditional reconstruction of sound systems and investigations of dialectal variation to a pragmatic analysis of footing and studies of cognitive, extralinguistic and typological factors in borrowing. If there is a common denominator in the studies collected here, that could be a focus on lexical items, either individual words or constructions (two, then, what.. for, how come, provided/providing (that), prefer, gog/cock, enter), groups of items (Norse loans, moneyers’ names, linking words, clothing and textile vocabulary), their properties (plural endings, gender and complementation), or frequencies and combinations in diachronic corpora. This characterization fits all but two of the articles, one of which focusses on sounds and the other on one speech event. The choices of data bear evidence to the central role of electronic corpora in current historical research. Most studies in this volume make use of text corpora, but also databases of coins and specific-purpose vocabulary as well as various dictionaries serve as bodies of data available in electronic format.

The introduction by the editors “Coins, clothes and corpora: Ways and means to refine investigations into the history of English” presents the contributions under the thematic headings “Dialect formation and regional variation in the history of English: Refining theory”, “Inter- and transdisciplinary vistas in English historical linguistics: Refining methods and tools”, “Syntactic variation and grammatical change in the history of English”, and “When texts talk: Speech related genres in historical pragmatics”. The themes cross-cut the five parts into which the articles are divided.
Part I, “Approaches to dialects and regional variation”, starts with Angelika Lutz’s article “Norse influence on English in the light of general contact linguistics”. On the basis of lexical evidence from Old and Middle English, she argues that the influence of Old Norse was superstratal, similarly to that of Old French. Investigating Old English charters and laws, she observes that the number of early loans from Old Norse was greater than generally acknowledged, because most of them were later replaced by French lexical items. These early loans as well as the later ones from Old Norse resemble the French loans in that all of them replaced English words or led to changes of meaning and in being cultural borrowings in similar semantic fields. Both the basic and the cultural borrowings from the two languages reflect the dominance of the donor language, which is in both cases further emphasized by the relatively small number of speakers.

In the second article, “The Germanic roots of the Old English sound system”, Hans Frede Nielsen returns to the topic of the classification of Germanic languages. In a detailed comparison of the phonemes in the early Germanic languages, he argues that phonological evidence supports Kuhn’s (1955) model with Gothic separated from the North-West Germanic group rather than the traditional grouping into West, North and East Germanic languages. Nielsen concludes that the consonant system of Old English can be derived from Proto-Germanic, while the vowels have different origins. The accented vowels can be traced to Early Runic, thus suggesting common North-West Germanic origin, but the unaccented vowels of Old English cannot be derived from this source, which points to differences from Old Norse and to a Proto-West Germanic origin. As to the chronology of the differentiation of West-Germanic languages, Nielsen argues that “a North-Sea Germanic Sprachkreis” (p. 69) had developed before Old English was moved to the British Isles and the later similar developments in Old English and Old Frisian can be explained by connections between the language communities.

In “Monetary policy and Old English dialects”, Fran Colman looks for evidence of the East Anglian dialect in a special kind of corpus of Old English, moneyers’ names on coins. The introduction to coins, minting and moneyers is interesting and informative to the uninitiated. After a meticulous analysis of the forms of the names, Colman concludes that the changing regimes are not reflected in the moneyers’ names, which remain unaffected by the rulers’ dialect. This is shown by the spellings of names on coins from Canterbury, whose dialectal form can be confirmed by manuscript evidence. A similar situation appears to hold for East Anglian coin-spellings, but unfortunately they reveal no specifically East Anglian dialect characteristics, only general Anglian features.

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1. Nielsen’s term for the language of runic inscriptions in Scandinavia, 160–500 CE.
Ryuichi Hotta’s “The order and schedule of nominal plural formation transfer in three Southern dialects of Early Middle English” presents a quantitative study of the spread of the s-plural. Using a sample of texts from LAEME and printed editions as his database, he selects two periods per dialect for a comparison of the choices of plural types (-s, -n, zero, vowel and miscellaneous) in nouns divided according to their Old English genders. Hotta proposes the following orders of likelihood for the adoption of the -s-ending for the genders: masculine → neuter → feminine, and for plural types: zero → vowel-ending → -n-ending. He suggests that the spread of the -s-ending in the South-West and South-East Midland and Southwestern dialects can be described as chronologically overlapping, but unparallel S-curves, which do not combine into one nicely formed S-curve, as in the northern dialect. Thus the northern S-curve should perhaps be seen as an exception and the southern development as the more normal situation.

Part I finishes with Jerzy Wełna’s “The temporal and regional contexts of the numeral ‘two’ in Middle English”, which investigates the choice of two as the standard form among competing forms of the numeral. In a corpus study of a sample from the Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose (Markus (comp.) 2008), Wełna charts the distribution of the forms in texts from different dialect areas and finds some complex patterns. First, the southern change of [a:] to [o:] appears also in northern texts, where most instances of the numeral have the form two. Secondly, the loss of the twain/tway forms started from London. And finally, looking at the dialectal distribution of [ei] vs. [ai] forms, Wełna finds that [ei] occurs in the texts from the Midlands and Southwest, as expected, but also in the northern and Irish texts, while the northern form [ai] is found in Kent.

Part II, “Syntactic variation in focus” begins with Matti Rissanen’s “Grammaticalization, contact and corpora: On the development of adverbial connectives in English”. Using the HC and ten other corpora, he presents a “long-diachrony” overview of these linking words from Old to Late-Modern English, illustrating the main lines of development with studies of representative items. In Old English the most productive type of adverbial subordinators were those consisting of a preposition and a demonstrative pronoun, followed increasingly often by the subordinator þe. In Middle English these phrasal subordinators were simplified by the loss of the demonstrative pronoun and þe was replaced by þæt/that, which was later dropped. Moreover, loans from French and Latin increased the repertoire of items. The Early Modern period saw the establishment and spread of the loans in various genres, and finally, Late Modern English was the period for the division labour and specialization of the various adverbial connectives.

Alexander Haselow focusses on one use of the frequent and multifunctional adverb then in “Discourse organization and the rise of final then in the history of English”. In Present-Day English utterance-final then marks the consequent
part in a paratactic conditional construction and it occurs typically in unplanned speech and dialogic contexts. To trace the origin of this use of *then*, Haselow studies a selection of texts from the HC (speech-based, didactic, intended for reading aloud or including dialogue, with larger samples from some of the texts) and, as present-day data, the spoken material from ICE-GB. Dividing the occurrences of *then* and its predecessors *pa* and *ponne* into deictic time adverbs, markers of logical conclusion, sequencers, discourse markers and final connectors, he finds a shift from propositional uses as adverb and sequencer towards non-propositional uses as discourse marker and final connector. This tallies with the fairly standard development of discourse-pragmatic uses. Moreover, as final *then* mostly occurs with directive speech acts in dialogic contexts, the development can also be described as subjectification (emphasizing contrast to the speaker’s expectations) and intersubjectification (softening or enforcing the illocutionary force for the recipient). Haselow suggests that the increasing frequency of final *then* parallels the growing influence of speech on writing, when writers select this paratactic structure instead of the hypotactic construction with an *if*-clause.

Claudia Claridge traces “The origins of *how come* and *what…for*”, two constructions with the meaning ‘why’, in three diachronic corpora (CED, CEECS and CONCE). *How come* has its likely predecessor in an interrogative clause with an infinitival complement. The current form appeared in the eighteenth century in informal and non-standard contexts, possibly in ESL or non-native speech. The causal meaning ‘why’ is a natural development from the manner meaning through subjectification. Parallel to the sense development the phrase was fixed in the non-clausal form. Claridge characterizes this construction as “a lexicalized form within the grammatical area” (p. 193) and classifies its development as lexicalization rather than grammaticalisation, because its form and syntactic behaviour are irregular and its meaning is opaque. *What for* has its origin in *for what*, which was used in the causal sense as early as in Middle English. A discontinuous form *what … for* appeared when preposition stranding became possible, and finally, the current form is found in the nineteenth century. Semantically, the construction has always had parallel purpose and cause senses. Claridge characterizes *what for* as “a periphrastic grammatical construction (G1 in Brinton & Traugott’s scheme, 2005:93), which has undergone semanticisation (ibid., p. 21)” (p. 192). Both forms have become more frequent, which can be accounted for as colloquialisation.

In “‘Providing/provided that’: Grammaticalization or loan translation?”, Rafał Molencki argues that the conjunction *providing/provided* has developed from a loan translation from Anglo-Norman, where the participial phrase *pourvu que* had been grammaticalized from a participial phrase to a conjunction in legal and official discourse in the fourteenth century. The calques *pourveyed that* and *provided that* appeared in Middle English at the same time as the verb *provide*. In English the grammaticalization of the conjunction continued through the loss of *that* in
the early seventeenth century. Further developments in English are the alternative providing (that) and the spread of the conjunction outside formal genres.

Thomas Egan looks for the origins of the complementation pattern of “Prefer: The odd verb out” in diachronic corpora (CLMET, COHA) supplemented by other texts and dictionaries. In Present-Day English, prefer differs from other emotion verbs, as it does not distinguish semantically between to-infinitive and -ing complements. Its historical development is also different, as it started with -ing and later adopted to-infinitives, whereas other verbs underwent a reverse shift. The word was borrowed as a construction with a number of prepositions marking the dispreferred alternative from French in the late fourteenth century. By the eighteenth century the prepositions had been limited to to, which could only be used with -ing complements. In the nineteenth century, to-infinitives started appearing as complements of prefer in constructions with the dispreferred alternative expressed by rather than and an infinitive. Egan suggests that this construction was adopted by analogical extension from other comparative constructions. The spread of infinitive complements with prefer lead to closer resemblance in the complementation patterns with other semantically similar verbs.

Part III, “Grammatical changes in nominal and pronominal constructions” begins with Mark Davies’s presentation of COHA “The 400 million word corpus of Historical American English (1810–2009)”. This corpus consists of over 100,000 texts of fiction, magazines, newspapers and non-fiction, balanced by genre and subgenre across the decades, and lemmatized and part-of-speech tagged. As a detailed description of the corpus is available on the corpus website, this article focusses on presenting ways of using the corpus, which is available online with multiple search facilities (COHA). While the searches for lexical items and parts of speech, using wildcards and patterns of various search terms, as well as studies of collocates and uses of words lists are not specific to COHA, Davies emphasizes that this corpus has greater potential for studies of diachronic changes than corpora that are smaller in size, include data from non-continuous periods and are not structured and balanced in their composition.

In “Gender change from Old to Middle English”, Florian Dolberg investigates gender-reassignment and loss of grammatical, or referential, gender in the Peterborough Chronicle, 1129–1154, a text representing the shift between the two periods. Dividing the gender-marked nouns and pronouns in the sample into referential class nouns, where gender matches the referent’s sex, and lexical class nouns, where gender and sex do not match, he compares their gender to the Old English system. While the pronouns in the sample have already completed the change to the present referential system, nouns show more varied developments. Most of the lexical class nouns have been reassigned, which agrees with a telic development, i.e. a sudden change of their gender system. Referential class nouns have changed only rarely, which suggests a gradual development with a degree of disorder in
Book reviews

the interim stage. As to factors affecting gender reassignment, Dolberg finds that abstractness and lack of morphological marking promote reassignment in the lexical class, while the changes in the referential class are largely unpredictable.

Reijirou Shibasaki charts the long history of the *ward(s)* construction in “‘Please tilt me-ward by return of post’: On the vicissitude of a marginal pronominal construction in the history of English”. While the *-ward(s)*-suffix can be combined with a variety of elements to form expressions of location or direction, the constructions with pronouns fell out of use in the twentieth century. Studying the OED and four corpora (HC, CLMET, UVE, COHA), Shibasaki finds that the pronoun + *ward(s)* construction appeared in Middle English and occurred infrequently all through its history. It started with third person pronouns and shifted then to first and second person pronouns. The starting-point agrees with the locative orientation of the construction, while the shift to speech-act participants tallies with (inter)subjectivization. However, the low frequency of the construction prevented it from being stabilized. Shibasaki argues that the role of frequency should be considered more thoroughly in diachronic research.

Part IV “The integration of loanwords in Middle English” includes two articles. Mark Chambers and Louise Sylvester study code-switching and technical vocabulary in “Multilingualism in the vocabulary of dress and textiles in late medieval Britain: Some issues for historical lexicology”. Their data come from two vocabulary projects. *The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing in Britain ca. 700–1450* collects lexical items in use in the period in a searchable database available online. The entries include dictionary definitions, etymologies and information about the language(s) of the items. Chambers and Sylvester note that there are problems of language attribution, which reflect the multilingual situation of medieval Britain, and code-switching, in particular, cannot be satisfactorily studied without the context of the lexical items. The other project, *Medieval Dress and Textile Vocabulary in Unpublished Sources*, compiles a corpus of administrative documents concerning dress and textiles from the petitions to Parliament and Royal Wardrobe accounts. Many of these documents are mixed-language texts, containing various types of code-switching. Chambers and Sylvester suggest that the code-switches are typically technical terms and they may thus be motivated by the use of specialist vocabulary among professionals.

In “‘No man entreth in or out’: How are typologically unsuitable loanverbs integrated into English?”, Judith Huber applies findings from cognitive linguistics and second language acquisition in her study of the entry of a French loan word into Middle English. In the motion-verb typology based on semantic components of motion events, English is characterized as a satellite-framing language, which encodes the manner of movement in the verb and the path in adverb or prepositional phrases, while French is a verb-framing language, where the path is expressed in the verb. Studying the uses of the verb *enter* in original English texts
and translations from French and Latin in two corpora (PPCME2, CEECS), Huber finds that *enter* tends to include manner in its meaning, particularly in the original texts, and, moreover, it often refers to movement in a figurative or abstract sense. She concludes that *enter* and a number of loans from French appear to adapt to the motion-verb type of English and thus borrowing across typological boundaries is a potential factor leading to semantic change.

The final part entitled “Investigating communicative intentions in historical discourse” begins with Krisda Chaemsaithong’s detailed analysis of an eighteenth-century trial in “Beyond questions and answers: Strategic use of multiple identities in the historical courtroom”. Chaemsaithong argues that the ways the interlocutors use questions and answers in the examination can reveal how they manipulate their identities and alignments, or footing (Goffman 1981) to present favourable arguments for their side in the trial case. For instance, when leading questions by the prosecutor prompt the witness to produce preferred responses, the message to the jury can be described as jointly created by prosecutor and the complying witness. The analysis shows an example of court discourse in a historical context, and more generally, it illustrates an approach to studying the uses of identity and footing in this legal genre.

The volume finishes with Sylwester Łodej’s “The demise of *gog* and *cock* and their phraseologies in dramatic discourse: A study into historical pragmatics of tabooistic distortions”. Studying the occurrences of the corrupt forms of the interjection *God!* in drama texts in the *Literature Online* database, Łodej finds that their declining frequencies tally with the general shift in swearing from the medieval mostly religious swearwords to the Modern English sexually oriented swear vocabulary. However, their frequencies in drama texts decrease abruptly in the early seventeenth century. Łodej argues that their unexpectedly sudden disappearance can be explained by an extralinguistic factor, namely the *Act to Restrain Abuses of Players* in 1606, which imposed fines on religious oaths. He emphasizes the importance of considering extralinguistic factors, which may influence different types of language use in different ways.

The index at the end is somewhat uneven in its inclusion of keywords. For instance, the corpora are fairly well covered, but most of the lexical items do not appear in the list. However, apart from the few errors which every publication unavoidably contains, this is a carefully edited volume.

As the purpose of conference volumes is to represent the theme of the conference and as the theme of the conferences in the ICEHL series is all of English historical linguistics, the reader of this book cannot expect a coherent volume, but a collection that covers the breadth of topics discussed during the event. That expectation is certainly satisfied by the variety of topics in the volume and the editors’ choices can be characterized as reflecting the state of the art as represented by the papers at ICEHL16 in 2010.
References


Literature Online. http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/


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