

Descriptive studies of particular languages

Chinese

95–509 Sampson, Geoffrey. Chinese script and the diversity of writing systems. *Linguistics* (Berlin, Germany), **32**, 1 (1994), 117–32.

DeFrancis claims that all writing systems are similar in being phonetically based. Chinese script, commonly cited as an exception, is, according to DeFrancis, essentially a syllabic phonographic system. This article argues that this claim confuses diachrony with synchrony. It may be correct that the creation of a script always involves phonetic

considerations, but subsequent evolution of script and spoken language can remove the phonetic basis of a writing system. It is difficult to agree that modern Chinese writing is essentially phonetically based; and it is certain that phonetic motivation is not a necessary feature for a script.

95–510 Lee-Wong, Song Mei. Address forms in modern China: changing ideologies and shifting semantics. *Linguistics* (Berlin, Germany), **32**, 2 (1994), 299–324.

This paper examines public address forms as a by-product of history, in particular polite address forms like (1) *tongzhi* ‘comrade’, (2) *shifu* ‘master’, and (3) *pengyou* ‘friend’, *xiansheng* ‘Mr.’, and *xiaojie* ‘Miss’. These terms are closely related to certain periods of Chinese history: *tongzhi* to the 1949 Revolution, *shifu* to the Cultural Revolution of 1966, and *pengyou*, *xiansheng*, and *xiaojie* to the Open Door Policy from 1978. It is maintained that as historical by-products these address forms document changes in ideological focus and cause semantic shifts

reflected in their pragmatic meaning. Such semantic shifts, while permitting speakers to adapt to changes without having to introduce a plethora of new terms into the address system, at the same time cause considerable difficulty to some sectors of the speech community. Findings from a survey and participant observation show that this difficulty arises mainly from a system that continues to emphasise socialism but is oriented toward a free-market economy. There is a perceived need to adopt terms that reflect the mood of modernisation and change.

English

95–511 Ahlu, Samuel. Variation in the use of complex verbs in international English. *English Today* (Cambridge), **42** (1995), 28–34.

This is the third part of a series; for earlier parts see *ET38*, April 1994 (abstract no. 94–497) and *ET40*, Oct 1994 (abstract no. 95–269).

Patterns which involve complex verbs, also known as phrasal verbs and multi-word verbs, are at the centre of discussions seeking to distinguish between native and non-native forms of English. This is an area which, for many writers, marks an expert knowledge of English. The author identifies seven ‘basic’ complex verb patterns and eight related transformations. The variation is of critical importance for the development of English as an international language because of the widely-held view that these idiomatic expressions constitute one of the remaining characteristics of English as a Germanic language. There are two main types of international divergence involving complex verbs: forms which are non-existent in Standard English (e.g. ‘to voice *out* an opinion’); and those which have undergone a semantic shift from Standard

English (e.g. ‘the event will *come on* tomorrow’). On the basis of examples from West Africa and South Asia, five major divergent patterns manifest themselves, which the author postulates as styles of Standard English. These patterns include the use of complex verbs and simple verbs as synonyms (‘The meeting *was presided by X*’); and the compounding of forms (‘*X has requested for* a transfer’). Many divergent forms occur in educated usage across local or national boundaries and there is no reason, for instance, why the English taught in Nigerian classrooms should be different from that taught in Indian classrooms. It is pedagogically and theoretically realistic to subsume the shared divergent usages within the concept of ‘Standard English’ or ‘correctness’. It may be legitimate to seek to identify regional and national usages, but focusing on them can overlook the extent to which they are indistinguishable from that of native speakers.

German

95–512 Zabel, Herman. Die 3. Wiener Gespräche zur Neuregelung der deutschen Rechtschreibung. [The third Vienna conference on German spelling reform.] *Zielsprache Deutsch* (Munich, Germany), **26**, 1 (1995), 9–15.

Reforms in German spelling were agreed in 1994 and will probably become compulsory in German, Austrian and Swiss state schools, official documents etc. by 2001. The main categories of change, with examples (present spelling in brackets), are as follows: (i) *e* sometimes becomes *ä* to reflect etymology, e.g. *belämmert*, *schnäuzen* (*belemmert*, *schneuzen*). (ii) Some doubled and tripled consonants, e.g. *Zigarrette*, *Rohheit*, *Flusssand*, *Schiffahrt* (*Zigarette*, *Roheit*, *Flussand*, *Schiffahrt*). (iii) *ß* always becomes *ss* after short vowels, e.g. *Hass*, *lässt* (*Haß*, *läßt*). (iv) Optional alternative spellings of some foreign words to reflect German pronunciation, e.g. *Varietee*,

Buklee, *Ortografie*, *Astma*, *Portmonee* (*Variété*, *Bouclé*, *Orthographie*, *Asthma*, *Portemonnaie*). (v) The endings *-zial*, *-ziell* as optional alternatives to (*-tial*, *-tiell*). (vi) Various changes affecting one-word, two-word and hyphenated forms, e.g. *Rad fahren*, *gefangen nehmen*, *irgendetwas*, *8-fach*, *Hairstylist* (*radfahren*, *gefangennehmen*, *irgend etwas*, *8fach*, *Hair-Stylist*). (vii) Greater use of capital letters, e.g. *in Beezug auf*, *Schuld geben*. (viii) New rules for hyphenation in line-breaks, e.g. *Wes-te*, *Zu-cker* (*We-ste*, *Zuk-ker*). (ix) Commas generally not used before main clauses with *und*, *oder* and before infinitive and participle phrases.

Russian

95–513 Davies, Ian and Corbett, Greville. The basic colour terms of Russian. *Linguistics* (Berlin, Germany), **32**, 1 (1994), 65–89.

Berlin and Kay have suggested that languages have a maximum of 11 basic colour terms. Russian may be an exception in that it appears to have 12 basic colour terms, including two for the blue region of colour space. A study of Russian colour terms is reported, which was carried out to establish the inventory of basic colour terms as a test of Berlin and Kay's theory and to clarify the status of the two blue terms. A large representative sample of speakers of

Russian performed two tasks: a list task (77 subjects) and a colour-naming task (54 subjects). The results from the two tasks converge to indicate that Russian does indeed have 12 basic colour terms including the two terms for blue. In addition, plotting the Russian terms in colour space and comparing the results with similar work on English allows the authors to define certain Russian terms more accurately than has been the case previously.

Translation/Interpreting

95–514 Atari, Omar F. (King Saud U., Saudi Arabia). The place of communicative strategies in translating. *Babel* (Budapest, Hungary), **40**, 2 (1995), 65–76.

This paper is an attempt to reaffirm the need for a higher level of awareness on the part of translator trainers of their trainees' literacy level as one important component of their linguistic and sociocultural background. Specifically, the paper presents a theoretical discussion of the role of the translator trainee's oral/literate strategies of communication in translating. An attempt is made to illustrate the adverse effect of the so-called 'orally based' strategies of communication on the process of interaction with the source text. It is argued that this 'orally based' mode of communication which some

translator trainees bring in with them to the class operates as a hindrance to their attempts at dismantling the complexity of some source texts.

The paper, first, offers a brief characterisation of orally-based and literate-based strategies. Second, the type of conceptual knowledge associated with these types of strategies, are explicated. Third, evidence from empirical research attesting to the dominance of these strategies among Arabic-speaking learners is provided, and finally, the adverse effect of orally based strategies on reading of the ST for comprehension is illustrated.

95–515 **Ishikawa, Luli** (U. of Edinburgh). English/Japanese professional interpretation: its linguistic and conceptual problems. *Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics* (Edinburgh), **6** (1995), 41–57.

This paper is a study of professional simultaneous interpretation in Japanese and English based on comparative analysis of grammar and discourse. Data recorded at an international conference is analysed. The problems encountered by the interpreters, mainly due to linguistic differences between the two

languages, are revealed as being also due to other factors, such as cultural differences, psychological pressure and inadequate training. It is concluded that Japanese/English simultaneous interpretation requires greater awareness of discourses and cultural differences between the two languages.