

Descriptive studies of particular languages

English

90–528 Cheshire, Jenny and others. Urban British dialect grammar: the question of dialect levelling. *English World-wide* (Heidelberg, FRG). **10**, 2 (1989), 185–225.

The Survey of British Dialect Grammar was carried out between 1986 and 1989. Its main aims were to increase our knowledge of the morphology and syntax of BrE dialects, and to consider the educational implications arising from the coexistence of Standard English and dialect grammar. The Survey responses indicated those features that are most widespread in urban varieties of BrE, including some not usually included, such as *should of*. Some features widely reported are thought to be used by

‘educated’ speakers so should perhaps not be considered as nonstandard, such as *there’s* and *there was, never* as past tense negator, and (possibly) adverbial *quick*. All these features are characteristic of spoken English, and children have to learn not to use them in their school writing. Perhaps such features should be thought of as ‘social dialect’ features rather than as regional dialect features, but their social distribution has not yet been determined.

Spanish

90–529 Miles, Cecil. About the Spanish verb ‘haber’. *Canadian Modern Language Review* (Toronto). **46**, 2 (1990), 317–23.

A number of aspects of the Spanish verb *haber* present conundrums as to their meanings and derivations which are far from being resolved. Apart from its familiar (and recent) function as an auxiliary in the so-called ‘perfect’ tenses, its

underlying meaning ‘to have, to hold’ still persists in the impersonal *hay* (a close relative of *il y a*) while other morphemes previously associated with *haber* may prove to be quite unrelated.

Translation

90–530 Dubois, Betty Lou. Thematisation across machine and human translation: English to French. *IRAL* (Heidelberg, FRG). **28**, 1 (1990), 43–65.

To investigate the effects of translation on thematisation, primary level (main clause) themes from the 463 independent clauses of an English journal article of high level physics popularisation were categorised according to status, unmarked, marked, or rhematised, using the analytic framework of Dubois and, as appropriate, syntactic form. Their distribution across three major sentence types in the 13 sections of the article was computed. Clauses of the article were compared first to a selection of those of an unpublished French machine translation and then to those of a published human translation, with thematic changes reported in detail for the latter. The automatic translation is generally faithful to the original thematisation, but confronted with the

complexities of the English noun phrase or with the gaps in its own lexicon, the machine can lose or create a theme or even garble one. As might be expected, machine errors are repetitive. The themes of the human translation, on the other hand, are perfectly comprehensible, but substantially transformed. There are 14 cases of combinations of English independent clauses, 17 of splitting of complex clauses, all of which alter primary thematisation. In the remaining clauses, there are extensive changes in thematisation, the most important being thematisation to a pronoun or to existential *il y a*. It is suggested that fidelity to thematisation is one criterion by which to judge the quality of a translation.

90-531 Hartmann, R. R. K. (Exeter U.). The not so harmless drudgery of finding translation equivalents. *Language and Communication* (Oxford), **10**, 1 (1990), 47-55.

Compiling a bilingual dictionary is a complex task involving an attempt to find equivalents in pairs of languages. Both linguistic and non-linguistic factors are probably included. It is agreed today that the best translations are those which make use of adaptation strategies and interpretation of the original text, and focus on the target language taking into account social and psychological factors, and the purpose of the text. It is recognised that there are equivalence types ranging from non-existent through partial to complete. Equivalents are easier to establish in pairs of languages of similar ancestry, such as European languages, but in a Chinese-English dictionary for example, the many linguistic and cultural differences make the task more difficult and require a process of gradual and complicated development from literal translation through to full equivalence.

A bilingual dictionary should offer lexical equivalents in the target language rather than explanatory

paraphrases or definitions, and such equivalents can be established through analysis of parallel texts. However, parallel texts provide equivalence only in terms of a particular use of a word in a certain context. Variables of use and context, and other meanings of a word render equivalence only partial or approximate. Comparison of initial entries for 'F' in a study of two recently published monolingual dictionaries, German and English, and the *Collins German-English dictionary*, revealed various shortcomings such as omission of the possibility of zero equivalence, translation loss, and circumlocution.

Analysis of parallel texts, although not explaining how equivalents are arrived at, could assist research into ways of establishing equivalents, and computers could be used to generate equivalents by scanning parallel texts and to store information concerning the matching operation. There is at present little conclusive information which could help teachers in the training of translators and lexicographers.

90-532 Wilss, Wolfram. Cognitive aspects of the translation process. *Language and Communication* (Oxford), **10**, 1 (1990), 19-36.

The current objective of translation science is to provide a framework to explain the cognitive processes involved in the activity of translation. A theory of translation must have an empirical foundation and provide a practical and efficient framework for the activity. Examples of cognitive processes are analysis, interpretation, comparison, and the weighing of possibilities, all of which are required to harmonise two different linguistic and cultural entities.

By its nature, translation is a complex activity in which the translator is the intermediary between the writer of the source text and the reader of the target

text. Although certain specialised text types, such as technical or commercial texts, are not too difficult to translate because of a degree of similarity in source and target languages, other types may cause severe problems because of semantic vagueness, syntactic complexity, metaphors, etc. Consequently, in order to create a text appropriate for its purpose, the translator requires to revise the work at various stages, to use imagination and inventiveness, and to apply competent decision-making strategies. However, caution must be exercised in the uncertain areas of creativity and intuition.