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
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Acknowledgements

The fourteen contributions to this volume, which were selected from papers delivered at the 15th International Conference on the History of the English Language (ICEHL) held at the University of Munich (24–30 August 2008), focus on the genesis and variation of nominal and verbal constructions in the history of English. At ICEHL 15, about 170 papers were given, of which fifty were handed in for consideration in the proceedings. The editorial board agreed on compiling three volumes, which were to be organized thematically. For the present volume, the editorial team from the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt picked those papers which were related enough to form a fairly coherent volume dealing with syntactic and morpho-syntactic topics and ultimately, after a thorough inspection by the editors and reviewers, the fourteen papers here united were chosen for the present publication. The editing was completed in time for the subsequent ICEHL conference in Pécs, Hungary, in August 2010. In addition to this book, an editorial team based at the University of Munich (editor-in-chief: Hans Sauer) will compile at least one more volume, to be published with John Benjamins, comprising selections from the remaining papers carrying a different thematic focus.

The editors wish to thank the organizing committee of the 15th International Conference on the History of the English Language (ICEHL) at the University of Munich for organizing and supporting such a huge conference logistically and academically. Our heartfelt gratitude also goes out to all the colleagues who have been involved in the selection process for this volume as referees, readers and advisors. Specifically, we would like to thank Daniel Hole, Ulrike Krischke, Angelika Lutz, Wolfgang Mager, Hans Sauer, Gaby Waxenberger and those reviewers who wish to remain anonymous for their quick and thorough review of the contributions, substantially improving sections of this book with their pertinent comments. We are also very grateful to the series' editor, E.F.K. Koerner, and the staff of John Benjamins for their support and, of course, to the authors for their cooperation and patience.

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Eichstätt, May 2010

Ursula Lenker, Judith Huber, Robert Mailhammer

Introduction

Capturing and explaining syntactic change in the history of English

Ursula Lenker, Judith Huber, Robert Mailhammer
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1. New paths of investigation: Corpus and constructionist approaches

In recent years, the study of historical syntax has in particular benefited from a methodological trend towards usage-based or functional approaches. This is largely due to the intrinsically compositional nature of syntax. Unlike morphology and phonology, which describe the formation and use of single speech signs, syntax is about stringing items together in order to form more complex functions and meanings. As a result, syntax forms a larger context, which it is, however, at the same time dependent on, since the co- and contextual parameters feed back on how words can be put together. In a synchronic approach, the contextual information can be backgrounded in favour of formal issues, but from a diachronic perspective it is exactly the changes in collocations, constructions (in a general sense) and sentence types that form the object of investigation. These changes occur in a complex interplay of conventionalization and variation, which is why it is important to pay attention not only to standardized or widely-used varieties of a language, but also to its dialectal varieties.

Consequently, studies in historical syntax, which either – explicitly or implicitly – contrast historical stages of a language with its later stages, or which describe a diachronic development, have increasingly made use of corpus studies and of a range of what can be labelled usage-based approaches, such as frequency-based accounts and, more recently, various kinds of constructional grammar (see Croft 2001: 14–21 for an overview of different approaches, with references), investigating not only the standard language but also various kinds of diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic varieties. Such functional investigations combine description with explanation, in the sense that changes in syntactic conventions are

documented, which may then be explained with, for instance, the help of a formal theory.

The key significance of such fine-grained studies of micro-variation for a theory of language change has been increasingly recognized in recent years (see, e.g., Enfield 2005). The problem of examining language change has always been to “catch it red-handed”, mainly because the perspective was often too wide, the method too crude and the resolution of the study too low. The gradual nature of change and the increasing entrenchment of new forms and meanings make it necessary to look more closely and to single out phenomena which can then be studied more carefully and more comprehensively. Traditional philology has always inherently assumed such a viewpoint, and this is why the editions of the nineteenth and early twentieth century are so valuable. In this sense, corpus linguistics takes philology to the next level, employing essentially the same perspective, but with much richer datasets. Ever more often, linguists also examine ongoing language change and use data from comparatively large contemporary corpora such as the Brown quartet (Brown/LOB for 1961 and Frown/F-LOB for 1991/92), the TIME Corpus or the BNC (see the contributions by Close & Aarts, Rudanko, Sellgren and Van linden, all in this volume) not only to study variation and change in Present-Day English, but to employ a wider perspective aimed at retrieving regular patterns of linguistic change (for a general discussion of the value of contemporary data, see Mair 2006: 12–35 and Leech, Hundt, Mair & Smith 2009: 1–50). And this is exactly what is needed to capture, and ultimately, explain language change: a wealth of data on one well-defined, clearly bounded phenomenon.

In syntax, these smallest observable phenomena are constructions in a broad sense, collocations which first become conventionalized and may then be grammaticalized. Therefore, the investigation of syntactic change starts with an analysis of the elements that are strung together on a regular basis and an examination of their behaviour through time (see, e.g., Ferraresi & Goldbach 2008). Recent studies in English historical linguistics have frequently followed this trend. The use of corpora has by now become part and parcel of the standard methodology analyzing the emergence, variation and developments of syntactic units, collocations, idioms and constructions in all historical stages of English and across varieties, both in a general and in a theory-determined sense.

However, there is another dimension to language change, and this is the fact that language change is a behavioural change of speakers, since changes of speech patterns require a change in behaviour. This has become especially clear through the network-based sociolinguistic studies of language variation (see, for instance, Milroy & Milroy 1992). In identifying reasons for such behavioural changes, recent theories on language change have made great progress (see, e.g., Labov 2001

and Enfield 2003). One such reason is external influence. The investigation of externally motivated language change depends on the availability of a broad range of linguistic and extra-linguistic data and the application of a strict methodology (see Thomason & Kaufman 1988), but the explanatory potential of change through language contact has been demonstrated time and time again. This is especially valid for the history of English with its massive impact – not only in the lexicon – from, in particular, Norse (see the discussions in Laing and Ohkado, both in this volume), Latin and French (see, for example, Akimoto and Egan, both in this volume). In recent years, the significance of Celtic influence on the structure of English has become increasingly apparent after it had been underestimated in earlier scholarship (see Filppula & Klemola 2009 and also Wischer, this volume).

2. Functional and distributional approaches to the history of nominal and verbal constructions

2.1 Approaches

A considerable proportion of the articles assembled here apply a usage-based approach, a majority of them investigating questions of constructions and complementation in the history of English. The general idea of usage-based approaches is to focus on the way certain forms and syntactic units are employed, discussing, for example, the frequencies and kinds of formal properties these constructions display and which functions they perform. Based on such a comprehensive design, the different approaches also emphasize different aspects, such as frequency, pragmatics or the degree of fixed contextual embedding and constructional entrenchment. In a sense, this could be termed a neo-philological or post-philological approach, a move ‘back to the roots’ of linguistics, in which the data are of primary concern (for a discussion of the importance of early Middle English data, see, for instance, Laing, this volume). Interestingly, this parallels the recent comeback of documentary linguistics as a linguistic subfield in its own right, whose primary aim is to document language and to make it accessible to outsiders (see Himmelmann 1998, for an overview of the field). In most of the papers brought together in the present volume, however, the comprehensive and detailed empirical base serves as a foundation for more general and also theoretical inferences, when, for instance, data on the conventionalization of constructions (in a general sense as well as in the sense of construction grammar) are linked up further with theories on grammaticalization (see Egan, this volume) and language change (see, for instance, Sellgren and Rudanko, both in this volume).

2.2 Verbal constructions

Many studies in the volume set out to capture data on constructions – whether ad hoc, conventionalized or grammaticalized – and document variation and stability. In a considerable number of the contributions “constructions” such as verb complementation patterns, phrasal units or idioms are investigated without explicit reference to construction grammar as a theory (see Goldberg 1995). The papers by Rudanko, Sellgren and Straaijer, for instance, examine questions of verb complementation from a basically distributional viewpoint, whereas Johannesson’s paper on verb complementation in Old English assumes a distinctly theoretical perspective. Johannesson develops a three-partite system for Old English verbs – according to the dimensions of copularity, transitivity and status (personal vs. impersonal) – and uses it to account for the fact that Old English verbs of naming can take an object complement either marked for nominative or accusative.

In one of the distributional analyses of a large corpus (the *TIME* Corpus), Rudanko shows that the patterns of complementation of *accustomed* have radically changed in the course of the twentieth century. In the 1920s, the older pattern with *to*-infinitive is roughly as frequent as the newer one with *to* -*ing*. Yet, Rudanko finds that this was not a matter of free variation, but that the new complementation pattern emerged in combination with non-volitional agents as well as in contexts without complement or adjunct extraction. The older *to*-infinitive complementation remained more widespread with volitional agents and in contexts involving complement or adjunct extraction. By the 1960s, however, the infinitival complementation was largely replaced by *to* -*ing*.

In a similar vein, Sellgren (using data from the BNC) compares different complementation patterns of *prevent* in Present-Day English, the older (*prevent*) *somebody from doing something*, and the more recent (*prevent*) *somebody doing something*. She proposes that one of the factors that govern the choice of complement is a semantic distinction: the *from*-pattern is preferred if the prevented action is a hypothetical one, while the other pattern is chosen more often in less hypothetical cases, where, for instance, the prevented action has been realized before.

In an even more fine-grained micro-study, Straaijer focuses on the usage of one individual author. He compares the usage of the auxiliaries *be* and *have* with mutative intransitive verbs (such as *begin* or *arrive*) in the private writings of the eighteenth-century grammarian Joseph Priestley with a) the rules of his grammar and b) a reference corpus of contemporary letters (for variation in the forms of *be* in Old and early Middle English and their functions, see also Wischer and Laing, both in this volume). In his *Rudiments of English Grammar*, Priestley suggests that the choice of auxiliary with these verbs depends on the context, *have*

being more appropriate with reference to past or completed events, *be* in other cases. Since this distribution is also found in his own usage and is furthermore in line with the eighteenth century’s general usage, Straaijer adds further evidence to the claim that Priestley is a de- rather than a pre-scriptivist.

While most of the studies thus deal with constructions in a more general sense, the contributions by Akimoto and Van linden make explicit use of construction grammar in the shape of the approach developed by Goldberg (1995). Akimoto compares the distribution of *give* + *Oi* + *Od* and *give* + *Od* + *to* through the history of English and traces the development of idiomatic expressions such as *give rise to* from the latter. He finds that the direct object slot in these expressions has ever more frequently been filled with short, eventive nouns from Early Modern English onwards. In a functional synchronic-diachronic description of the clausal complement patterns found with *good* in extraposition constructions, Van linden shows that PDE *good* differs from other deontic-evaluative adjectives, such as *important* or *convenient*, in that it preferably combines with propositional *to*-infinitive clauses (as in *it is good to hear that*) instead of mandative *that*-clauses (as in *it is important that you go there*). The frequency of propositional *to*-clauses with *good* is attributed to the existence of two partially filled constructions in the sense of Goldberg (1995): the locative pattern and the knowledge/acquisition-of-knowledge pattern. Both of these papers using large corpora illustrate that, as Croft (2001: 11) asserts, one of the fundamental methods of construction grammar is a quantitative and distributional analysis of different diachronic occurrences of a given construction. From this basis, further inferences are possible via frequency-based models of language change, which ties in further with cognitive theories (see Bybee 2003) and grammaticalization (see Egan, this volume).

2.3 Modality and (marginal) modals

Three contributions in this volume address constructional issues of modality and (marginal) modals in the history of English. Egan’s paper is a good example for linking distributional findings to issues of grammaticalization. He shows that the employment of *fail to* has changed radically from being almost always negated in the eighteenth century to being hardly ever used with negation in Present-Day English. He discusses its semantic development and argues that *fail to* is to some extent grammaticalized as a negative marker in Present-Day English.

The developmental ancestor of many constructions in a general as well as a theory-specific sense is the collocation, the topic of Nykiel’s paper. He traces the development of the Old English collocation *mæg eaþe* ‘may easily’, which is on its way to lexicalization in Old English, to its disappearance in Middle English. Nykiel finds that OE *eaþe* may collocate with *mæg* in all the verb’s meanings

except that of “permission” and suggests that the collocation *mæg eaþe* reinforced the deontic and possibility-interpretation of *mæg*.

In their contribution on current changes in the system of English deontic/epistemic modals, Close & Aarts look at the uses of *must* and *have to/have got to* in the *Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English*. In environments where both *must* and *have (got) to* are possible, the deontic as well as the epistemic use of *must* is shown to have declined from the 1960s to the 1990s, while deontic *have to*, already more frequent than *must* in the 1960s, keeps rising. Contrary to what one might expect, however, *have to* is not increasing in its epistemic use, and also *have got to*, the most recent of the three, is in decline.

2.4 Developments in the English noun phrase

Two papers in this volume focus on features in the diachrony of noun phrases. Bartnik discusses Old English discontinuous quantificational structures, i.e., quantifiers that are not adjacent to the noun or pronoun they quantify. He shows that the group is heterogeneous and offers a classification according to whether or not they show morphological agreement. While the first case involves movement such as topicalization or scrambling, the quantifier is base-generated in the other case.

Juvonen’s analysis of *s-* and *of-*genitives in late Middle and Early Modern English challenges the claim that the *s-*genitive rises from being a mere relic in 1400 to becoming a normal genitive variant from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, arguing that the *s-*genitive was the unmarked choice for human possessors all along (particularly widespread in the informal genre of letters), while the *of-*genitive is more frequent in formal contexts like sermons. Thus genre is seen as the most important factor in genitive variation, with factors such as weight, topicality, givenness and genitive function also playing a role.

3. Syntactic variation and change through contact

The second strain of investigation present in this volume focuses on language variation and, in a further extension, on explanation operating with language contact. The papers by Wischer and Laing complement each other in this successive application of research methodology, examining the forms of the copula verbs OE *beon/wesan* in Old and early Middle English.

In her distributional investigation of the double paradigm of *beon* and *wesan* in Old English, Wischer finds that the difference between the two verbs, one of future/habitual present vs. (current) present meaning, is linked to a similar one in Celtic. Wischer argues that it is the prolonged contact with Celtic after the

Anglo-Saxon settlement that the spread of the *b-*forms to the subjunctive, imperative and infinitive, and the development of the Old English full double paradigm, an exception among the West-Germanic languages, is to be attributed to.

In a fine-grained study, Laing investigates how the Old English distribution of *b-* and *s-*roots of the *BE*-paradigm, with *b-* more often referring to future time, develops in regional varieties of Middle English. She identifies four different types, some of which continue the Old English distinction in the present indicative singular only, while others – with *ar-/er-* instead of *b-*forms in the plural – also maintain the distinction to the plural.

While the impact of the Celtic languages (as discussed by Wischer, this volume, in particular) is a topic which has been revived in recent years (see now Filppula & Klemola 2009), the linguistic impact of Old Norse has been a long-standing and more stable area of research. In his paper, Ohkado re-examines the evidence for the Norse origins of a particular word order pattern in English. He shows that in Old and Middle English clauses with pronominal or empty subjects, the finite verb tends to be preceded by adjectives, participles, infinitives, negatives and other adverbs more frequently than in clauses with a full NP subject, where the verb tends to be followed by these elements. Ohkado attributes this difference in word order to stylistic fronting of these elements into the subject gap, a phenomenon known, for instance, from Old Norse. On the basis that stylistic fronting can be observed in all Middle English dialects, but even more so in non-Northern ones, the paper argues (against Trips 2002 and also Ohkado 2006) that it is not only due to Scandinavian contact but has to be a genuine property of Old and Middle English.

This volume thus brings together two avenues of research which have been extremely fruitful in the investigation of English historical syntax, namely, functional and data-oriented as well as contact-linguistic approaches. The key strength of the former perspective is its fine-grained examination of micro-variation and micro-change, whereas motivating language change is at the heart of the latter. In recent years, it has become clear that both of these perspectives are indispensable parts of a theory of language change. In particular, the study of constructional change and language variation, which the majority of contributions to this volume are concerned with, has shown to provide crucial data for the description and explanation of syntactic change in the history of English.

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PART I

Verbal constructions

On verb complementation in Old English

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Traditional works on Old English which offer an explanation of the syntax of naming constructions (nominal predication and nominal complementation) are generally based on an account of Old English verb complementation in terms of taxonomicity, namely the presence of a taxonomic complement in the structure of the clause. In terms of the structure of the clause, the presence of an internal argument in the nominative case and the presence of the presence of an external argument in the nominative case are not necessarily correlated. By treating these features as distinct, rather than as taxonomicity, we can explain the distribution of the verb *be* in Old English. This study will explore the distribution of the verb *be* in Old English in terms of the presence of an internal argument in the nominative case and the presence of an external argument in the nominative case. This study will explore the distribution of the verb *be* in Old English in terms of the presence of an internal argument in the nominative case and the presence of an external argument in the nominative case. This study will explore the distribution of the verb *be* in Old English in terms of the presence of an internal argument in the nominative case and the presence of an external argument in the nominative case.

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In Old English, we find examples of taxonomicity, namely the presence of a taxonomic complement in the structure of the clause. In terms of the structure of the clause, the presence of an internal argument in the nominative case and the presence of an external argument in the nominative case are not necessarily correlated. By treating these features as distinct, rather than as taxonomicity, we can explain the distribution of the verb *be* in Old English.