

PRE-PRINT VERSION

## INTRODUCTION

# PERIPHRAISIS, REPLACEMENT AND RENEWAL: LESSONS FOR AND FROM THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH

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In the infinite process of language change various factors can lead to the loss of lexical elements or grammatical features. Parallel with this, the solutions to remedy such losses and to renew the affected part of the linguistic system can also be multifarious. Synchronic theory and diachronic investigations smoothly blend in research inquiring into the question of how the language system is renewed after loss or how a defective paradigm is amended. A major device for gap-filling in the structure of languages is periphrasis, a mechanism that has both morphological and syntactic properties. This Janus-faced nature of periphrasis poses a problem for linguists working with any linguistic model when they try to formulate the criteria for labelling a certain construction as an instance of periphrasis. Attempts have been made to achieve a better understanding of periphrasis in the framework of various grammatical theories, as for example in a lexical grammatical approach (Kiparsky 2005), or in canonical typology (Brown et al. 2012), to mention only a couple. Growing interest in periphrasis has motivated the publication of in-depth studies of this phenomenon: a recent collection of studies (Chumakina & Corbett 2012) focuses on typological variation of periphrastic constructions observable in languages of diverse language families, while John Anderson (2011), in his trilogy on the substance of

language, devoted the second half of volume 2 to the discussion of periphrasis.

Analytic constructions, thus periphrasis, are known to have gained increasing significance in the history of the English language. With the decline of inflectional endings in the Late Old English period it is not an unexpected development that the subjunctive, which was marked by suffixes, gradually lost its importance against periphrastic forms conveying modal distinctions: the optative subjunctive was replaced by *may*-periphrasis, while the hortative subjunctive by the *let*-construction. Replacement of the hortative seems to have spread faster, so much so that by the end of the 16th century it became more frequent than the subjunctive but optative periphrasis did not develop that fast (see Rissanen 1999: 229). As opposed to mood, aspect in Old English was expressed with the help of prefixes (e.g. Old English perfective *ge-* or *be-*), so the spread of periphrastic replacement – as, for example, in the case of the perfect – is connected not only with the formal and functional weakening of prefixes but also with the gradual intrusion of the once exclusively possessive *have* into the domain of the perfect aspect. This typologically widespread expansion and grammaticalization of *have* may have to do with Scandinavian influence (see McWhorter 2002: 236f).

The phenomenon of linguistic replacement is closely connected to periphrasis; in the examples cited above, a periphrastic structure eventually replaced a synthetic one. One of the most exciting tasks of historical linguists is to discover and uncover the possible reasons and causes behind the development of periphrastic constructions and the replacement of older linguistic forms by these. As some of the papers in this volume show, replacement is always preceded by synchronic variation, and for the study of this phenomenon the use of digitized corpora provides great help. This relatively recent aid for historical linguistic research has been exploited by most authors in the present volume.

The replacement of an older linguistic item (be it a morpheme, a lexical element or a more complex structure) will often affect some of the sub-systems, or sometimes even the whole linguistic system of a language, thus it may lead to the renewal and restructuring of some of these (to mention just one well-known example, the gradual loss of final inflectional endings in Middle English triggered off significant changes in syntax). One can thus view the phenomena of periphrasis, replacement and renewal as constantly recurring processes in the cycle of language change.

## Patterns and Models of Replacement

Periphrasis is a phenomenon often neglected or incorrectly treated by handbooks and textbooks. In this volume John Anderson points out unfortunate aspects in the terminological tradition and significantly refines the theoretical distinction between the notions of ‘grammatical periphrasis’ and ‘lexico-grammatical periphrasis’, which is equally relevant for general linguistics and for historical linguistic considerations. Taking the expression of the Latin perfect passive as a prototype for the central notion of the term ‘grammatical periphrasis’, the author examines several potential cases of grammatical periphrasis in English – such as the progressive, perfect, and passive constructions, as well as expressions with *used (to)*. He finds that modal constructions that interact with the morphological subjunctives are closer to the prototype than other instances of modals, which turn out not to qualify as instances of periphrasis.

The loss and replacement of the Old English preterite-present verb *þurfan* – an unsolved mystery in the history of English – is investigated by Lucía Loureiro-Porto. In an earlier work (Loureiro-Porto 2010), she already discussed the competition between verbo-nominal constructions with the nouns *þearf* and *need*, and rejected the earlier assumptions ascribing the loss of *þurfan* to phonological confusion with *durren* in Middle English (see Visser 1963–1973, Molencki 2005) because the noun *neod* had replaced the noun *þearf* more than two centuries earlier. Loureiro-Porto’s study in the present volume approaches the question why *neod* ousted *þearf* from a psycholinguistic perspective and evaluates the role of morphological productivity in a quantitative analysis. The author concludes that the Old English verbform *neod* had a high resting activation, and the circumstance that it was easily retrievable from the mental lexicon in the process of speech production secured its productivity, which led to the substitution of *þearf* by *neod* in the contexts where originally they used to be in free variation.

Aspectual loss and renewal in the history of some ingressive markers is investigated by Lynn Sims, who analyses how the increasing degree of grammaticalization of Old English *onginnan* contributes to its decline and replacement by Old English *beginnan*. In the Middle English period the occurrence of {*begin* + bare infinitive} gradually disappeared, and a new *-ing* complement appeared. But then the distribution pattern of the {*begin* + *-ing*} structure was challenged and – by the beginning of the 20th century – suppressed by a new competitor: {*start* + *-ing*}. The introduction of the new ingressive marker *start* in early Middle English may have been facilitated by some semantic restrictions on the use of *begin*. The evolution

of ingressive markers and their complements exemplify how history sometimes repeats itself because the cyclic mechanism of loss and renewal by replacement tends to recur.

Justyna Rogos investigates the intricate network of “multivocal relationships in the mapping of sound to symbol” (Laing & Lass 2009: 2) in seven manuscripts of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Man of Law’s Tale*. Based on the views of Laing & Lass 2003, her paper makes use of the medieval doctrine of the *littera*, which conceives of the letter as a unit of both writing and speech, in order to show the multivalent relation between spelling and sound in the manuscripts examined. She sets out several Litteral Substitution Sets (LSS) – that is, when a number of *litterae* can represent in variation the same *potestas* (sound value) – used in the manuscripts. She comes to the conclusion that the LSS attested in the manuscripts under examination indicate that the scribes in question worked within the framework of conventionalized spelling, which admitted little variability. She also argues that an examination of Potestatic Substitution Sets (PSS) is necessary for a thorough analysis of the spelling systems in the 15th-century manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*.

## Syntactic and Semantic Variation and Change

The loss and replacement of some causative verbs is investigated by Brian Lowrey, who looks at syntactic and semantic variation in Middle English causatives and complement types. He argues that up to now too little attention has been paid to their variation, and that is why the explanations for the distribution of Middle English complement types in causative structures have only been partially successful. He examines five different complement structures in his corpus within the framework of a dynamic model of variation and change proposed by Smith (1996). On the basis of his findings concerning the distribution of causers/causees by thematic role in each of the texts examined, the author argues that the agentivity of the causer and that of the causee are very important factors to be considered, as they affect the variational spaces (i.e. all the contexts in which a given linguistic item may appear) of both causative verbs and complement types. He also discusses the case of *make*, *do*, *gar*, *let* and *cause* in detail and demonstrates that the shift in their respective variational spaces in Middle English was heavily influenced by the factor of agentivity.

Syntactic variation is examined by Anna Cichosz from another vantage point. In a comparative study of Old English and Old High German translations of Latin texts she investigates how far the Latin source may

have syntactically influenced these translations, especially with respect to the relative position of the finite verb and its subject in main and subordinate clauses. Her results show that the verb-first pattern of Latin is closely followed in the Old High German translation, while in the Old English translation the verb-first structure rarely occurs, and even if it does, the original Latin word order is slightly modified. When the subject is expressed in the Latin text, Old High German faithfully reflects this order but the Old English translation consistently moves the verb from initial position (V-1) to V-2, V-3 or even to final position. So Old English seems to have been less dependent on the syntactic structure of the source, while Old High German closely follows the pattern of the Latin original. When word order in the translations is the same as that in the Latin text, it is difficult to decide whether the structure used in the target languages can be considered a Latin syntactic calque or a native structure, i.e. the structural correspondence may only be coincidental.

The most recent trend in generative grammar, the Minimalist Program is used as a theoretical framework in Víctor Parra-Guinaldo's study, which examines the grammaticalization of Old English *whether*. In the first part of his article the author sets out the basic principles of the Minimalist Program, laying emphasis on the concept of economy, and arguing for the relevance of van Gelderen's Complementizer Phrase Cycle model based on her two economy principles – Head Preference and Late Merge (Gelderen 2004: 18, 28) – for examining and interpreting the grammaticalization of Old English *whether*. The article discusses the different functions of Old English *whether* (including, among others, *whether* as a declinable and an indeclinable pronoun, and as a conjunction in various contexts) based on Ukaji 1997, and provides illustrative examples for each function. The author argues that the descriptive work done by Ukaji on *whether* should be revised applying the Minimalist Program and van Gelderen's economy principles.

The Minimalist Program, however, cannot provide an explanation for all aspects of the history of English, as case in Present-Day English is considered uninterpretable in the Minimalist framework. In the present volume Fuyo Osawa proposes a different viewpoint of case interpretability on the basis of investigating transitivity in earlier periods of the history of English. She shows that uninterpretability in English emerged as a result of the separation of case from thematic roles, thus new syntactic constructions could emerge and 'deviant' transitive constructions (i.e. constructions that have few transitive properties) could become productive. Transitivity in Old English was easily expressed by internal vowel contrast or by prefixation, since a form–meaning correspondence

obtained to some extent in Old English. But later, due to phonological coalescence and morphological simplification, the situation changed, and this had an effect on transitivity as well. The author purports that a shift from a lexical-thematic stage to a functional one took place in the history of English and she proposes a new case hierarchy in which the instrumental case is ordered below the genitive, while the genitive is below the dative (as opposed to earlier interpretations expressed, for example, in Calabrese 1998 or Blake 2001).

Octav Eugen DeLazero uses the theoretical framework of formal semantics – among others, the views put forward by Zucchi (1993), Larson (1998) and Gentner (2005) – to make several valuable observations in connection with the development of modal adjectives (e.g. *likely*, *probable*, *possible*, *virtual*, *potential*) in the history of English. The author points out that all of these adjectives are borrowings in English, almost exclusively from French or Latin. These adjectives in English have certain selectional restrictions that were inherited from the languages from which they were borrowed: namely that originally they could only stand with nouns which described situations, and they started to be used with nouns denoting physical entities only in the 18th–19th centuries. The reader is introduced to the concept of modal adjectives and some diachronic data are provided about them; furthermore, a cross-linguistic analysis of this class is given with examples from Ancient Greek, Latin, Old Icelandic, Old Church Slavonic, Gothic and Sanskrit. DeLazero also gives an outline of the status of these adjectives in Present-Day English, and then proceeds to analyze the denotations of the modal adjectives and those of the nouns they can combine with. The author's conclusion is that 'proper' modal adjectives are only those that can combine both with situational and relational nouns, and he also argues that languages that do not allow such combinations (of which English was one up to the end of the 18th century) are not able to express modality at determiner phrase level.

## **Adverbials and Particles**

The methods of corpus linguistics have facilitated research into the smaller building blocks of language like adverbials, particles and conjunctions. Thus the changes that occurred in these areas can be traced fairly accurately, and detailed analyses can be provided about the phenomena connected to these developments.

Artur Bartnik examines the development and distribution of adverbial *before* in Old and Middle English. In order to provide a clearer picture, he also carries out a parallel investigation of Old English *æf*, Middle English

*er* ('before'), and demonstrates that there are a number of differences in the use of *before* and *ær*. One of these is a quantitative difference, as their number of occurrences in the examined corpora shows considerable variation. These differences can also be semantic, as these adverbials do not quite carry the same meanings (while *before* can have both temporal and locative meaning, *ær* carries only temporal meaning). Furthermore, the use of *before* and *ær* can also be grammatically different, as they do not always occur with the same type of modification (see also Molencki 2007). Apart from discussing these differences, Bartnik also shows what changes occurred in the use of these two adverbials with respect to the differences mentioned above during the Old and Middle English periods; moreover, he also gives a comprehensive list of all the possible Middle English variant forms of *before*. The author convincingly illustrates all of his points with examples from his corpora.

The loss of the adverbial status of the *no sooner ... than* construction is examined by Daisuke Suzuki. Although in Present-Day English this construction correlates with *than*, earlier it used to combine with *but* as well. Following a period of competitive coexistence between the two correlatives, the use of *than* became established. On the basis of corpus evidence the author shows that the *no sooner* construction gradually lost its status as an adverb in a process of grammaticalization, and became a conjunction. Suzuki also investigates other factors connected to the development of this construction. One of these is the frequency of the occurrence of inversion and the position of *no sooner* in the construction. Another factor is the use of different tenses in the *no sooner* clause. The third factor under scrutiny is the co-occurrence of *no sooner* with synonymous expressions like *immediately*, *instantly*, *at once*, *presently*. The author also examines the semantic change which led to the present-day meaning of *no sooner*, and he argues that this change was heavily influenced by the co-existence of *but* and *than*. Furthermore, he also points out that it is justified to use the framework of grammaticalization when analyzing the development of the *no sooner* construction.

English phrasal verbs or verb-particle combinations have always received considerable attention from scholars. They are generally grouped into five semantic categories: literal, reiterative, aspectual/*aktionsart*, figurative, and non-compositional. A relatively large number of phrasal verbs or verb-particle combinations, however, cannot be easily fitted into these categories. Paula Rodríguez-Puente, in a study focusing on the combinations of verbs with the particle *up*, offers to refine this categorization by distinguishing a sixth group, that of emphatic phrasal verbs, which are likely to have emerged in the Middle English period. The

corpus evidence she examined allows for a tentative explanation: Latinate verbs started to be combined with the particle *up* by way of analogy with native verbs in reiterative combinations. This process, probably also fuelled by the increasing analyticity in the history of English, must have facilitated the naturalization of the foreign elements.

## **Functional and Regional Variation in Discourse and Vocabulary**

Discussing discourse strategies in early texts has enjoyed a strengthening popularity over the past two decades. In her study of Early Modern English travelogues, Virtanen (1995) introduced three discourse strategies, namely temporal, locative, and participant-/topic-oriented, and since then these strategies have served as bases for subsequent work dealing with historical discourse analysis. The use of these three discourse strategies in *Margery Kempe* and in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* were compared by Fumiko Yoshikawa (2008). Her paper in this volume extends the earlier investigation and offers a comparative study of the discourse strategies used in *The Book of Margery Kempe* (the chapters describing Margery Kempe's pilgrimage) with the discourse strategies applied in *Mandeville's Travels* and *The Stations of Rome*. The comparative analysis focuses on examining adverbials of time and place in sentence-/clause-initial position, as well as references to the author or to participants in the above-mentioned texts. The analysis reveals that discourse strategies used in travelogues differ from those in pilgrimage stories inasmuch as the latter tend to combine locative and participant-oriented strategies. Illuminating the differences between *Mandeville's Travels* and *Margery Kempe*, Yoshikawa argues that while the former can be considered descriptive, the latter is rather narrative. This can be concluded from Yoshikawa's observation that the way coherence is maintained in the two texts is not alike: in *Margery Kempe* coherence is achieved by temporal discourse strategy, while in *Mandeville's Travels* by locative discourse strategy. The author also calls attention to the use of participant-oriented strategy, which is consistently used in *Margery Kempe* but not in *Mandeville's Travels*.

Earlier discourse models, however, are found inadequate for explaining a discrepancy revealed in a corpus study carried out by Lilo Moessner, in which she used a corpus of ca. 90,000 words from the fields of medicine and natural science from the period ranging between the middle of the 17th and the middle of the 18th century. The author applied a modified version of multidimensional analysis for highlighting characteristic

register properties of these early texts, and she found that – contrary to earlier long-term discourse studies – the registers of medicine and science began to diverge with respect to the properties informativeness, narrative concerns, overt expression of persuasion, and degree of abstractness in the hundred-year period examined by her. To explain the discrepancy between earlier studies and her findings, she proposes a new and more powerful discourse model that integrates extralinguistic aspects (such as format, purpose, audience, etc.) in the linguistic investigation.

A so far undeservedly neglected source for the study of regional vocabulary in 17th-century England is analyzed by Javier Ruano-García. He surveys the unpublished manuscript of Bishop White Kennett's *Etymological Collections of English Words and Provincial Expressions*, which was compiled most likely in the late 1690s and the early 18th century. Ruano-García provides an extensive lexical survey of the unique material contained in this manuscript: he discusses the Northern words, the Midland words and the Southern words, and emphasizes the importance of the fact the Kennett very often provides a precise location for the lexeme listed: thus we get information about the vocabulary used in 38 counties in England, and some further information concerning the Isle of Man, Wales, Ireland and Scotland. Although information provided about the Northern counties of England is the most extensive, still, in comparison with other contemporary lexicographical works, one of the greatest merits of Kennett's work is that it documents the lexical history of the Midland and southern counties, and thus provides valuable information for the study of hitherto unknown aspects of historical regional variation.

No matter whether the processes of periphrasis, replacement or renewal are at work, the linguistic changes analyzed by the studies collected in this volume testify to the intricate relationship between the cognitive needs of the speakers and their concrete representations at the level of language, as well as to the immense human creativity in the changes affecting the linguistic system. Several papers combine various aspects of theoretical linguistics with historical linguistic research, and they testify to the beneficial results of 'cross-fertilization' between these two areas. Thus the papers in this volume also show that there are still important lessons to be learnt both for and from the history of English.

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