

TRACKS TO MASTERING ENGLISH



© Brian Mossemeneer 2008

ANGLICANA TURKUENSIA No 25

Tracks to Mastering English

Edited by Lydia Kokkola

Anglicana Turkuensia

ISSN 1236-4754

(continuing from *Publication of the Department of English, University of Turku*,
ISSN 0781-707X)

No. 25

University of Turku

Turku, Finland

2009

ISBN 978-951-29-3847-6

Copyright © individual authors

Cover photograph © Brian Mossemeneer 2008

Layout and cover design by Ira Hansen

Typeset in 12 pt Book Antiqua

Tracks to Mastering English

<i>Introduction</i>	7
Risto Hiltunen, Matti Peikola & Janne Skaffari	
<i>The Philological Track</i>	11
1. On philology	11
2. On historical linguistics	12
3. On Master's theses on the Philological Track	13
Juulia Ahvensalmi	
<i>Grammatical Gender in Anaphoric References in Early Middle English</i>	18
Abstract	18
1. Introduction	18
2. On grammatical gender	18
2.1. <i>Material</i>	21
3. Anaphoric pronouns	21
3.1. <i>Anaphoric references in different lexical subsets</i>	25
4. Reasons for the loss of gender	30
4.1. <i>Phonological changes</i>	30
4.2. <i>Language contact</i>	31
4.3. <i>Synchronic and diachronic variation</i>	31
4.4. <i>Genuswechsel and discourse motivations</i>	32
5. Conclusion	33
Hanna Salmi	
<i>Turn-Taking and Immediacy in The Owl and the Nightingale</i>	36
Abstract	36
1. Introduction	36
2. Overview of <i>The Owl and the Nightingale</i>	37
3. Theoretical framework and methodology	39
4. Results: Immediacy-features in relation to turn change	42
5. Discussion: The findings and their literary ramifications	45
6. Conclusion	49
Jaakko Henrik Salminen	
<i>Transparent Editing: A framework for overt communication between editors and readers</i>	52
Abstract	52
1. Studying the interaction of mind and text	52
2. The different faces of current editorial theory	54
3. Some preliminary questions	56
4. The proposed framework	58
4.1. <i>Signatures</i>	58
4.2. <i>Textual status</i>	60
4.3. <i>Editorial intentions</i>	61
4.4. <i>The editing process</i>	62
5. Practical solutions for portraying editorial processes	63
6. Conclusion	66

Päivi Pietilä

<i>The Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Track</i>	70
--	----

Susanna Rosin

<i>Pragmatic Competence in the English of Finnish Upper Secondary School Student</i>	75
--	----

Abstract	75
1. Introduction	75
2. Subjects and methods	76
3. Results	78
3.1. Test performance	78
3.2. Factors affecting test performance	80
4. Discussion	81
5. Conclusion	85

Appendix One: The items in the test of pragmatic competence	87
---	----

Sonja Vainio

<i>Does Multiple-Choice Testing Lead to Multiple-Choice Teaching? Textbook washback of the Finnish matriculation examination in English</i>	94
---	----

Abstract	94
1. Theoretical background – washback	94
1.1. Washback hypotheses	94
1.2. Positive and negative washback	95
1.3. Textbook washback	97
2. Materials and methods	98
2.1. The matriculation examination	98
2.2. Textbooks for upper secondary school	99
2.3. Constructing the research tool	100
3. Results	101
3.1. Matriculation examination listening tasks	101
3.2. Matriculation examination reading tasks	103
3.3. Composition, multiple-choice and other tasks	105
4. Discussion	107

Terhi Ylirisku

<i>Development of L2 Negation: An empirical study of Finnish learners of English</i>	113
--	-----

Abstract	113
1. Introduction	113
2. The development of L2 negation	114
2.1. Research methods	114
2.2. Subjects	115
2.3. Coding the gathered data	116
2.4. Analysing and organising the data	116
3. Results	119
3.1. The implicational scale perspective	120
3.2. The developmental stages of negation perspective	122
4. Discussion	133
5. Conclusion	134

Risto Hiltunen & Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen

<i>The Discourse Track</i>	136
1. The study of discourse	136
2. On Master's thesis on the Discourse Track	137

Maria Heiniluoma

<i>Metatext and the Company's Future Outlook: The use of hedging and emphatics in the letter to shareholders sections of annual reports</i>	142
Abstract	142
1. Introduction	142
2. Key theoretical concepts	143
2.1. Metadiscourse	143
2.2. Hedging and emphatics	144
3. Object of study	146
4. Theoretical background	147
4.1. Hedging and emphatics in the present study	149
5. Methods of study	150
5.1. Good vs. bad year and future-orientedness in the corpus	152
5.2. Remarks on methodology: Counting procedure and subjectivity	153
5.3. Results regarding individual companies	154
6. Results	154
6.1. Metadiscourse markers found in the corpus: General view	154
6.2. Metadiscourse categories: Absolute counts in good vs. bad years	155
6.3. Metadiscourse categories: Frequency counts in good vs. bad years	156
6.4. Modal verbs	158
7. Discussion	159
8. Conclusion	162

Susanna Mäkinen

<i>Generic Features of Runaway Slave Advertisements from Eighteenth-Century America</i>	166
Abstract	166
1. Introduction	166
2. Slaves and newspapers in the North American colonies: The cultural context	167
3. The corpus of the study	168
4. The genre of runaway slave advertisements	169
4.1. Some general features of the advertisements	170
4.2. The structure of the runaway advertisement using the notion of "moves"	172
4.3. Different speech acts attested in the moves	174
4.4. Recurring vocabulary and fixed phrases	176
4.5. The advertiser referring to him- or herself	177
5. The differences between the three colonies	179
6. Conclusion	181

Lydia Kokkola	
<i>The Literature Track</i>	183

Anna Orhanen	
<i>Beautiful Untrue Things: The art of contradiction in Oscar Wilde's 'The Decay of Lying'</i>	189
Abstract	189
1. "Art never expresses anything but itself"	192
2. "All bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature"	195
3. "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life"	199
4. "Lying is the proper aim of Art"	205
5. Contradiction as expansion: The core of Wildean aesthetics?	207

Elina Siltanen	
<i>"Other ways of looking out over wide things": Polyphonic criticism of the present moment in John Ashbery's 'Litany'</i>	212
Abstract	212
1. "For someone like me": Establishing indeterminate presences	215
1.1. "Anyway, I am the author": Defining and decentralizing authority	216
1.2. "The agony of looking steadily": Unconfirmed ideas	219
1.3. "Whose subjects are these?": Blurring the boundaries between you and I	222
2. "new Criticism": Metatextual discourse and the present moment	225
2.1. "Solemn abstractions": Uncertain attitudes and multiple meanings	227
3. "Poetic license": Poetry as criticism in 'Litany'	229

Tracks to Mastering English: Introduction

Lydia Kokkola

The Road Not Taken

TWO roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth,
Then took the other ...
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference

Robert Frost (1874–1963)

Mountain Interval. 1920

Students who paid attention in Academic Writing Skills might read the above quotation from Frost, expect me to write about ‘the track less travelled’ in the English Department’s Advanced Studies, and feel rather disappointed with their teacher for choosing such a clichéd bait. I would be very proud of a student who responded in this way; it reveals true mastery of the English language, its literatures and its use in different contexts. With such mastery comes humility, the realisation that there will always be far more to know about the language, its literatures and its use than one could ever learn. This volume was primarily written for students standing at a particular crossroads in their academic career: the point at which they are completing their BA degree and are wondering which track to take in Advanced Studies. Recognising that learning ‘everything’ about English is an impossible task, students at this stage are choosing areas in which to specialise and, ultimately, a topic on which to write their MA thesis. So, yes, this introduction will indeed consider ‘the track less travelled’, but perhaps I will be forgiven for using this metaphor if I show how apt it is for describing this moment in such students’ academic careers.

Students who are completing their BA degrees have already travelled many varied paths as language learners. Arrival at this particular crossroads signals that students are extremely successful language learners, which often means that their experiences at school were very positive. This may have led to a decided interest in the processes involved in learning a foreign language and a firm decision to take the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) Track. Other, equally successful, students will arrive at this point without any sense of where they want to go next. Such students could benefit from reviewing their progress as learners to the point at which they could not only understand the quotation above, but recognise it and understand how it could be used to introduce a discussion on an academic topic. In other words, by reviewing their private reading history and their success as learners in the English Department, students may be able to determine which track will suit them best.

Most applicants sweating over the many difficult tasks in the English Department entrance exam will be wholly unacquainted with Frost's poem. A few may have had teachers who encouraged them to read literature in school, many applicants read fiction for pleasure and virtually all applicants are used to using their English skills for finding information in their private lives as well as to support their studies. Those who were offered places at the Department tend to read widely and eclectically. These private reading patterns tend to reveal the kinds of topics students take as options. Students who particularly enjoy surfing for information and chat tend to be more interested in the topics offered on the Discourse Track, whereas readers of lengthy non-fictional works often feel more at home on the Philological Track and, of course, readers of fiction tend to enjoy the Literature Track most. However there seems to be no pattern of private reading that characterises students who wish to take the SLA Track.

Another way to think about which track to take in Advanced Studies is to consider which courses at the Department have appealed the most so far, however, students should also note that they have not yet had much of a chance to study all the areas covered by the tracks. In this respect, the Philological Track is particularly noteworthy as the history of the English language has not been included in the compulsory teaching at the BA level since the degree reform known as the Bologna process. Prior to the reform, it was one of the most popular courses in Intermediate Studies. Bearing in mind that one needs to take courses from at least two tracks in Advanced Studies, students are strongly encouraged to consider all the tracks before making their decision. Choosing one that is "less taken" may make "all the difference"!

Frost's traveller gazes down the two roads in the yellow wood and is sorry he cannot "travel both / and be one traveler". He cannot follow both paths without splitting himself in two. Fortunately, the English Department is not like the yellow wood. Students in Advanced Studies often combine their studies from different tracks to produce very high quality research in the MA theses. Several of the articles in this volume are based on theses which combined research skills and methodologies from more than one track (e.g. Mäkinen and Salmi). So even those students who have already decided which track they wish to take are encouraged to explore the other tracks in search of support for their main areas of concern.

And what about you? Yes, I know that I have taught you that in academic texts one should avoid addressing the reader directly as it comes across as being much less polite in English than it does in Finnish. I also told you to avoid spoken conventions like rhetorical questions and contractions. And if you have a habit of starting a sentence with a conjunctive, I probably circled it and told you to refrain from doing so in the future. But if you were paying attention, you'll remember I also told you that you could break all the rules once you truly understood the conventions. So I'm breaking all my own rules and talking to you directly, you, the one who has been reading this text and thinking "but I

didn't recognise that quotation from Frost"! Did you think I hadn't noticed you? Of course I know you were reading this too! You too are a successful language learner.

Students who did not recognise Frost's poem, and yet managed to follow the ensuing text in which they were assumed to know more than they actually did are displaying skills that prove very useful in the day to day practice of studying English at the Department. No-one can remember every linguistic detail or poem s/he has been taught; learning to recognise what one does not know and developing the research skills to fill in those gaps are far more important. If the shift in register in the previous paragraph did not immediately catch your attention, the content should at least have alerted you to the need to revise the conventions for writing academic prose in English. The ability to recognise gaps in one's understanding and knowledge, combined with skills for seeking solutions, lie at the heart of Advanced Studies. There are taught courses which will present information and then test students' knowledge of what has been taught on the course, but Advanced Studies are designed with the assumption that students are willing and able to work independently. The real goal of Advanced Studies is not the production of an MA thesis, but the development of independent learning strategies which will enable students to continue learning English for the rest of their lives. So, if the choice of track seems daunting, take comfort from the fact that any track can take you to this destination. However, this volume was designed to enable students to find the most enjoyable scenery on this journey.

Whilst all readers are warmly encouraged to read the volume in its entirety, it has been constructed to enable students to focus exclusively on those tracks they are considering taking. Each track is preceded by an introduction outlining what is taught on the track. Those readers who are still a little uncertain about how the various elements of the track (Foundation course, Methodology, Electives and the Thesis Seminar) fit together, and when they should be taken, are strongly advised to read the Introduction to the SLA Track where this is explained in greater detail. The other tracks work in much the same way, the only exception being that the Literary Theory Methodology is offered at the same time as the foundation course. These introductions will guide readers towards particularly good examples of master's level research conducted at the Department. Two or three examples of some of the very best theses are showcased through articles based on the larger studies. Short abstracts of the articles will enable readers to decide which topics seem the most interesting, and if one wishes to know more, bound copies are available from the seminar library. Most of the theses can also be accessed electronically by following the links to Turku University through Doria (<https://oa.doria.fi/>).

The volume begins with the Philological Track, the mother discipline which gave the Department its name, *englantilainen filologia*. However, those who read the introduction to this track will understand why the official English name of the Department has never been English Philology. This is followed by the SLA Track which,

as noted above, also outlines the way in which the tracks are structured. The Discourse Track follows, and completes the three 'linguistics' tracks. These are tracks which are usually taken by students who have attended the Linguistic Proseminar in Intermediate Studies. Those who took the Literature Proseminar usually specialise in the Literature Track, but since all students take courses on at least two tracks, changes are also possible at this stage.

I write this Introduction at an exciting cusp in the history of the English Department, exactly at the mid-way point between two major upheavals which have impacted on the curriculum offered. Behind us is the Bologna process which brought the four tracks included in this volume into existence. The transition process gave rise to an unprecedentedly high number of MA theses being completed. The remarkable quality of many of these texts inspired me to want to create a volume which would showcase the excellent work done by students at the English Department. Ahead is the merger with the Department of English Translation Studies, which will result in a large department offering initial training in translation and interpretation at the BA level and a fifth track in the Advanced Studies which will enable students to become fully qualified translators. The horizon is expanding. I hope this volume enables you to find the most suitable track towards it.

The Philological Track

Risto Hiltunen, Matti Peikola & Janne Skaffari

1. On philology

Students of English who choose the Philological Track for their MA studies specialise in the research of written texts from the Anglo-Saxon period to the 1800s. The research ethos of the track may be elucidated by examining the meaning of the term *philology*. As an umbrella term characterising a wide range of possible research activities covered by the track, *philological* suggests a way of approaching written texts of the past. This approach is crystallised in Siegfried Wenzel's definition of philology as

an appreciative attraction to verbal documents that seeks to understand their meaning, starting with the surface and penetrating to whatever depths are possible, but also alert to the fact that a given text comes from and is shaped by a specific time and place that usually is significantly different from that of the observer.

(Wenzel 1990: 12)

In Wenzel's definition, philology emerges as a broad theoretical disposition rather than a distinct field of study or a subfield of, say, linguistics or literary studies. The philological mindset entails interpreting texts of the past as products of the historical contexts in which they were written and initially transmitted. Regardless of the specific research questions asked and the materials studied, *philologists* need to be constantly aware of the danger of anachronism, that is, silently (and often erroneously) assuming that the phenomena, concepts, and patterns of thought familiar to us from the present day had the same or similar signification in the past. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that historical texts are products of alien cultures: in order to understand what a text means, one must become familiar with the culture that produced it.

In addition to the broader definition of philology as a context-sensitive mindset for approaching texts of the past, it may also be defined more narrowly as an historical study of language employing that mindset (for the narrower definition of philology, see Hogg 1994, Morpurgo Davies 1998: 22 n. 8). Adopting a *text-oriented* approach, philologists situate past instances of language use in their text-internal and text-external contexts. In practice, this means viewing written texts as communicative events or records of specific historical communicative situations. While the actual linguistic features studied may vary a great deal, philological research aims at reconstructing the original communicative situation to interpret the linguistic evidence.

Reconstructing the communicative situation requires philologists to study a number of interrelated questions: Why was a text written? What channels of transmission and/or publication were used? Are there different versions of the same text? How much can a text vary and still be considered a version of the same text? In addition to the original

writer(s), what other 'actors' may have contributed to the language of the text as it has come down to us (scribes, correctors, editors etc.)? What was the intended or imagined audience? How do the forms chosen for expression (dialect, register, genre, layout etc.) reflect the communicative intentions of the writer or the expectations of the audience? The articles in this section pose these questions in relation to specific texts dating from the late 12th century to translations of Catullus produced less than five years ago.

Understanding the context is crucial regardless of whether whole texts or text extracts are being studied. For the same reason, philologists tend to use non-modernised editions of the texts they work with, or even make direct use of those manuscripts or early printed books in which the texts were originally transmitted. Sometimes the best way to address the philological problems presented by a text is to prepare a new edition of it. Editing historical texts forms is therefore a recognised subfield of philological research (see e.g. Lönnroth 2007: 13-14; Salminen *this volume*).

2. *On historical linguistics*

The Philological Track was originally called the *Historical* Track to mark the track's focus on the history of English and its connection to historical linguistics. As a field, historical linguistics is a product of the 19th century, during which era scholars discovered similarities between different languages and created a method of reconstructing their ancestor language by comparing words from possibly related languages. Hence the field has also been called *comparative* linguistics. At the Department of English, however, our interests typically lie not in comparisons between languages but in the linguistic and philological study of the past stages of just one language, English. This does not exclude the study of language contacts from the track – on the contrary, the ways in which English has been influenced by other languages have always been fairly popular topics for Master's theses.

Historical linguistics studies language change over time: living languages are in a constant state of change, which applies to any and every level of language. This field of linguistics therefore comprises a variety of subdisciplines, ranging from historical phonology to historical discourse linguistics, all of which are concerned with issues which are also discussed within the linguistic study of contemporary language states. The major difference between contemporary and historical studies lies in the data: the materials explored by English historical linguists are texts surviving from the dozen centuries in which English has been a recorded language, excluding the most recent period. Despite the focus on older texts, it is possible to include even present-day data in a historical study. The word *historical* is indeed often replaced with the term *diachronic*, which emphasises the fact that development over time – often including very recent times – and the actual process of change are many linguists' major concerns. This does not mean, however, that *synchronic* studies of language, focusing on one particular point in time rather than the sequence of time, are not undertaken by historically oriented

scholars. On the contrary, a good understanding of how a linguistic feature or phenomenon has evolved through centuries also assumes knowledge about each consecutive stage within that process of change. The Turku 'school' of English historical linguistics and philology has a long tradition of working synchronically on selected periods. The authors of this introduction, for example, have written on topics including questions and answers in late 17th century court trial records, collective plurals in religious discourse around 1400, and lexical borrowings in early 13th century genres (Hiltunen 1996, Peikola 2000, Skaffari 2000).

What causes this ubiquitous change in language? Answering this question is the objective of the whole field; as Curzan writes, "[t]he goal of historical linguistic scholarship is to unravel and seek to explain the complexity of language change" (2003: 5). Numerous reasons are known for language change, some of them extralinguistic (for example technical innovations and language contacts), others intralinguistic (for example the tendency towards regularity). The classic problem of causation in language change was expressed in 1968 by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog, who wondered why specific change occurs in one language at a particular time, not a century earlier or two centuries later, and not in another language at all. Several factors promoting change, be they intra- or extralinguistic, may of course operate simultaneously, while there are also forces working in the opposite direction: it has been observed, for example, that change tends to be slow in small, tight-knit language communities with few contacts with the outside world (Milroy 1992). Thus studying not only the changing forms or features themselves but also the context of change is important; there are plenty of interesting issues for a student of language history to examine.

3. On Master's theses on the Philological Track

Working on a Master's thesis provides students with an opportunity to explore a topic of special interest extensively. On the Philological Track, the research possibilities are wide-ranging, not only in terms of the available subjects, but also regarding theoretical approaches and the choice of data. The Master's theses completed in the Department in recent years bear evidence of the versatility of this dimension of English studies. At the same time, they indicate its significant potential for a rewarding research experience for those who opt for this track.

In the search for a thesis topic, the student's own interests and initiative are foregrounded. The idea of a thesis on a linguistic or philological question concerning a given period, text(s) and/or author(s) may first have arisen in the course of earlier studies and/or previous reading. Such a background is likely to form the most fruitful starting point for designing the thesis project. Although considerable thematic variation results from this freedom, it is still the best starting point for a successful thesis. The all-important decisions concerning research questions, methodology and data will subsequently be agreed in collaboration with the thesis supervisor. To ensure a

sufficiently comprehensive exposure to the field at large, it is important that the curriculum on the Master's level prior to thesis writing should contain an introductory foundation course into historical themes, a course on historical research methodology, and elective courses on more specialised topics. A forum for discussing issues related to the research for the thesis and the writing of the text will thereafter be provided by a thesis seminar. Courses on topics of related interest on, for example, the Discourse Track and the Literature Track may also be fruitfully combined with the Philological Track.

Viewing the range of historically oriented theses topics since the 1990s (ca 30 theses in all), it becomes apparent that lexical studies are by far the most numerous, followed by syntactical and morphological studies. Semantics and phonology have so far been represented more marginally. In terms of historical periods, Early Modern English predominates the scene (17 theses), followed by Middle English (10 theses) and Old English (3 theses). These figures reflect the slightly higher threshold involved in choosing a medieval topic, especially one dealing with Old English. On the other hand, those who have followed up their interest in medieval studies have usually found it well worth the effort. With some practice in the language, students will be able to gain access to the achievements of the Middle Ages through texts and documents in their original language and discover how they often both build on even earlier traditions and, at the same time, anticipate forthcoming changes and developments. The Early Modern period, in turn, appeals in part due to its linguistic accessibility, and perhaps because the points of connection between past and present are more immediately obvious. The theses topics need not, of course, be restricted to any given period. On the contrary, the division of the linguistic continuum into periods should not be taken too categorically, for "unlike dates, 'periods' are not facts. They are retrospective conceptions that we form about past events, useful to focus discussion, but very often leading historical thought astray" (Trevelyan 1946: 92).

A closer look at the topics of the Master's theses completed since 2000 reveals current interests in the dimensions of the field: (a) a philological approach to texts representing a specific socio-cultural context (e.g. Ervasti 2002, Helola 2003, Leppälähti 2003); (b) a discourse linguistic approach, focusing on the import of contextual factors on the communicative processes represented in the material (e.g. Riski 2001, Koski 2002, Salmi 2008 (see also *this volume*), Szurawitzki 2002); (c) a diachronic linguistics approach, tracing the history of particular linguistic changes in a set of representative materials (e.g. Ahvensalmi 2007 (see also *this volume*), Marin 2008); (d) a corpus linguistics approach, examining syntactic variation historically (Riipinen 2008); and (e) the linguistic features of particular historical genres (e.g. Bergholm 2008, Mäkinen 2008 (see also *this volume*)). At present, discourse-oriented studies are on the increase, in line with the Department's current research profile on the Philological Track. Promising new areas for Master's thesis work also include issues of editing (e.g. Salminen 2008 (see also *this volume*)) and topics connected with the linguistic and cultural issues of early printed books.

In this volume, three thesis writers report on their work on the Philological Track. On each occasion, the topic chosen by the writer is unusually complex and demanding. Juulia Ahvensalmi's thesis focuses on linguistic change in Early Middle English (ca 1150-1225). Her work explores the gradual loss of grammatical gender in this period through a close analysis of three prose texts from its beginning, middle, and end respectively. Although the phenomenon is ridden with interpretative challenges, she succeeds in presenting an ambitious and innovative survey of the various language-internal and language-external criteria that may have contributed to the loss/retention of grammatical gender in her material. These include, for example, the possible role played by the genre of a text (saint's life vs. medical treatise).

Hanna Salmi's thesis is a thorough and innovative analysis of the colloquial language of the Early Middle English poem, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, from the particular vantage point of turn-taking and the "language of immediacy" (Koch and Oesterreicher 1985), comprising interactive features like questions, imperatives, address forms, and pronouns. Among the most interesting findings of the study are the clustering of certain interactive features at turn beginnings, the use of cross-reference in structuring the poem and, more generally, the usefulness of the model of Koch and Oesterreicher for historical discourse analysis of written representation of speech.

Jaakko Henrik Salminen's thesis addresses some major issues raised in recent editorial theory concerning the interface between editors and their audiences (Schillingsburg 1996, Stillinger 1994). In his study, Salminen compares the editors' metatextual discourse in five recent, nonspecialist Anglo-American editions of the Roman poet Catullus. He discovered that such discourse varies considerably between the editions studied in terms of how transparently and fully the editors state their intentions and editorial methods. The findings suggest that it is crucial for the editors to communicate adequately with their readers in sharing textual and other editorial information also in editions intended for the general audience.

References

(a) The M.A. theses cited (all completed in the Department of English, University of Turku)

Ahvensalmi Juulia 2007. Her onginp seo boc: *On the Loss and Retention of Grammatical Gender in Early Middle English*.

Bergholm Anneli 2008. *The Form and Formulas in Fifteenth Century English Personal Letters: A Study Based on a Selection of Cely, Paston, and Stonor letters (ca. 1470-1490)*.

Ervasti Eeva-Riitta 2002. *Female Monasticism in Early Anglo-Saxon England with Special Reference to the Old English Translation of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*.

- Helola Taika 2003. *The Lost Sun: The Significance of the Copernican Revolution to the Signification of the Sun in the Poetry of John Donne.*
- Koski Eija 2002. *Impoliteness in an Example of Early Conflict Talk: A Study of Heroic Flyting in Beowulf (II.499-606).*
- Leppälahti Kaarina 2003. *"Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde": English Sources for the Study of Medieval Clothes.*
- Marin Tomi 2008. *Case in English? The Status of the Possessive.*
- Mäkinen Susanna 2008. *Generic Features of Eighteenth Century American Runaway Slave Advertisements.*
- Riipinen Reima 2008. *Simple Negation in The Spectator: An Examination of Do-less Negation in a Set of Eighteenth Century Texts.*
- Riski Elisa 2001. *The Devil and his Servants: The Witches and their Relationship with the Devil in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692.*
- Salmi Hanna 2008. *Language of Immediacy and Turn-Taking in The Owl and the Nightingale: Bo wel stille & lust nu to me!*
- Salminen Jaakko Henrik 2008. *"So, who is my reader?": Intentions, Audiences, and Editorial Discourse in Five English Nonspecialist editions of Catullus.*
- Szurawitzki Michael 2002. *Marlowe's Tamburlaine Plays and Machiavelli's The Prince: A Study in Renaissance Intertextuality.*

(b) Other references

- Curzan Anne 2003. *Gender Shifts in the History of English.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fernández Francisco, Fuster Miguel and Calvo Juan José (eds.) 1994. *English Historical Linguistics 1992. Papers from the 7th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics, Valencia 22-26 September 1992.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hiltunen Risto 1996. "Tell me, be you a witch?" Questions in the Salem witchcraft trials of 1696. *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 9 (25): 17-37.
- Hogg Richard 1994. Linguistics, philology, chickens and eggs. In Fernández, Fuster & Calvo (eds.): 3-16.
- Koch Peter and Oesterreicher Wulf 1985. Sprache der Nähe – Sprache der Distanz: Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Spannungsfeld von Sprachtheorie und Sprachgeschichte. *Romanistisches Jahrbuch* 1985: 15-43.
- Lehmann W.P. and Malkiel Yakov (eds.) 1968. *Directions for Historical Linguistics: A Symposium.* Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Lönnroth Harry 2007. *Filologin som Vetenskap: Artiklar om textutgivning och filologisk metod.* Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Milroy James 1992. *Linguistic Variation and Change: On the Historical Sociolinguistics of English.* Oxford: Blackwell.

- Morpurgo Davies Anna 1998. *Nineteenth-Century Linguistics* (History of Linguistics 4). London: Longman.
- Peikola Matti 2000. *Congregation of the Elect: Patterns of Self-Fashioning in English Lollard Writings* (Anglicana Turkuensia 21). Turku: University of Turku.
- Skaffari Janne 2000. *Early Middle English Loanwords: A Study of Language Contact and Lexical Borrowing*. Unpublished Licentiate thesis. Turku: University of Turku.
- Schillingsburg Peter L. 1996. *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age: Theory and Practise* (3rd edition). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Stillinger Jack. 1994. *Coleridge and Textual Instability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weinreich Uriel, Labov William and Herzog Marvin I. 1968. Empirical foundations for a theory of language change. In Lehmann & Malkiel (eds.): 95-195.
- Wenzel Siegfried 1990. Reflections on (new) philology. *Speculum* 65: 11-18.

Grammatical Gender in Anaphoric References in Early Middle English

Juulia Ahvensalmi

Abstract

This paper examines the loss and retention of grammatical gender in Early Middle English as it shows through anaphoric pronouns. It is based on my MA thesis (Ahvensalmi 2007) in which I examined the loss and retention of grammatical gender in Early Middle English. The changes in the grammatical system between Old and Middle English were substantial. There are various theories proposing reasons for the loss of grammatical gender. The gender loss showed in the anaphoric pronouns referring to human animate beings already in Late Old English, but traces of grammatical gender persisted in anaphoric constructions also after the loss was complete in the nominal and demonstrative forms.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the development of grammatical and natural gender in anaphoric pronouns in Early Middle English (EME). It is based on my MA thesis (Ahvensalmi 2007) Old English (OE) had a grammatical gender system, whereby nouns were divided into three classes: feminine, masculine and neuter, much like in present day German. In addition to the nominal endings, grammatical gender was visible in adjectives, demonstrative pronouns, possessives, determiners and numerals. In Early Middle English (traditionally c. 1066 – c.1250) this distinction was lost. In this paper, I intend to examine the changes as they appear in the anaphoric pronouns, that is, pronouns referring back to the antecedent noun (e.g. *Jane loves her cat*). There are various reasons for choosing this particular point of view. On one hand, the breakdown of the grammatical gender system was already visible in the anaphoric pronouns of Old English, where nouns referring to human beings were sometimes referred to with pronouns consistent with their natural, rather than grammatical, gender. For instance, some of the nouns meaning 'woman' were not grammatically feminine (e.g. *wif* was neuter, and *wifmann* masculine), although the 'real world' referent, a woman, was always feminine. On the other hand, anaphoric pronouns also preserved the system after traces of grammatical gender had disappeared in the suffixes and in the determiners. This is particularly the case with non-animate referents. The next section will discuss the development and changes in the system of grammatical gender in Old and Middle English.

2. On grammatical gender

Grammatical gender, as defined by Fodor (1959), is based on syntactic congruence of sentence elements (Fodor 1959: 2, 8). Grammatical gender can be defined using various

criteria, including semantic as well as morphological and phonological. Thus, the system of grammatical gender can be perceived as a continuum between grammatical and semantic agreement. In Present Day English (PDE), third person pronouns have a three-way distinction between the feminine *she*, masculine *he* and *it*. Essentially these pronouns differentiate between female and male beings (particularly human) and 'sexless' beings, or animate (female/male) and inanimate, but no gender distinctions are made otherwise in the nominal forms (except for suffixes such as *-ess*, e.g. *waitress*) or in the forms of modifiers. The few instances where grammatical gender could be said to survive in PDE are, for instance, anaphoric references to nouns such as 'ship', which is still sometimes referred to as 'she' today. Nevertheless, grammatical gender is not, essentially, part of English grammar today.

One of the problems in discussing grammatical gender is the vagueness of terminology and the general fuzziness of categories (Curzan 2003: 202, Millar 2000: 35). There are various explanations and theories concerning the nature of the grammatical changes in this period. Essentially, while Old English (OE) had a full grammatical gender system, by the end of the Middle English (ME) period it had been lost. If the system is thought to have switched from *grammatical* to *natural* gender, the semantic motivations need to be taken into account in explaining the shift. Gender and sex as social and cultural constructions influence the perceptions of gender as a grammatical category.

The OE grammatical gender system is generally assumed to be at least partially motivated by semantic considerations. Apart from a few exceptions, nouns designating human animate beings adhered to the natural sex/gender of the referent. Some traditionally quoted examples of these exceptions are masculine or neuter nouns representing female referents; *wifmann* 'woman' (OE masc.), *wif* 'woman, wife' (OE neut.), *mægden* 'maiden' (OE neut.). Particularly towards the end of the OE period, the human animate nouns begin to show natural rather than grammatical gender; instead of *se wifman* (masc.), we find *seo wifman* with the feminine article, and instead of *þe wiifa* (neut.), *seo ærest wiifa* (Mitchell 1985: 35). The gender of the referent is particularly evident in anaphora, and these exceptions sometimes tended to take anaphoric pronouns according to their natural, not grammatical, gender already in OE (Curzan 2003: 62, 92). Thus it would have been natural to extend this system of reference to cover inanimate nouns as well so that nouns which were male in the 'real' world would take masculine pronouns, females feminine and all other nouns, particularly inanimates, neuter. If the anaphoric pronouns governing the antecedent nouns or noun phrases are regarded as representing grammatical agreement, it could be argued that even languages such as Modern English, in which the only remnants of a grammatical gender system show in the personal pronouns, have a gender system (Curzan 2003: 95, Corbett 1991: 5).

The difference in the surface manifestations of grammatical gender in Old and Early Middle English can be divided to noun-phrase internal (nouns, relative pronouns, adjectives, demonstrative pronouns, possessives, articles, numerals) and noun-phrase

external (agreement between nouns and verbs and anaphoric pronouns). Some scholars have suggested that the pronominal system (in particular, anaphora and deixis) would have sufficed to support the system of grammatical gender, even when the gender-specific morphology had ceased to mark the differences (Classen 1919: 140-141). As the phonological developments shaped the morphological endings by making them less distinctive, confusion over the gender marking was inevitable. While the nominal and adnominal forms in Old English inflected according to gender, case and number, the phonological changes erased these distinctions. The sound changes (particularly the "Germanic stress rule", the shifting of stress towards initial syllables) levelled the vowels in unstressed syllables to a uniform (written) *-e*, thereby shaping the nominal forms and causing a gradual erosion of the endings, especially with the disappearance of the final unstressed nasal (Moore 1928: 239-240, Curzan 2003: 43).

Even without distinctive nominal and adjectival forms, the grammatical gender system could have been maintained through demonstratives and anaphora at least for a short while. The demonstratives, however, lacked the immediate gender reference in form, unlike the pronouns, and the demonstrative paradigm fell together, that is, the demonstratives became ambiguous in form and *þe* came to be used for both masculine and feminine as well as neuter referents (Millar 2000: 206). It has been argued that grammatical gender in pronouns could hold the system only as long as the gender distinction was maintained in the determiners. With the loss of the *se/seo* distinction, the use of gender-indeterminate forms would also have been generalised to the personal pronouns (Heltveit 1958, according to Mitchell 1985: 37). Some of the forms which, on the surface, might be interpreted as representing the survival of grammatical gender might, on closer examination, turn out to be examples of more complex emerging syntactic or semantic patterns. It has been suggested that this fundamental ambiguity in the form, as well as in the function, was what caused the system to break down (Millar 2000: 26). This functional reanalysis, whereby some of the inflectional endings came to mark case across gender, could have led to a reinterpretation of the inherited forms. Thus gender congruence became a secondary consideration to speakers, when the forms were reinterpreted as case, rather than gender, markers (Jones 1988: 18, Millar 2000, Markus 1988: 242).

Therefore, only the pronominal system was left to support the gender system. It has, however, been shown that the personal pronouns cannot maintain the system on their own, without support in the noun phrase (Howe 1996: 63). Nevertheless, anaphoric pronouns provided a means for showing the intended gender of the antecedent noun after grammatical gender had ceased to be marked in the NP. There are various reasons for this, which I will examine in this article.

2.1. Material

The data from which the examples quoted in this paper are taken consisted of two versions of the *Life of Margaret* (MSS Cambridge Corpus Christi College 303 and Oxford Bodleian Library Bodley 34) as well as a collection of medical recipes, *Peri Didaxeon* (MS British Library Harley 6258b, hereafter *PD*) from c.1200. MS Cambridge Corpus Christi College 303 (hereafter *C303*) dates from mid-twelfth century; the later version, MS Bodley 34 (*B34*) is part of the Katherine-group texts and dates from c.1225.

The reason for choosing these particular texts is that they represent various stages in the transition period from Old to Middle English. The time span of the texts covers the period often characterised as the transitional period between Old and Middle English. This offers an opportunity for diachronic comparison. At the same time, the divergent nature of the texts allows for a comparison of the differences between two genres, namely hagiography and medical or scientific writing. The *Life of Margaret* in *C303* is thought to date from the twelfth century, although it derives from an earlier source or sources (Clayton and Magennis 1994: 106, 70-71). The language is predominantly West Saxon, and quite conservative. The version in *B34* derives from a different source or sources, and is also linguistically divergent from the *C303* version. The language is a standardised form of the West Midlands dialect, part of the so-called AB-language group to which *Ancrene Wisse* also belongs. The date of *PD* is debated, and although it linguistically conforms largely to Late West Saxon, there is considerable confusion in the forms, and it is debated whether the language should be classified as Old or Middle English (see Ker 1957: xix, Voigts 1979: 251, de Vriend 1984: xxx).

3. Anaphoric pronouns

Cornish (1999: 21) defines anaphora as fundamentally a discourse phenomenon. The anaphoric pronoun refers to an antecedent noun or noun phrase with which it agrees. This can be said to constitute a form of grammatical agreement; and the concord between an anaphoric pronoun and its antecedent can form the basis of a grammatical gender system. This 'pronominal gender system' (such as the one in PDE) is, however, not universally accepted (Corbett 1991: 5). The problem with discussing anaphora is, on one hand, the vagueness of the terminology (e.g. the distinction between anaphora and deixis is somewhat vague) and, on the other, the vagueness and complexity of anaphoric references themselves.

The breakdown of the grammatical gender system was initially manifested in the anaphoric pronouns already in the Late Old English period (see Jones 1988: 10, Curzan 2003: 84, 86), while the gender system was preserved slightly longer in the anaphoric references than in the nominal forms or the forms of the modifiers, and the agreement can still be seen in some conservative texts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (such as *Ayenbite of Inwyrt*) (Curzan 2003: 124, 126, Platzer 2001: 41). Therefore, anaphora proves to be simultaneously both innovative and conservative.

Moore (1921) claims that there was 98% natural gender agreement in the Old English anaphoric references (Moore 1921: 90). This, however, has been shown to be inaccurate (see Heltveit 1958: 357-369, according to Mitchell 1985: 36). Firstly, the selection of texts will affect the results. While some texts will have high gender agreement, other texts will exhibit more varying patterns. In *Peri Didaxeon*, for instance, the grammatical gender concord in anaphora for feminine nouns is 63.6%, for masculine nouns 73.3% and for neuter nouns 93.3%. This text, however, contains very few references to human animate nouns, whereas the saints' lives, which contain a far larger number of references to human animates, also have a higher degree of natural gender agreement. Counting exact statistics for anaphoric references is also problematic, since the references often are vague and general, which can make determining the reference accurately difficult.

	Fem.	Masc.	Neut.	Pl.
Nom.	heo, hio	he	hit	hie, hi
Acc.	hie, hi	hine	hit	hie, hi
Gen.	hire	his	his	hira, hiera, heora, hiora
Dat.	hire	him	him	him, heom

Table One. *The Old English third person pronominal system.*
(according to Mitchell and Robinson 2002: 18)

As can be seen in Table One, the forms of the third person pronouns overlap to a certain extent. The changes in the OE pronominal system further contributed to the variation, as the *hine/him* distinction was lost with the merging of the dative and accusative in most dialects into a general object-case (*him*) (Lass 1992: 118). In addition to the loss of distinction in the case markers, the personal pronouns also indicate confusion in the gender attribution, as *his* and *him* could both be interpreted as neuter as well as masculine, and *hi/hio/hire* could, in many dialects, stand for both the plural nominative/accusative and the singular feminine accusative. Thus numerical concord also shows signs of blurring. Like the nominal forms, the feminine forms of the personal pronouns are more distinctive than the masculine and neuter forms which tend to overlap. The ambiguous syntactic structures may also affect the interpretation. Thus, the analysis of the pronominal anaphoric references proves, in many cases, ambiguous.

The OE determiners *se(o)* and *þe* (which, in ME had been reduced to *þe*) could also be used anaphorically. *Se*, for instance, in C303 is used as a relative pronoun to refer to masculine nouns denoting human males (1). As a general reference, *hit* is used; the gender of the noun is irrelevant, and the anaphoric reference is used similarly to PDE (2).

- (1) *Theodosius dohtor se gehersumode þan deofle* (C303 262: 21) ‘the daughter of Theodosius, who worshipped the devil’.
- (2) *for min Drihten hit wat þæt Ic hit unwillende do þæt Ic æfre þas dæda gefremme* (C303 270: 249) ‘for my Lord knows it that I do that (more) unwillingly (than) any of the deeds I have performed’.

There are also ahistorical congruencies and even the same nouns may take conflicting grammatical references. For instance, *adle* ‘sickness’ (OE fem.) is referred to with the neuter *hyt* ‘it’, although otherwise the noun regularly takes feminine grammatical inflections and modifiers (*þeos ædle* .. *hyt* [PD 126: 94a]; *of yfelre adle* [PD 141: 98a], *þeo ylca adle* [PD86: 85a]). Similarly, *wæta* ‘fluid, sap’ (OE masc.; also *wæte*, OE fem.) is referred to with the neuter pronoun (*se wyrsta wæte* [PD 104: 88b]/ *þe yfela wæte* ... *hyt* [PD 120: 92b]). Feminine anaphoric reference to *tunge* ‘tongue’ (OE fem.) in B34 can be considered to be a genuine reflection of grammatical gender. Otherwise, gendered pronouns are mostly used for animate (often human) nouns, which can be identified as either of female (*heo/hio/hire* for *moder* ‘mother’) or male sex (*he/his* for *deofol* ‘devil’ etc.). Inanimate nouns are in most cases referred to as *hit* ‘it’, with some notable exceptions.

- (3) *ant lahte ut his tunge, se long þet he swong hire abuten his swire* (B34 58: 16-17) ‘and (he) thrust out his tongue, so long that he could swing it (her) around his neck’.

The distance from the antecedent noun also appears to have an effect; the farther the pronoun is from the antecedent, the more likely it is to follow the semantic, or ‘natural’, gender of the referent, rather than the grammatical one (Corbett 1991: 243). The importance of the distance between the anaphoric pronoun and the antecedent noun has frequently been discussed and “assumed but not proven” (Curzan 2003: 98-99, 127-128). In addition, the textual context, such as the proximity of other nouns whose gender assignment could influence the choice of the pronoun, could have an effect on the gender (Mausch 1986: 99).

To illustrate some of the confusion in the anaphoric references, in *Peri Didaxeon*, the grammatical subject is often omitted and left for the reader to infer from the context. In these cases, I referred to the translation by Cockayne ([1866] 1961) and used this as a guideline. The distinction between singular and plural is particularly problematic, as many instances could be interpreted as either. This is especially true of borrowed Latin terms which, if they take inflections, quite regularly use the weak declension. Thus, in many cases, there is no distinction between singular and plural either in the form of the noun or in the form of the pronoun. Some of the complications are illustrated in example (4).

- (4) *nim myrta & leȝe hy on huniȝe & nym þanne ða myrta & leȝe to ðan eaȝean þ þa eaȝen to ðinden & nim þanne rudan & cnuca hy & menȝ axan to & leȝe syðþan (MS syðþan) to þan eaȝen þanne ærest byt heo swyle þa brewas & after þan heo hyt ȝlewlyce ȝehæld* (PD 98: 87b) 'take myrtle berries and lay them in honey, and then take the myrtle berries and lay them to the eyes, that the eyes may swell; and then take rue and pound it, and mingle ashes therewith, and then lay them to the eyes, then first it biteth them; swill the eyelids; and after that it cleverly healeth them'.

Myrta 'myrtle' (Gr., via Lat.; not attested in OE according to Old English Dictionary) is treated as a plural ('myrtle berries'); the pronoun is *hy* ('it'). Similarly, *Rudan* 'rue' (OE fem. < Lat. *ruta*) likewise takes the pronoun *hy* (which could be either singular feminine or plural). *Heo* refers to *þan eaȝen* 'the eyes'. The next part, *after þan heo hyt ȝlewlyce ȝehæld* is translated as 'after that it cleverly healeth them'. *Heo* could also be taken to refer to the mixture of rue and ashes applied to the eyes (and interpreted either as a feminine singular or plural), and *hyt* 'it' to the beginning of the recipe; *þis sceal wið eaȝen tyddernyssa* (OE fem.) 'this is for tenderness of eyes' (Cockayne: 'this shall be for tendernesses for eyes', which agrees with the plural *heo*). *Hyt* is also frequently used as the formal (expletive) subject in all of the texts (similarly to PDE, e.g. *hyt pricaþ innan þa sculdru* 'there are prickings in the shoulders') or as a general reference, e.g. *hyt eall* 'all of it'. Thus many of the forms can only be inferred from the context or from the verb form; while this is possible in many cases, it is often a matter of interpretation, and absolute certainty is not possible.

Multiple-gender and plural antecedent nouns were more likely to take on neuter pronouns, while feminine inanimate nouns had the highest percentage of grammatical gender agreement (see Curzan 2003: 73). There are no clear tendencies for masculine or neuter nouns to assume any grammatical properties of the feminine, either in the nominal form or in the determiners although there are some exceptions in PD. In anaphoric constructions, feminine pronouns are more prevalent, although this is partly because the neuter and masculine forms tend to overlap. This *anaphoric feminisation* (Curzan 2003: 109-110) is particularly prevalent with regard to *personification*, which should be treated as a separate phenomenon from grammatical gender albeit a connected feature.

The nominal forms can be said to show masculinisation tendencies in adopting patterns and forms associated with the strong masculine category in OE (such as the extension of the ending *-es*). The anaphoric references to inanimate nouns, however, show more tendencies to take neuter pronouns, and there is evidence that neuter was becoming the default gender in Late Old English anaphoric pronouns (Curzan 2003: 92), while animate (particularly human) beings are referred to with pronouns agreeing with the natural gender of the antecedent noun. Clark (1957) observes that while the

Peterborough Chronicle shows masculinisation in the forms, the *Lindisfarne Gospels* use neuter rather than masculine as the default category (Clark 1957: 113).

3.1. Anaphoric references in different lexical subsets

Although the subject matter here is grammatical gender in anaphora, that is, outside of the noun phrase, it cannot obviously be separated from the developments within the noun phrase, since the anaphoric pronouns are, by definition, connected to their antecedents. Therefore, this section will discuss some lexical subsets and the ways in which anaphoric pronouns function in these different contexts.

3.1.1. Human animate nouns

For the purposes of this chapter, 'animate', rather than referring to all animate beings, is specifically used to denote nouns referring to human animates, thus excluding, for example, animals from this classification. Therefore, when talking of 'natural' gender, reference is made to this particular class of animate beings, following the male/female distinction (cf. Platzer 2001: 36).

There are differences between animate and inanimate nouns, and some scholars would argue that the semantic feature [+animacy] was indeed the deciding factor in the development of the grammatical gender system in English (Platzer 2001, Markus 1995). As noted in the introduction, many human animate nouns were already likely to appear with natural gender anaphoric references in OE. Platzer (2001), however, notes that only 10 per cent of the human animate nouns had, in fact, a contrary sex/gender assignment; in other words, human animate nouns tended to conform to natural sex even in the early period (Platzer 2001: 38, cf. also Jones 1988: 4-6).

The system could also be said to have gradually moved towards simpler classifications, where the semantic feature animacy [+animate], [+inanimate] had a growing role in determining the grammatical properties of the nouns (Markus 1995). Thus, extra-linguistic reference could be said to have already become the primary consideration with regard to human animate nouns already in OE; there were, however, differences between animate and non-animate nouns (Platzer 2001: 41).

The anaphoric pronouns referring to human animate nouns conform to natural gender assignment in most of the texts from this period. While the gender concord in anaphora for inanimate nouns in *Peri Didaxeon* largely corresponds to OE patterns, this is not as clear-cut in the saints' lives. C303, for instance, contains only few anaphoric references from which the grammatical gender of the inanimate referent could be determined; in this respect B34 offers more scope for investigation.

While the animate (particularly human) subjects take gendered pronouns solely on the basis of the natural gender of the referent, even when it clashes with the grammatical gender of the noun (e.g. *þis meiden .. ha .. hire* 'this maiden .. she ... her' (B34 46: 1-5, 84: 4-5), *meiden*, OE neut.), the inanimate nouns show more variation. Nevertheless, the neuter

pronoun is clearly prevalent, and the majority of inanimate nouns use the neuter or gender-unspecific pronoun (e.g. *mi meidhad .. hit* 'my virginity .. it' (B34 48: 2-4), OE masc.; *hire liflade .. hit* 'her (course of) life' (B23 82: 31-32), OE fem.). *Unwiht* 'evil spirit, devil' (OE *wiht* 'person, creature, being', fem./neut.) is referred to with the pronouns *hit/his* (example 5), although *him* is also used (B34 48: 4). The extension of 'natural' gender to inanimate antecedent nouns seems to have coincided with and strengthened the distinction between inanimate and animate (Curzan 2003: 92, 112; Markus 1995).

- (5) *an unsehen unwiht ... se grislich, se ladlich, þet ne mahte hit na mon redliche areachen, ant his twa honden to his curnede cneon heteueste ibunnden* (B34 60: 27-29) 'a different devil .. so grisly, so loathsome, that no one could easily find words to describe it, with both his hands tightly bound to his gnarled knees'.

As can be seen from the following examples from C303, the forms *hio/heo* and *hi* are used interchangeably to designate both third person singular feminine ('she, her') and third person plural ('they') in both nominative and accusative cases. The distinction, however, may usually be inferred from the context or from the forms of the antecedent noun and the verb. In example (8) the antecedent noun for the pronoun *heo* is syntactically ambiguous; the translation by Treharne (2000) does not clarify the structure much, and *heo* could as well be interpreted as a mistake (by the scribe or by the editor) for the earlier *he* referring to *Drihten*, 'Lord'.

- (6) *þonne hio ungebletsodon wæren* (C303 268: 172) 'when they were unblest'.

- (7) *Hio hy sona seneda þa hio uteode and me þær forworhte men of Antiochia þære burh gesamnoden þæt hi þa fæmne geseon woldan And hi þa andswera ageaf* (C303 193-196) 'She soon blessed herself as she was led out and the sinful people of Antiochia gathered together so that they could see the woman ... And she gave the answer'.

- (8) '*Ic eom geara,*' *cwæð hi,* 'on *Drihten to geleafanne þe gesceop heofonas and eorðan; and he sæ bedraf þær þe heo wrohtað dægges and nihtes*' (C303 264: 71-72) "'I am ready," she said, "to believe in the Lord who made heaven and earth and surrounded it by sea there, who made day and night"'.

The animate nouns in C303 are, in the majority of cases, referred to with a naturally gendered pronoun rather than a grammatically gendered one. By and large, however, the grammatical and natural gender of these nouns coincide. For instance, *seo fæmne* 'woman', OE fem., is used consistently instead of, for example, *wif* (OE neut.) or *wifmann* (OE masc.); this might be a conscious choice made by the scribe. The only possible clashes

occur with *mæden* 'maiden' (OE neut.), which is referred to with the feminine rather than with the neuter pronoun, and (*mæden*)*cild* '(female) child' (OE neut.)

In a scene about Margaret's childhood in C303, *mædencild* (OE neut.) is referred to as *hit/him* until the child is baptised; after that the pronoun becomes *hi* 'she' even when the antecedent noun is *mæden* 'maiden' (OE neut.). This is the only occasion in C303 when the natural gender concord prevails over the grammatical one. After this, *mæden*, when used, is referred to with *hi*.

- (9) *Hit gewearð swa þæt heo bearn gestreonedon and þæt wearð geboren mædencild; and se hæþene cing his fæder hit het ut aweorpan ... se Godes þeowe Theochimus gefand þæt cild and he hit up anam .. he him nama gesette and þæt wæs Margareta. And hi syððan to lare befæste* (C303 262: 8-12) 'It happened that she bore a child who was born a girl; and the heathen king (who was) (the child's) father let throw (the child) out ... God's servant Theochimus found the child and took it (her) up ... he gave it (her) a name and that was Margaret. And from then on, she was to be educated'.

The majority of anaphoric references in C303 are to animate antecedents. These, too, are limited in scope; the feminine pronouns refer to *Margaret*, (*seo*) *fæmne* '(the) woman', *mæden* 'maiden', *fostermoder* 'foster-mother' and *cwen* 'queen'. The masculine pronouns refer to antecedent nouns such as (*se*) *gerefa* '(the) reeve', *God*, *Crist*, *deofol* 'devil', *broþor* 'brother'. *Engel* (OE masc. < Lat. *angelus*, masc.) is referred to with the masculine pronoun; in B34 the noun only appears in plural nominative and genitive (*engles*, *englene*); the pronoun is *ha*.

3.1.2. Resilient nouns

The so-called *resilient nouns* present a different case from animate nouns, which were likely to agree with natural gender already in Old English. These were nouns which were more likely to retain their grammatical gender later in the period when the grammatical gender markers had largely disappeared from the language as a whole. Representing a semantic category, these nouns are difficult to classify or define in a precise manner (Curzan 2003: 29). This lexical subset is closely connected with *personification*, although not defined by it. Curzan (2003) observes that resilient nouns do not seem to be affected by distance between the antecedent noun and the anaphoric pronoun. The category includes terrestrial entities such as *eorðe* 'earth' (OE fem.), *woruld* 'world' (OE fem.), *burg* 'city' (OE fem.); celestial bodies such as *sunne* 'sun' (OE fem.), *mona* 'moon' (OE masc.) as well as temporal phenomena. It can also be argued that frequency, rather than semantic criteria formed the basis for this class of nouns (Curzan 2003: 102); there are, however, common nouns that do not conform to this pattern, and instead show considerable variety in their anaphoric references. One example is the noun *hand* which shows

significant variation in the nominal form as well as in the forms of the modifiers and in anaphora.

It seems that most of the resilient nouns were feminine and that feminine referents prove to have been more resilient than masculine ones (Curzan 2003: 100). Rather than preserving gender-specific inflections or modifiers, the gender of these nouns tends to show in the anaphoric references. Some nouns such as *sun* (OE fem.), *moon* (OE masc.) and *star* (OE masc.) retain their original OE gender assignment until the 14th century although, as Mustanoja notes, this might be due to OE or classical literary tradition rather than a retention of grammatical gender (Mustanoja 1960: 46). This can be seen in example (10), where *sunne* is referred to with a feminine pronoun.

(10) *þe sunne .. hire rune* (B34 58: 37) 'the sun .. its (her) course'.

The retention of grammatical gender here can also be seen as an example of *personification*, which will be discussed next.

3.1.3. Personification

Distinguishing genuine reflections of grammatical gender from personification can be difficult. Personification is a literary device and does not (necessarily) represent grammatical patterns; thus its occurrence in literary settings, such as the saints' lives, but not in the more factual texts is natural.

Personification may explain some cases where the grammatical gender appears to survive. It is more likely to be visible in anaphoric constructions than in the forms of the noun or its determiners, as personification entails (although not necessarily) differing from the grammatical features. An example from B34 is *sawle* 'soul' (OE fem.), which is referred to as *hire* on two occasions [examples (11) and (12)]; the definite article used is *þe* [example (13)]. Similarly, the feminine pronoun is used for *sawle* in C303 [*þa sawla .. heo*; example (14)]; this is, in fact, one of the few instances in C303 where an inanimate antecedent noun is referred anaphorically with a personal pronoun. Since *sawle* in OE is feminine, distinguishing between grammatical usage and personification, which is rather a literary device, can be problematic. Again, the intended gender of the noun is most often revealed in the form of the anaphoric pronoun.

(11) *mi sawle .. heouen hire into heouene* (B34 54: 7-8) 'my soul ... raise it (her) to heaven'.

(12) *mi sawle .. nabbe Ich bute hire ane* (B34 54: 18-19) 'my soul... I have nothing but it (her)'.

(13) *þe engles, as ha beren þe sawle in hare bearmes* (B34 82: 18) 'the angels, carrying the soul in their arms'.

- (14) *ures Drihtnes ænglæs þider comen and þa sawla underfengon, and heo on heofone rice gebrohton* (C303 270: 259-260) 'the angels of our Lord came there to receive the soul and brought it to the kingdom of heaven'.

Personification does not, however, always show in the grammatical features. An example of this can be seen in Margaret's reference to her 'beautiful virginity' (*min mægþhad fægre*). Virginity (*mægþhad*, OE masc.) was often portrayed as feminine, as were other virtues, in Latin and through that, English literature. In B34, virginity is referred to as 'queen' and 'flower', and it is also characterised as a 'jewel' (*3imstan*, OE masc.); the determiners and anaphoric pronouns used are *þe* and *hit*.

- (15) *þu chure meiðhad, þe of alle mihtes is cwen* (B34 76: 24-25) 'you chose virginity, which is the queen of all virtues' (*meiðhad*, OE masc.; *mihte*, OE fem.; *cwen*, OE fem.).
- (16) *Ich habbe a deore 3imstan ... mi meiðhad I mene, blostme brihtest* (B34 48: 1-3) 'I have a precious jewel ... my virginity, I mean, the brightest of all flowers'.

In the above examples, a feminine anaphoric pronoun is used for nouns with OE feminine gender. As can be seen below, there are also examples of masculine nouns used with a feminine pronoun or a feminine referent, in a context where it is clearly a case of personification rather than a misplaced attempt to save grammatical gender.

- (17) *com a culure beorinde, se briht as þah ha bearnde, a guldene crune, ant sette hire o þet seli meidenes heued* (B34 76: 15-16) 'a dove came carrying a golden crown which was so bright it (she) burned, and set it (her) on the head of the blessed maiden'.
- (18) *come a culure of heouene, se briht as þah ha bearnde, wið a rode* (B34 78: 31-32) 'a heavenly dove came, as bright as if it burned, with a cross'.

In the first example (17), the personal pronoun *ha* 'she' is more likely to refer to *crune* 'crown' (OE *corona*, masc. < Lat. *corona*) than the preceding noun *culure* 'dove' (OE fem.); in the next example, however, which appears some paragraphs later, a similar construction, possibly affected by the preceding paragraph, occurs with the noun *rode* 'cross' (OE fem.) (18). This can also be seen as an example, where the textual context (i.e. the proximity of nouns conforming to another pattern) could influence the choice of the pronoun.

4. Reasons for the loss of gender

There are a variety of theories describing and explaining the reasons for the loss of grammatical gender in Early Middle English. Some focus on explaining how the change occurred, whilst others propose different reasons as to why the changes happened. By combining language-internal and language-external explanations, it is possible to arrive at more complete explanations behind the changes.

The phonological changes and the levelling of the final endings contributed to the loss of grammatical gender, but mere phonological erosion does not explain how case and gender as concordal categories disappeared (Mustanoja 1960: 43; Lass 1992: 105). The extralinguistic explanations emphasise the sociohistorical circumstances in addition to the purely intralinguistic factors, as linguistic developments can be seen reflecting social and cultural developments, not as separate processes. Sociolinguistic explanations take contact with Norse, French and Latin into account, while in more technical explanations the shift is often explained as a direct result of the simplification of the inflectional system and the loss of inflectional endings.

4.1. Phonological changes

The sound changes (cf. the "Germanic stress rule", the shifting of stress towards initial syllables) levelled the vowels in unstressed syllables, shaping the nominal forms and causing gradual erosion in the endings (see Curzan 2003: 43). Moore (1928) has described the phonological changes in this period and argues that "the rapid and extensive morphological development ... between 1050 and 1300 was the result of a highly complex cooperation of sound changes, syntactic changes and analogical changes" (Moore 1928: 238). The changes, the beginnings of which can already be seen in the eleventh century texts and continuing until the twelfth century included the levelling of unstressed vowels to a uniform (written) *-e* and the disappearance of the final unstressed nasal (Moore 1928: 239-240). The inflections were gradually levelled to a uniform *-e*, which became generalised as the standard nominal and adjectival ending. The processes whereby the morphological forms of the endings were shaped were probably largely simultaneous (Moore 1928: 242). This levelling can be evidenced from the data at various points; for instance, the plural dative *-um* ending has become largely marginalised, and often levelled to *-en*. Moore states that the "apparent stability" of the word-final *-m* (e.g. *of his naspyrlum* [C303 125]; *wið tobrocenum heafod* [PD 86: 85a]) is a graphic phenomenon which no longer carries grammatical meaning (Moore 1928: 243). This is supported by the fact that, for instance, *wið tobrocenum heafod* 'for a broken head' appears in the previous line as *wið tobrocene heafod* (PD 86: 85a). The stress on the phonological system was under affected not only the nominal (and adjectival) morphological endings, but also in the forms of the demonstratives, thereby causing what Millar calls *ambiguity in form* (Millar 2000: 206); the different demonstratives became phonologically increasingly similar, until a full merger was inevitable.

4.2. Language contact

Language contact is one of the most widely discussed issues relating to the loss of grammatical gender in EME. On one side, there had been ongoing contact with Old Norse since the eighth century, and in 1066 the Norman Conquest brought Old/Norman French into close contact with English. In addition, Latin also had an impact as the *lingua franca* and *lingua ecclesiastica*. Nevertheless there was continuity in the use of the vernacular throughout the period. The Norman Conquest did not cause a complete disruption in the use of English, and while Latin as the language of the church continued to influence particularly the written usage during this period, its influence was largely confined to the clergy who were literate in Latin. There are widely divergent opinions on the extent of the impact language change had, and also on which of the languages had the strongest impact.

A Middle English creole or creoloid has also been argued to have developed either based on French (e.g. Bailey and Maroldt 1977) or on Scandinavian (e.g. Poussa 1982). These theories would argue for a stronger interference on both the lexical and structural level in the substratum language, OE or Anglo-Saxon. Similarly, there was the influence of dialect contact, i.e. the differences between dialects, as well as the OE and Latin literary tradition.

4.3. Synchronic and diachronic variation

Despite some continuity throughout the EME period, the Norman Conquest of 1066 must have disrupted the vernacular textual practices. Although there are surviving texts from the eleventh and twelfth centuries (such as the two texts in the data, C303 and PD), the number of written texts is far smaller than from the preceding or following periods, and the texts from early thirteenth century (such as B34) show a language form quite far removed from that of surviving OE texts. Therefore, even if there was little or no disruption in the spoken vernacular of that period, the textual transmission must have been disturbed to some extent. Assuming that C303 and PD are copies of earlier texts, the language was sufficiently similar for the scribes to understand, but probably not similar enough to their own language (dialect or idiolect) for them to copy all the forms faithfully; instead, their own use of language may be seen in the forms deviating from the LWS standard. A reference in B34 to *ald englis as ure ledene* 'our language' (B34 82: 33-34) could be taken as evidence of that tradition; but the adjective *ald* could also be interpreted to signify distance from that form of language.

The texts from this transitional period show a variety of usages. In the data used for the thesis, the most conservative of the texts is the *Life of St. Margaret* in C303, dating from early or mid-twelfth century which, by and large, conforms to the standard LOE usages, showing nearly complete grammatical gender agreement in anaphoric pronouns. The nominal inflections and demonstratives show more confusion concerning grammatical gender. The language, however, is likely to be deliberately archaic. *Peri Didaxeon*, a

medical text dated to mid/late twelfth century (and thus, possibly only a few decades later than C303) shows considerably more varied usage. It is nevertheless quite conservative with regard to anaphora, particularly for a scientific text, although variation in the nominal forms as well as in the forms of the modifiers is substantial. The *Life of St. Margaret* in MS Bodley 34, dating from the mid-thirteenth century, is, not unexpectedly, the least conservative of the texts.

A corpus study carried out by Curzan (2003) suggested varying patterns for the different dialectal areas. The East Midland texts (*Ormulum*, *Trinity Homilies*, *Peterborough Chronicle* and *Vices and Virtues*) generally showed the highest frequency of natural gender agreement in the anaphoric pronouns whereas the southern texts (*Bodley Homilies*, *History of the Holy Rood-Tree* and *Peri Didaxeon*) were considerably more conservative, as was the only Kentish text (*Vespasian Homilies*) studied. The West Midlands (*Ancrene Wisse*, the *Katherine* group) fall into a transitional category as, although natural gender concord prevails in the West Midlands texts, there are still traces of the grammatical gender system. Although *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, a mid-fourteenth century Kentish text, still preserves grammatical gender, the late thirteenth-century *Kentish Sermons* demonstrates the spread of natural gender agreement (Curzan 2003: 122-124). Some of the forms in these texts may be taken to represent dialectal variation; PD is a southern text while B34 is from the West Midlands; C303, while predominantly West Saxon, is suggested to have some Kentish, Anglian and Northumbrian influence (Clayton and Magennis 1994: 104-105). *Vices and Virtues*, though an East Midland text, is more accurately located as deriving from Essex, and is considerably more conservative in this respect than the other East Midland texts, which are generally more innovative.

Stylistic considerations must also be taken into account; to what degree was the use (or the absence) of certain forms a conscious stylistic choice made by the author or the scribe? In OE, partly because of the strong West Saxon literary tradition, and partly because of the grammatical system itself, there were a certain number of collocations; for instance, the feminine dative *þære* could only appear with a limited number of nouns because of the grammatical restrictions (Samuels 1977: 50-53).

4.4. *Genuswechsel* and discourse motivations

While some scholars argue that, primarily due to extensive language contact, the nouns changed their gender (*Genuswechsel*), assuming properties (usually) from either the masculine or neuter categories; this is termed *masculinisation* or *neuterisation*. These explanations, however, presume the preservation of the system and therefore do not explain the subsequent loss. If individual nouns were indeed assuming grammatical properties from another class, it would presuppose that gender categories were still functional, whereas the whole system was, in fact, abandoned. *Genuswechsel* under the influence of the grammatical gender assignment in the donor language also presupposes a sufficient command of that language (particularly Latin/French), whereas the change

could be argued to have originated from below rather than from above through written texts (Millar 2000: 39).

It can also be argued that there was no change in the grammatical gender; gender simply became irrelevant to inflections (Jones 1988: 129). *Genusverlust* - the loss of gender properties (Moore 1921) - was caused by ambiguity which threatened the whole system causing it to compromise (Millar 2000: 40).

Thus it seems that under these pressures, maintaining both a fully working gender system and a case system was not possible (Jones 1988; Samuels 1977: 50). The remaining inflectional endings came to be interpreted as case markers without a gender distinction. However, the confusion in the case marking caused that system to dismantle rapidly as well. Jones (1988) proposes a temporary subsystem, whereby gender marking became irrelevant. This temporary system, however, would have been too unstable to cope with the pressures coming from outside; the external pressure (extensive language contact on one side with Old Norse and on the other side with French) would have caused the system to disintegrate (Millar 2003: 64). With regard to anaphora, in particular, the semantic aspects should be taken into consideration. If grammatical gender is thought to have at least partial semantic basis, then (with other factors affecting the linguistic change) speakers could easily have reinterpreted the rules and extended the so-called natural gender to cover all nouns.

5. Conclusion

Grammatical gender had, by mid-thirteenth century, largely disappeared from English, although some remnants survived until the fourteenth century, and, with regard to anaphora, until the present day. The changes in the pronominal system and the loss of grammatical gender in the (ad)nominal forms led to the restructuring of the system. This change can be thought of and discussed in various terms; and the system is often said to have switched from grammatical to semantic or natural gender. The phonological changes led to the restructuring of the system, and the intermediate stage can be thought of in terms of a temporary subsystem, which eventually led to the present day situation. The anaphoric pronouns continue to distinguish the gender of their antecedents to this day, although the distinction in PDE is primarily between (human) animates and inanimates, and grammatical gender as such is not part of the language any longer. While the anaphoric pronouns were the first to show evidence of this grammatical breakdown, it was also in the pronouns where the distinction persisted after other gender-specific forms had disappeared from the language. The differences seem mainly to be manifested between human animate nouns and non-human/inanimate nouns. Human animate nouns were more likely to conform to natural gender patterns, while other nouns were more likely to take neuter pronouns. There were some exceptions to these general patterns, such as the class of nouns here referred to as 'resilient', as well as nouns which were likely to be personified according to literary traditions. The semantic considerations

seem to have become more important as the system was restructured and reinterpreted; the extralinguistic reference, i.e. to the natural sex of the referent, became the speakers' primary consideration.

References

Primary sources

Clayton Mary and Magennis Hugh 1994. *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

D'Ardenne Simonne Rosalie Thérèse Odile 1977. *The Katherine Group: edited from MS. Bodley 34*. Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres.

de Vriend Hubert Jan (ed.) 1984. *The Old English Herbarium and Medicina de Quadrupedibus*. London: Oxford UP.

Löweneck Max (ed.) 1896. *Peri Didaxeon: Eine von Rezepten in Englischer Sprache aus dem 11/12 Jahrhundert nach einter Handschrift des Britischen Museums*. Erlangen: Junge.

Treharne Elaine (ed.) 2000. *Old and Middle English: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Secondary sources

Ahvensalmi Juulia 2007. *Her onginp seo boc: On the Loss and Retention of Grammatical Gender in Early Middle English*. University of Turku: MA Thesis. Available: <https://oa.doria.fi/handle/10024/43606>

Bailey Charles-James M. and Maroldt Karl 1977. The French lineage of English. In Meisel (ed.): 21-53.

Blake Norman (ed.) 1992. *The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol. 2: 1066-1476*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clark Cecily 1957. Gender in "The Peterborough Chronicle" 1070-1154. *English Studies* 38: 109-115.

Classen Ernest 1919. *Outlines of the History of the English Language*. London: MacMillan.

Cockayne Thomas Oswald (ed.) [1866] 1961. *Lechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England: Being a Collection of Documents, for the Most Part Never Before Printed Illustrating the History of Science in this Country Before the Norman Conquest*. London: Holland Press.

Corbett Grenville 1991. *Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cornish Francis 1999. *Anaphora, Discourse, and Understanding: Evidence from English and French*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Curzan Anne 2003. *Gender Shifts in the History of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fisiak Jacek (ed.) 1995. *Linguistic Change under Contact Conditions*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

- Fodor Ibrahim 1959. The origin of grammatical gender. *Lingua* 8: 1-41 & 186-214.
- Howe Stephen 1996. *The Personal Pronouns in the Germanic Languages: A Study of Personal Pronoun Morphology and Change in the Germanic Languages from the First Records to the Present Day*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Jones Charles 1988. *Grammatical Gender in English: 950 to 1250*. London: Croom Helm.
- Kastovsky Dieter and Bauer Gero (eds.) 1988. *Luick Revisited*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Ker Neil Ripley 1957. *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lass Roger 1992. Phonology and morphology. In Blake (ed.): 23-155.
- Markus Manfred 1988. Reasons for the loss of gender in English. In Kastovsky and Bauer (eds.): 241-258.
- Markus Manfred 1995. On the growing role of semantic and pragmatic features in Middle English. In Fisiak Jacek (ed.): 161-178.
- Mausch Hanna 1986. A note on LME gender. *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 18: 89–100.
- Meisel Jürgen M. (ed.) 1977. *Langues en contact – Pidgins – Creoles – Languages in Contact*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Millar Robert McColl 2000. *System Collapse System Rebirth: The Demonstrative Pronouns of English 900-1350 and the Birth of the Definite Article*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Millett Bella and Wogan-Browne Jocelyn (eds.) 1990. *Medieval English Prose for Women*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mitchell Bruce 1985. *Old English Syntax*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mitchell Bruce and Robinson Fred C. (eds.) 2002. *A Guide to Old English*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Moore Samuel 1921. Grammatical and natural gender in Middle English. *PMLA* 36 (1): 79-103.
- Moore Samuel 1928. Earliest morphological changes in Middle English. *Language* 4 (4): 238-266.
- Moore Samuel [1951] 1969. *Historical Outlines of English Sounds and Inflections*. Ann Arbor, MI: Wahr.
- Mustanoja Tauno 1960. *A Middle English Syntax 1: Parts of Speech*. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique de Helsinki.
- Platzer Hans 2001. "No sex, please, we're Anglo-Saxon?" On grammatical gender in Old English. *View[z]: Vienna English Working Papers* 10: 34-47.
- Poussa Patricia 1982. The evolution of early standard English: The creolization hypothesis. *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 14: 69-86.
- Samuels Michael L. 1977. *Linguistic Evolution, with Specific Reference to English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Voigts Linda E. 1979. Anglo-Saxon plant remedies and the Anglo-Saxons. *Isis* 70 (2): 250-269.

Turn-Taking and Immediacy in *The Owl and the Nightingale* Hanna Salmi

Abstract

A preliminary reading of *The Owl and the Nightingale*, an early Middle English debate poem, suggested there might be a connection between turn-taking and colloquial expressions. This article investigates that connection in relation to two related research questions: Is there language of immediacy in the poem and does it cluster at the turn changes? The theoretical framework is based on Koch and Oesterreicher (1985). They argue that in addition to distinguishing between spoken and written language, a further dichotomy between *language of immediacy* (informal, colloquial) and *language of distance* (formal) is necessary. While written texts tend towards distance and speech typically gravitates towards immediacy, some immediacy-features can be found in written texts and conversely distance-features may occur in speech.

In this study, I first identified a set of immediacy-features in the poem and then calculated the percentage of occurrences that were situated within three lines of a turn change. This method demonstrated that language of immediacy was indeed present in many forms in the poem, but that not all immediacy-features clustered at turn changes. However, a subset of the immediacy-features, the interactive features, did have a marked tendency to concentrate near turn changes.

One may surmise that the interactive features may have been used, intentionally or not, to assist in structuring the text and helping the audience recognise that a new turn has begun. The results of the analysis also highlighted the Nightingale's surprising aggressivity. This may have been one way for the author to make the debaters more evenly matched, suggesting that he did not want there to be a clear winner.

1. Introduction

This article is based on my pro gradu thesis (Salmi 2008), which belongs to the field of historical discourse linguistics (see Hiltunen, Peikola & Skaffari, *this volume*). Originally, the thesis grew from an interest in the colloquial nature of the early Middle English poem *The Owl and the Nightingale*. In this poem, an owl and a nightingale argue about which of the two is the better singer and more useful to humankind. The presence of two characters engaged in an intense and emotional debate made the presence of elements that resemble colloquial speech (albeit in a somewhat stylised form) rather than a stilted literary representation very likely. My initial subjective perception was that the colloquial features in the poem seemed to cluster near turn changes – in other words, they seemed to be used, either consciously or not, for structuring the text. The goal of the study was to verify this impression by scholarly methods. 'Colloquial' features were defined as features which harmonised with Koch and Oesterreicher's concept of 'language of

immediacy'. The research problem was finally redefined as two separate questions: Is there language of immediacy in the text? If there is, does it cluster near turn change? The initial hypothesis was that the answer to both questions would be positive.

In this article, I will discuss some of the most salient findings of my study. The article is structured to reflect the stages my enquiry took. Having engaged with the material in sufficient depth to form a hypothesis, I then had to develop a method which would solve the problem. The results and their significance had to be re-examined in the light of the original hypothesis and the reformulated questions. So, in this article I will first describe the material and the theoretical framework. After these preliminaries I will go on to describe the results, which are followed by a discussion of their linguistic and literary significance. In this way, I hope to provide readers with an insight not only into the results of my study, but also the process of writing a thesis.

2. Overview of The Owl and the Nightingale

The material for the study was a single early Middle English text, *The Owl and the Nightingale*. This is a narrative poem of 1794 lines depicting a debate between two birds, overheard by the unnamed narrator. The poem has been interpreted as a political allegory, a satire on women's bickering, a treatise on astrology and many other things besides (for a convenient summary of interpretations made up to the mid-1970s, see Hume 1975). In fact, Hume drily remarks that "[d]espite intensive study of *The Owl and the Nightingale* over the last sixty years, scholars agree on little beyond its being a Middle English poem about 1800 lines long preserved in two manuscripts" (1975: 3). It could be added that most readers seem to have liked the poem. The example quoted below will give the reader an idea of the general flavour of the text.

[Owl:] "Hu þincþ þe? Artu 3ut inume?
Artu mid ri3te ouercume?"

"Nay, nay!" sede þe Ni3tingale,
"þu shalt ihere anoper tale.
3et nis þos speche ibro3t to dome.
Ac bo wel stille & lust nu to me!
Ich schal mid one bare worde
Do þat þi speche wurþ forworþe!"
"þat nere noht ri3t," þe Hule sede,
"þu hauest bicloped also þu bede,
An ich þe habbe i3iue ansuare.
Ac ar we to unker dome fare,
Ich wille speke toward þe
Also þu speke toward me—
An þu me ansuare 3if þu mi3t!

[Owl:] "What do you think? Are you beaten?
Are you overcome with what's right?"

"No, no!" said the Nightingale,
"You will hear another argument.
This debate isn't yet brought to arbitration.
But be quiet and listen to me now!
I shall, with one single word,
Make all your speeches useless!"
"That wouldn't be right," the Owl said,
"You have made allegations as you asked to
do.
And I have given you an answer.
But before we go to our judgement,
I want to speak against you
As you have spoken against me—

Seie me nu, þu wrecche wiȝt,
Is in þe eni oper note
But þu hauest schille þrote?
þu nart noȝt to non oper þinge,
Bute þu canst of chateringe;
Vor þu art lutel an unstrong,
An nis þi reȝel noþing long!
Wat dostu godes among monne?
Na mo þe deþ a wrecche wranne!
Of þe ne cumeþ non oper god,
Bute þu gredest suich þu bo wod;
An bo þi pipinge ouergo,
Ne boþ on þe craftes na mo.”

And you answer me if you can!
Tell me now, you miserable thing,
What purpose do you serve
Apart from having a shrill throat?
You're no good to anyone else,
Besides knowing how to chatter;
For you are little and weak,
And your clothing is not long at all!
What good do you do among men?
No more than does a wretched wren!
No good comes of you
Except that you shout as if you were crazy.
And when your piping is done,
There are no other skills left in you.”

(ll. 541-568)¹

This section was chosen to illustrate both the style of the arguments and the colloquial language used by the birds. It also shows the level of the birds' emotional involvement in the debate. The debate ranges over many topics and the relative merits of the two species, but the focus as stated by the narrator in the beginning of the poem is on their singing ability: both claim their song is superior.

The edition used for this study was Cartlidge (2001). *The Owl and the Nightingale* is usually considered to be rather early, dating from the late 12th century, although Cartlidge argues that it could well have been written up to a century later. In either case the text is too young to be an example of authentic orally composed folklore ('primary orality', to use the term introduced by Ong 1982), which rules out using methodologies based on either the Oral-Formulaic Theory or other related theories in this study.

The author of the poem is not known (although interesting speculations have been expressed, usually based on very little factual evidence) and the dialectal provenance cannot be determined very precisely. It is, however, a southern text and a rare example of such an early text (very little material has survived from this period). It contains mostly dialogue, and most scholars have agreed that the tone of the poem is very colloquial. Like any written text, it is obviously not a true reflection of genuine spoken language, but it is probably the closest one can get to real speech from this early period. Furthermore, at this

¹ The translations given here are all mine. They are intended merely as a help in understanding the original, the literary quality of which is much higher than these word-for-word translations would lead one to suppose. For a more free-standing translation, see Cartlidge (2001), which provides both the original and a more artistic translation.

point, standard Old English had collapsed and no new standard had yet emerged, which means that colloquial, speechlike features could even more easily make their way into written texts (Milroy 1992: 157-159).

3. *Theoretical framework and methodology*

Since most modern studies on the phenomena associated with turn change have concentrated on naturally occurring casual conversation, their conclusions could not readily be applied to *The Owl and the Nightingale*. As befits a debate, the turns in the poem are rather longer than those found in ordinary conversation – several points and complicated arguments may be discussed within a single turn. Many studies have also focussed on elements, like intonation and body language, that do not have a counterpart in written language. As a result, the present study does not build heavily on the results of modern conversational analysis, only borrowing two important concepts: that of *turn* and *turn change*. The birds take *turns* speaking, and the place in the text where one bird ceases to speak and the other one begins a new turn is here referred to as the *turn change*.

The methodology for my investigation was based on Koch and Oesterreicher (1985). They introduce the concept of language of immediacy as opposed to language of distance. The reason for selecting this particular framework was that it is not very easy to provide a scientific definition of 'colloquial', and yet it was colloquial features I wanted to study. There was plenty of high quality material on the differences of written and spoken language, but the poem I studied was a written text that sounded speech-like in some ways. Many scholars studying historical linguistics had apparently concluded that it did not matter whether a text sounded like speech: if it was written it was written, and any similarities with spoken language must be merely superficial. In some respects, this may be quite true; however, it could be argued that scholars specialising in historical linguistics cannot afford to be so finicky. There had to be some means of studying written language that sounds like speech. The Oral-Formulaic and related theories were rejected for the reason already stated. Biber's corpus-based method did not seem appropriate because the poem is relatively short; it seemed that more could be achieved by close reading combined with hand-counting forms. The framework finally selected for the thesis was based on Koch and Oesterreicher.

In many previous studies, scholars have tried to study the differences between written and spoken language by comparing text samples from diametrically opposing genres, for example academic prose and light conversation. This approach fails to take into account the fact that both media have a great deal of internal variation; in other words, that it is indeed possible to 'talk like a book' or write in a very colloquial style. Koch and Oesterreicher's theory is an attempt to deal with this problem by introducing the idea of a 'conceptual medium' (immediacy or distance) combined with the actual medium (written or spoken).

While the difference between written and spoken language is quite clear – something is either a written text or a spoken utterance² – the difference between the conceptual media is more of a continuum with fuzzy boundaries. Nevertheless, by combining the two, we arrive at a two-dimensional field of variation with four possible combinations of medium and conceptual type, resulting in four extreme types of text, as illustrated in Figure One below.

		CONCEPTUAL CONTINUUM	
		language of immediacy	language of distance
ACTUAL MEDIUM	spoken	typical speech	'elaborated orality', formal speech
	written	'simulated orality', informal written text	typical written text

Figure One. *Combining the conceptual continuum with the actual medium.*

The terms in single quotation marks are from Koch and Oesterreicher, the alternative terms are my own formulations.

This means that in addition to differentiating between the actual media (spoken/written), both media can be divided further into language of immediacy and language of distance, although, as pointed out above, this division is less than clear-cut. Speech typically uses language of immediacy, but some spoken genres qualify as language of distance (for instance, sermons, if not simply read aloud from written notes, or in genuinely oral societies perhaps ritual 'texts'). Again, written texts are typically language of distance, but some forms of writing (for example electronic chat) have most of the features characteristic of language of immediacy. Most texts will of course be situated somewhere between these extremes, neither completely language of immediacy nor language of distance. It might also be added that the most extreme examples of written language of distance may always be somewhat more distant than those of spoken language of distance, and that similarly the spoken extreme end of language of immediacy may always remain somewhat more immediate than the written extreme. In other words the diagram should not be completely square – it is more like a rhomboid shape. However, both media still show an extensive continuum.

Koch and Oesterreicher also provide a list of conditions (German *Kommunikationsbedingungen*) that are typical for language of immediacy and, conversely, for language of distance. These are used to further define the concept of language of immediacy, and can therefore also be used to help determine whether a particular feature in a particular language is an immediacy-feature (see below). To briefly sum up their list of immediacy-

² In this paper I will generally refer to both spoken and written samples of language as 'texts'.

conditions: language of immediacy is typically dialogic (as opposed to the monologue form typical of writing and formal speech), the interlocutors know each other and interact face to face, theme development is relatively free and the linguistic interaction is private rather than public. It is also spontaneous rather than planned, the speakers are personally involved in the topic and/or interaction (as opposed to the detached attitude found in language of distance), it is highly situation-dependent and allows great expressivity and affectivity.

Koch and Oesterreicher's model of language is appealing in its simplicity and elegance, in the mathematical sense. However, it is by no means as simple to apply to the analysis of real texts – perhaps one should not even expect to find elegance, in the mathematical sense, in human behaviour. The problems lie in their list of immediacy-features, which is supposed to be language-universal and is therefore too general to apply directly to *The Owl and the Nightingale*. For instance, the features mentioned in their article include lexical 'poverty', 'weaknesses' in congruence (these were actually included in the present study), and 'speaker and hearer signals'. So for this study, it was necessary to develop a methodology for recognising new immediacy-features, features which might well be language-specific, and defining them so concretely they could be analysed by counting instances. As a result, I accepted features which could be supported by Koch and Oesterreicher's immediacy-conditions, and which had been considered colloquial in some other study. This method proved useful, as very few features conform to all or even most immediacy-conditions. These criteria led to the following list of immediacy-features: questions, imperatives, address forms and the use of personal pronouns; interjections and insults; and finally cross-reference, ungrammaticality, repetitive word-pairs and loanwords. The items studied in the thesis were divided into three classes: interactive, expressive and other features. This division is based on Salmon's article on Chaucer's colloquial language (1975). Although somewhat arbitrary, this method nevertheless provided a useful way of organising the different features.

- | |
|---|
| <p>1. Interactive features</p> <p>Questions</p> <p>Imperatives</p> <p>Address forms</p> <p>Personal pronouns</p> <p>2. Expressive features</p> <p>Interjections</p> <p>Insults and impoliteness</p> <p>3. Other features</p> <p>Cross-reference</p> <p>Ungrammaticality</p> <p>Repetitive word-pairs</p> <p>Loanwords</p> |
|---|

Figure Two. *The immediacy-features included in this study.*

The methodology used, then, to study these features was the following. After the features were identified, their occurrences in the text were counted. Next, these occurrences were examined with a view to their placement within the turns: any occurrence within three lines of a turn change (either the turn's beginning or its end) was defined as being 'near turn change'. Finally, the percentages of occurrences near turn changes were calculated for each feature; a high percentage thus meant that the feature had a high tendency to cluster at turn changes. The definition of what percentages were 'high' was based on comparison with the percentage that one would get with random placement of the feature in question: a percentage several times as high as the one with random dispersal was considered high. In the case of pronouns and insults, which were very evenly spread, some further analysis followed this simple counting method. This was intended to find out more about their use at the beginning of turns, and led to some interesting findings about the birds' argumentative strategies and individual characteristics. The methods used for this further analysis, in combination with the results obtained, are explained in more detail below.

4. Results: Immediacy-features in relation to turn change

Before studying the immediacy-features as such, a preliminary examination was made of the use of punctuation. The idea was to ascertain the degree to which further verbal marking of turn change was motivated, or whether the use of punctuation alone sufficed to signal a turn change to the reader/listener. Punctuation in the narrow sense was prolific in the manuscript, but seemed to have few of the meanings we would ascribe to punctuation today. Most lines ended with a *punctus*,³ so that any meaning it carried could just as well have been carried by the line division alone. Modern quotation marks did not exist when *The Owl and the Nightingale* was copied. Capital letters, however, did have significance and were, moreover, found to coincide with turn change to some degree. Presumably the capitals were used to structure the text into paragraphs. This might be surprising to a reader familiar with modern usage, but was fairly standard practice in the mediæval period: Parkes (1992: 34) mentions the use of *litterae notabiliores* ('more noticeable letters', usually capitals, often in a different style) to mark the beginning of a rhetorical idea. Very little punctuation was used at that time, and because vellum was very expensive, it had to be conserved by avoiding empty spaces. So, instead of separating paragraphs and chapters by leaving an empty space in between (and then using a capital initial or separate type for the heading), the mediæval practice was to use capital initials only. As it was clear that the initials were used for paragraph division rather than for marking turn change, it seemed that indeed there was motivation for further verbal marking of the turn change in the birds' speech turns.

³ The ancestor of the modern full stop, the *punctus* resembled it in appearance and to some degree in usage also.

After these preliminaries it was possible to go on to the study of the immediacy-features themselves. Most features did not cluster at turn change, thus disproving my original hypothesis that language of immediacy was used to mark turn change. On the other hand, the major finding of the study was that some features did indeed cluster at turn change. In the following, I will first discuss the features that did cluster at turn change, then the ones that did not, and I will then end this section with a discussion on features that provided some interesting insights into the text even though they did not support the original hypothesis.

The features clustering at turn change included questions, imperatives, address forms and interjections and, to a slightly lesser degree, also cross-reference. The first three belong to the class of interactive features. So, while it turned out that immediacy-features in general did not cluster at turn change, the interactive features certainly did! This suggests that the initial hypothesis was somewhat inaccurate, but not wholly wrong: it was not immediacy-features as a whole that clustered at turn change, but just a subset of them. Figure Three provides a brief summary of these results.

Clustering features	Non-clustering features
Interjections (62%)	Personal pronouns (7%)
Address forms (45%)	Insults (% not calculated)
Imperatives (27%)	Ungrammaticality (8%)
Questions (24%)	Repetitive word-pairs (4%)
Cross-reference (22%)	Loanwords (11%)

Figure Three. *Summary of results.*

The percentages refer to the proportion found within 3 lines of turn change.

The clustering tendency of the interactive features is probably due to the increased possibilities of interaction at turn change; for instance, questions asked in the midst of one's own long turn would tend to be forgotten before an answer could be provided. The percentage of interactive features clustering near turn change were also among the highest in the study: 24 percent of questions clustered, 27 percent of imperatives, and address forms were the most marked with 45 percent occurring within 3 lines of turn change. One major type of address form used in the poem was the names of the birds,⁴ especially the Owl's (the Owl, on the other hand, rarely uses the Nightingale's name as an address form, presumably because it takes up half an octosyllabic line).

One of the non-interactive features that clustered at turn change was cross-reference. For my purposes, cross-reference was not defined as a sentence-internal, but as

⁴ Again, the nature of the material meant that referring to previous studies produced some interesting dilemmas. An amusing, albeit not a central, one was whether the birds' names should be interpreted as names, titles or possibly occupations. This is not as irrelevant as it may seem, since it also influenced the decision as to whether they should be capitalised.

a text-internal function, in other words it signifies words or expressions used to refer back to some earlier part of the discourse. Usually it took the form *þu seist þat...* ('you say that') followed by a recapitulation of the opponent's argument. References to later parts of the debate are also possible, for instance, the Nightingale's claim that '*Ich schal mid one bare worde/ Do þat þi speche wurp forworpe!*'⁵ (ll. 548-9) might be seen as a cross-reference, if the Nightingale were able to realise this threat. However, cataphoric cross-reference was not studied. The use of cross-reference is probably best explained as a result of its text-organising functions rather than as a result of its immediacy – in fact, there is some doubt as to whether it should have been counted as an immediacy-feature at all. In the debate, several points are often discussed within one turn. When moving from one point to another, cross-reference is used to help orient the listener: first one bird presents several arguments, and then the opponent attempts to counter each of these in turn. So, a turn is formed by a series of arguments each beginning with a cross-reference: You say that I eat filthy food. (Counterargument: What do you eat yourself?) You say that my nest is not clean. (Counterargument: You're wrong, it's cleverly built including a toilet branch!)

The use of interjections to mark turn change has also been documented in studies by Taavitsainen (1995), although these studies focussed on later periods. Taavitsainen's material also differed from mine in that it consisted mainly of plays: plays are often considered to be closer to actual speech than most other genres, and are therefore superior material for scholars interested in the colloquial speech of earlier periods. Thus, finding that the use of interjections had already developed some hundreds of years earlier and in such a different genre as the debate poem is interesting.

As mentioned above, some of the immediacy-features studied did not cluster at turn change. These features included pronouns (which is hardly surprising, as pronouns are a nearly ubiquitous word class and were used on nearly every line of the poem), insults, ungrammaticality, repetitive word-pairs and loanwords. Insults were a problematic class, since the birds' turns are basically nothing more than an extended series of insults! The insults were also rather long and elaborated. This made it meaningless to calculate percentages of insults near turn change – an insult that starts near the beginning of turn can easily go on well into mid-turn. It would hardly be accurate to claim that such a feature 'clusters at turn change', even if some part of it happens to do so.

Ungrammaticality was another problematic, or at least not very felicitously named, class. This is because ungrammaticality is usually defined as a quality that only a native speaker can fully recognise, and of course there are no native speakers of early Middle English alive today. This is true of any dead language, which has not stopped scholars from writing grammars of almost all dead languages of which textual material has survived. The cases studied here were generally odd or misleading rather than ungrammatical in the strict sense, including interrupted sentences and deleted subjects. As mentioned above, they showed no tendency to cluster at turn change.

⁵ 'With one single word, I shall make your speeches useless!'

Repetitive word-pairs are the next type of non-clustering features. Repetitive word-pairs are forms such as *starc & strong*, also known as binomials. In some cases there are more than two items that clearly belong to the same group (i.e. *stif & starc & strong*); in effect this is a trinomial, but these were included here despite the extra member. There were a considerable number of repetitive word-pairs and triplets in the text but, as already stated, there was no tendency for them to cluster at turn change. The same was true of loanwords: they were numerous, but they were fairly evenly spread across the text, with the exception of the word *nay*. It is perhaps understandable that this particular word would often come near turn change, as it is then used to answer a question (in some cases, it is also used in this way in the middle of a turn, answering a self-posed rhetorical question).

As already mentioned above, insults were a problematic class, because they were so extended. However, by focusing on the first insult of each turn, some insight into the structure of turns could be gained. Some of the turns were procedural, i.e. concerned with the procedure of the debate, what the rules were and how it was to be conducted. These contained no insults. By examining the remaining turns and their first insults, a pattern was seen to emerge. The Nightingale directs her insults towards the Owl's person as a whole, while the Owl repeatedly refers very specifically to the dishonest (in her opinion) way in which the Nightingale was conducting the debate, her rhetorical tricks.

Pronouns were another class that definitely did not cluster at turn change, but could be analysed further. This was done by means of analysing pronoun groups. A pronoun group was defined as an occurrence of three or more pronouns referring to the same person, without pronouns referring to another person between them. In this way, it was possible to get a broad idea of whether the theme at any given point in the poem was *ich*, *pu* or a third person. Again, this was then examined in relation to turn change, both at the beginning and the end of turns. The results were useful for understanding the debate strategy used by the birds: there was a clear tendency for turns both to start and end with *pu*-groups, in other words, with an attack. Sandwiched in between were *ich*-groups and third person groups (these latter usually took the form of a proverb, exemplum or some other observation of people in general). Both *ich*-groups and third person groups generally seem to function as defensive. The *pu*-groups at the end function as a final challenge or a counterattacking move, often a prognostication that after such a brilliant argument the opponent must surely fail. Both birds use the same broad strategy when organising their attack. This is interesting, as it is by no means the only possible alternative: it would be quite possible to start with defensive moves and only then move into attack.

5. Discussion: The findings and their literary ramifications

The interesting findings of this study can be divided into two classes. The first class includes matters that relate to the structuring of the text; these were expected, as they

formed part of the original hypothesis and followed naturally from it. However, some of the findings also had significant ramifications for literary analyses of the text, yielding new insights especially in terms of characterisation. These insights arose not from the hypothesis, but as a result of the close reading of the text required for analysing the structural use of immediacy-features. In addition, the results confirmed that immediacy-features were common in the poem, which supports an analysis of *The Owl and the Nightingale* as a colloquial text aimed at a large, non-specialist audience.

The most important structural findings have already been discussed: interactive features clustered at turn change, thereby helping the audience to recognise that turn change has indeed taken place, and interjections were used in much the same way. Cross-reference was used as another way to structure the text, helping the audience to orient itself and distinguish between the different points under debate. Another structural finding was the use of capital initials for the same purpose. The interactive features are worthy of further discussion here, as there are several possible explanations for their tendency to cluster at turn change. They might be intended as a hearer signal, a way to help the reader or listener of the poem to notice when turn change is taking place. The degree to which such signals are really necessary is debatable, since most, if not all, turn changes are also marked verbally by the narrator. In an age in which works of literature were routinely read aloud to an audience, it may still have been useful to reinforce the narrator's signals by others placed within the birds' turns. The clustering of interactive features might also reflect strategies used in real debates: a lively start is generally a good way of capturing both the audience's and the opponent's attention.

Finally, the degree to which the author's use of interactive features and especially interjections is conventionalised is also worth consideration. Taavitsainen (1995) found that the use of interjections was conventionally used in plays of the Early Modern period to signal turn change; the author of *The Owl and the Nightingale* may well have been doing the same. This would probably mean that the usage had developed much earlier, and may have been imported from Latin or French, possibly from earlier debate poetry, but possibly also from other genres.

Another point worth noting is the significance of the debate form as opposed to genuine conversation. This is most clearly seen in the structure of the insults. So, when the Nightingale begins the debate by calling the Owl an '*vnwiȝt*' (a monster, unnatural creature), we might expect a denial or possibly another insult in response, and possibly the whole thing might end in a brawl. Since this is a debate, what we get instead (in the end) is a careful argument attempting to *prove* that the insult is factually true, because a) she is '*unmilde*' and bullies small birds, b) they all hate her as a result, c) she is ugly and dirty and, although the Nightingale's second turn ends here, she later goes on to elaborate the argument, mentioning among other things that the Owl has the unnatural habit of flying by night and sleeping by day.

The most important literary finding was the aggressiveness of the Nightingale as opposed to the Owl. This emerged in the analysis of insults. Stereotypically one might expect the Owl, as a bird of prey, to be the aggressive bully, but in fact it is the Nightingale who starts the verbal brawl, and she is consistently on the attack, while the Owl focuses more on defensive strategies. The Owl also complains that the Nightingale lies and uses unfair rhetorical tricks that will make listeners think she is telling the truth. In fact, the Nightingale's arguments do tend to be more emotional and personally insulting ('You nasty wretch!'), while the Owl seems to aim for a logical refutation of the Nightingale's claims. Of course, the Owl's complaints should be taken with a grain of salt: not everyone who accuses the opposition of foul play is telling the truth. However, her argument is supported both by the narrator and, to some degree, also by the above-mentioned analysis of the Nightingale's tactics: she may not be unfair, but she certainly is rude and aggressive.

Curiously, it is the Nightingale, a harmless songster, who is depicted as the more belligerent figure. There does not seem to be any basis for this in the known traditional associations of the birds: the Nightingale was associated with carnal, sometimes adulterous love and worldliness, but there does not seem to be any traditional association that would make her so eager to fight, even in a verbal sense. As for the other associations concerning the Nightingale, she is of course a nocturnal bird just like owls, but as she sings mainly in the short summer nights, and has such a famously pleasant song, she escapes the negative fame of owls. The Owl, on the other hand, was thought to be a bird of ill omen, often associated (as the Nightingale is quick to point out) with darkness, witchcraft and death. As a counterweight to these negative associations is her reputation as a symbol of wisdom, at least partially due to her being the bird of Athena/Minerva, the goddess of wisdom (Armstrong 1958: 119; see also Cartlidge 2001: xxxvi).

The finding supporting the Owl's claims about the Nightingale's aggressiveness has an effect on our understanding of the poem. For example, who is the winner? The author leaves the point unclear: the Nightingale certainly thinks she has won, but the Owl does not accept this conclusion, and so they agree to go and ask for a verdict from a certain Nicholas of Guildford. We never hear that verdict and, despite much debate, modern scholars also disagree on the point.⁶ The likeability of the peppery Nightingale often seems to count for more than the quality of her arguments. In the mediæval period, this was probably to be expected: Hume (1975: 39) notes that in debate poems the more pleasant speaker *always* wins, unless the other has an overpowering moral superiority which simply cannot be ignored. The birds are often assumed to be allegorical figures standing for a particular view of life,⁷ and so scholars tend to select the winner based on how much the character's arguments agree with their own philosophy. The problem with

⁷ In some readings they are even interpreted as allegories of political figures (Hume 1975).

this line of interpretation is that there is no agreement on exactly what the birds represent! On the other hand, the birds are so evenly matched that it is difficult to reach a verdict based solely on the quality of their arguments.

Making the Nightingale the aggressive party rather than the Owl may well have been part of the author's strategy to even the odds; a carefully considered system of checks and balances to make sure that the winner could not easily be ascertained. The Nightingale's reputation, while not entirely positive, was nevertheless considerably more benign. Had the Owl been the one to attack the Nightingale without provocation, the audience's sympathies would surely have gone to the latter. Leaving the debate unresolved has several potential effects on the audience. Firstly, both Owl supporters and Nightingale-fans may leave the text with a sense that surely the bird of their preference must be right. For audience members who are less certain of the winner, pondering the relative merits of the birds' arguments will offer much more entertainment than a ready-made solution.

Reed (1990) argues that for an audience chained to the tight hierarchies of the mediæval period, this type of irresolution functioned as a necessary, carnevalesque form of relaxation: for once, everyone was free to judge for themselves without the pressures of strict orthodoxy. The assumption underlying this argument is that individuals in the mediæval period were infinitely less free than modern readers, whose society is assumed to have progressed to a higher (more individualistic) level. This is often taken for granted, but the concept of 'progress' is in fact more problematic than it seems at first glance. Undeniably there has been great technological progress, but that does not mean that all other areas will have progressed at the same rate; some aspects of human behaviour and society may in fact have regressed. The institutions in modern western societies are more democratic; but this in itself does not necessarily mean that modern people are freer in all respects than their mediæval counterparts, who for instance did not need to worry about being somewhere at eight o'clock sharp – portable watches were not yet available and such punctuality could not be expected. However, there is something to be said for Reed's argument: leaving the text open for different interpretations gives it a richness and artistic quality which it might not achieve had the author gone out of his way to produce a text that has only one correct reading.

So, the audience's disagreement about who is the winner may have been the author's goal; it certainly does focus readers'/listeners' attention on the nature of the debate itself, its flow and strategies. And the supposition that the focus of the text is the debate itself, the language used in it, the rhetorical strategies, is certainly supported by the narrator's statement, at the very beginning of the poem, of what the topic is (emphasis added):

& hure & hure of operes songe
Hi holde plaiding supe stronge.
'And especially about each other's song
They had a vehement debate.'

(ll. 11-12)

Perhaps oddly, this statement by the narrator seems to have been ignored by many scholars writing about the poem. It is nevertheless clear that the narrator, at least, presents the question of song as the central point under debate. The birds do begin with that topic and, even though they soon move to other issues, they do return to it later on. Perhaps there is also significance in the fact that the birds are apparently not aware of their one-person audience, the narrator – had they known of his presence, they might have asked *him* to decide the winner. Choosing another judge⁸ for the debate enables the narrator, among other things, to claim ignorance of the outcome, and thus leave the debate unresolved. Given that literary texts were often read aloud in the mediæval period, it is quite possible that a reading of the text would produce another lively – if perhaps more polite – debate among the hearers, who would argue about the outcome, taking the role of judge upon themselves. In this way, they would be provided with much more entertainment than if the text had specified the result of the birds' debate, and for any hearers who had not had the benefit of much formal schooling, the ensuing discussion might also prove educational, familiarising them with the basic strategies of debating.

6. Conclusion

While the second part of the initial hypothesis was disproved, in other words language of immediacy did not cluster at turn change, it was found that interactive features, interjections and cross-references did cluster near turn change. Further analysis of these features proved important for understanding text structuring and characterisation in *The Owl and the Nightingale*: the clustering of interactive features and interjections would help the audience recognise turn change, while cross-reference was used in structuring the different arguments discussed in the debate. The results also support an analysis of the poem where great stress is put on the debate form and the rhetorical strategies involved in such a form. The evidence also supports the conclusion that the author has made the birds as evenly matched as possible, so that it would be hard to decide the winner.

Interesting avenues for further research were opened up. One such possibility would involve study of rhetorics in the Middle Ages and the kind of tactics used in debates. Another viewpoint that could certainly help towards a deeper understanding of the poem would be to compare *The Owl and the Nightingale* with both the English and the

⁸ Of course, some scholars (for instance, Cartlidge 2001:xiv) have argued that the author of the poem was the said judge, Nicholas of Guildford, who wrote the poem to convince his superiors that he was worthy of preferment. If this is the case, he must have attributed quite a sense of humour to his superiors, since the poem criticises them quite sharply.

international tradition of debate poetry. This is not to say that such an analysis would necessarily produce new evidence of intertextual links or antecedents, but the widespread bilinguality, or in some cases trilinguality, of the learned classes of the Middle Ages should always be kept in mind. *The Owl and the Nightingale* is not an academic text – it could surely be enjoyed by illiterates hearing it being read aloud – but still the context of other works in the same tradition should be kept in mind, and that context cannot be solely English.

In sum, the study produced some very relevant results in terms of both text-structural and literary analysis. The results support the common argument that *The Owl and the Nightingale* should be seen as a colloquial rather than scholarly text. It also sheds light on the different text-structuring ways used by the poet to help his audience orient themselves within the text. The results also have relevance for the characterisation in the poem.

References

Primary Source

Cartlidge Neil 2001. *The Owl and the Nightingale: Text and Translation*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

Secondary Sources

Armstrong Edward A. 1958. *The Folklore of Birds*. London: Collins.

Blake Norman (ed.) 1992. *The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol. 2, 1066-1476*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hume Kathryn 1975. *The Owl and the Nightingale: The Poem and its Critics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Jucker Andreas H. (ed.) 1995. *Historical Pragmatics: Pragmatic Developments in the History of English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Koch Peter & Oesterreicher Wulf 1985. 'Sprache der Nähe – Sprache der Distanz: Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Spannungsfeld von Sprachtheorie und Sprachgeschichte. *Romanistisches Jahrbuch 1985*: 15-43.

Milroy James 1992. Middle English dialectology. In Blake Norman (ed.): 156-206.

Ong Walter J. 1982. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London: Routledge.

Parkes Malcolm B. 1992. *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*. Aldershot: Scolar Press.

Reed Thomas L. 1990. *Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

- Ringbom Håkan, Ingberg Alfild, Norrman Ralf, Nyholm Kurt, Westman Rolf and Wikberg Kay (eds.) 1975. *Style and Text: Studies presented to Nils Erik Enkvist*. Stockholm: Språkförlaget Skriptor.
- Salmi Hanna 2008. *Language of Immediacy and Turn-Taking in The Owl and the Nightingale: Bo wel stille & lust nu to me!* University of Turku: Master's thesis.
- Salmon Vivian 1975. The representation of colloquial speech in *The Canterbury Tales*. In Ringbom Håkan et al. (eds): 263-277.
- Taavitsainen Irma 1995. Interjections in Early Modern English: From imitation of spoken to conventions of written language. In Jucker Andreas H. (ed.): 439-465.

Transparent Editing: A framework for overt communication between editors and readers.

Jaakko Henrik Salminen

Abstract

Literary works change over time, in part because of our interaction with the texts that represent them. Awareness of the history and evolution of the texts that represent literary works is a key factor in understanding them. This article is based on a Master's thesis (Salminen 2008) which concentrates on how editions intended for general audiences portray the editorial processes that have shaped those editions. In particular, five Anglo-American editions of Catullus were scrutinized with regard to the different aspects of editorial information present in them. This article focuses on the one hand on these aspects of editorial information, which are here presented in the form of a framework of four key issues that should be taken into account in all editions. This framework is intended to provide a point of reference for evaluating edited texts in terms of how they portray editorial processes and other textual issues.⁹ On the other hand, this article focuses on the practical problems of implementing and portraying that framework in editions specifically intended for general audiences, as such editions seem to have less interest in editorial information and fewer resources for presenting it than specialist editions intended for scholarly use. I argue that, in our present culture of attributing information to its 'rightful' authors, including editorial information is also necessary in nonspecialist editions in order to increase our understanding of the nature of literary works as evolving and non-static cultural artefacts. Finally, on the basis of the editions of Catullus discussed in my Master's thesis, I point towards some possible solutions to the practical problem of presenting editorial information in editions for more general audiences.

1. Studying the interaction of mind and text

In his essay, *Criticism and the Experience of Interiority*, Georges Poulet plays with the notion that when a book is being read it simultaneously exists both internally and externally to its reader. The book exists in the reader's hands as a material object that can be handed over to another person. At the very same time, the book also exists in the reader's mind as ideas interpreted from the material object by the reader's very own code of meaningful references. Due to the relativity of language, these ideas of the book cannot be handed over to others in exactly the same way as they were perceived by any given reader. In short, written texts such as books exist in two radically different dimensions; that of the material object on which they are recorded and that of the ideational sphere into which they have been interpreted by a reader.

⁹ In my Master's thesis, I also examined the use of discursive methods for evaluating editorial information present in editions. In order to keep this paper concise, this discussion is left out here.

The duality of the material object and its interpretation lies at the heart of *Textual Studies*, which has the practical goal of understanding how ideas are transferred from person to person through the textual mode. Within the field of textual studies, this article concentrates specifically on how literary works are transformed after their initial publication by subsequent editors. Every iteration of a literary work in the form of an edition necessarily entails a subjective reading by the person or persons who recreate that work in the form of a new edition. The contexts of such transmissions vary greatly, and often in ways of which we are not overtly conscious. Editors are faced with a problem related more to choice than locating the true ontology of a literary work. Instead of simply reproducing a text, editors need to consider whose reading of the text to use as a basis for their own reading. Editors also need to consider how that choice, their own interpretation of available textual evidence, their own editorial goals and objectives, and various material factors such as layout and typesetting affect the end result, the edition. In order to do this in a practical way, editors need to be conscious of how the process of editing necessarily changes texts. Similarly, readers need to be conscious of how a particular editorial process has resulted in the edited text that they read in order better to understand that text, its relationship to the literary work that it represents, and, more generally, the role of texts in society.

Currently no general framework for judging the editorial merits or problems of editions exists. In this article, I concentrate not on the justifications of particular editorial choices, but instead on differentiating between editions on the grounds of their presentation and use of editorial methodology. The main objective is twofold. First, I wish to collect the details necessary for understanding editions within a practical framework that could then be used as a basis for comparing and understanding editions in light of the editorial methodologies and practices used in particular editions. This framework is presented in Section Four. Second, I argue that this basic framework should be visible not only in editions for specialist audiences but also in editions intended for more general audiences. If present in the latter, the framework could make many of the integral issues of editing and the textual status of particular works clearer to general audiences. Any increase in the transparency of editing and editions is, in my opinion, a goal worth striving for in a society overflowing with media and information. However, my second objective also brings with it the problem of the extent to which editorial information should be provided in editions with limited resources. I hope to provide some rough guidelines for ethical practices in Section Five.

Towards these objectives I will discuss the framework used in my MA thesis for studying recent Anglo-American nonspecialist editions of Catullus and how these editions present editorial information (Salminen 2008). Editions of the Roman poet Gaius Valerius Catullus' poems were chosen as the material for my study for a number of reasons (Salminen 2008: 26–33). First, editions of Catullus are relatively common in the English speaking world, thus providing sufficient material for comparison. Second,

Catullus' oeuvre has an extensively documented textual history that nevertheless has a fair share of gaps in it, making room for editorial speculation. Third, numerous aspects of Catullus' text are in fact disputed, providing ample material for textual change even between contemporary editions. Fourth, Catullus' poems continue to be popular not only as more faithful editions, but also as a playground for editors and artists who intentionally want to shape Catullus' poems into new forms and modes, which provides for a level of creativity also in editions. Finally, Catullus' texts inspired my personal admiration of the poet and his work.

The editions taken under closed scrutiny are Balmer's *Catullus: Poems of Love and Hate* (2004), Garrison's *The Student's Catullus* (2004), Green's *The Poems of Catullus: A Bilingual Edition* (2005), Lee's *The Poems of Catullus* (1998), and Mulroy's *The Complete Poetry of Catullus* (2002). All appear intended for somewhat different audiences. None of them is, however, purely intended for specialists in either Catullus or textual studies; the editions claim to target general audiences and do not consistently provide commentary on any particular aspect of the poems as opposed to, for example, the 1998 edition of Thomson, which aims at providing a detailed and systematic discussion of Catullus for specialists and especially with regard to textual issues (Salminen 2008: 30,44ff.). In all the editions discussed here, the editorial matter is in English. Regarding the language of Catullus' poems, both Green's and Lee's editions are bilingual, containing a Latin base text with a facing-page English translation. Garrison's edition has the base text only in Latin. Balmer's and Mulroy's editions contain solely English translations and are therefore not editions in a strict sense. Both nevertheless also discuss textual and editorial issues and can therefore be included here. For closer discussion on the editions of Catullus studied and their differences see Salminen (2008: 30–33, 34ff.).

2. *The different faces of current editorial theory*

Editorial theory has at present arrived at a point of diversification. Clearly there can be no single overarching theory on how texts should be edited. Different kinds of authorial or social intentions alongside other kinds of readings of what a text should be like may all prove as viable a method as any for reproducing texts. Each individual editorial theory might be argued to be better than the rest from some point of view or for some particular editorial purpose. As Werner notes in a discussion of a recent edition of Emily Dickinson's poems:

[T]he editor ... is charged with the task of re-making Dickinson in the image of the present critical and cultural age. Of particular interest here will be the ways in which [the edition] responds to recent readings of Dickinson—many feminist and poststructuralist in orientation—that challenge, among other things, the "hierarchies of traditional textual

components (e.g., truth and error, reading and variant, center and margin),” and that are clearly antithetical to masterpiece theories of art.

(Werner 1998: 256)

It is also clear that everything that is part of the materiality of a recorded text, from words and punctuation to typesetting and material context, may affect the meaning of that text in any given reader’s mind. Thus we will keep on learning of new ways in which we can study texts as material objects and how the interaction of this materiality with readers’ minds affects meaning making *ad infinitum* (cf. e.g. Part IV in Modiano, Searle and Schillingsburg 2004). Further, as texts are retransmitted, the particularities of previous iterations become embedded in new ones, and even follow on to different modes of transmission (e.g. Schillingsburg 1996: 118). Through their retransmission, texts may gain new features, such as subtitles, pagination, and indexes when printing manuscripts or reprinting earlier printed texts or automatic search and rearrangement features and hyperlinks when transferring texts into electronic format (e.g. McGann 2004). Texts may also lose features, as in the case of fixing oral texts by writing down in a single version works that previously existed in a polymorphic oral format (e.g. Lord 2003: xiii) or the fixed order of scrolling that Catullus’ poems were bound to in the scroll format (Green 2005: 17, quoting Skinner).

The contradiction of editing is that, on the one hand, everything about a text can affect meaning. On the other, it is not feasible for an editorial endeavour to account for everything, especially in a printed format, due to the limits of time, space, and human comprehension. Even in cases where editors try to account for a number of textual variants, one variant is typically raised above the rest while others are relegated to, for example, an apparatus at the bottom of a page. Stillinger sums up the present situation by noting the arbitrariness of editing (1994: 132). In short, he adopts the notion that all existing documents embodying some version of a literary work jointly constitute that work. The degree of textual difference necessary to determine whether a text is a version or not is ultimately arbitrary, even when possibly quantified through, for example, the number of different substantives. The relative authority of a version depends on the application of some particular individual’s criteria or theory for defining authority. In the end, editing comes down to a matter of choice regarding theory and interpretation of evidence. This must be seen as an enrichment to literary discussion and interpretation.

An almost infinite range of different material and interpretive points of view from which to edit a text are thus a reality. An editor may choose an editorial methodology and objective and stick to it on whatever grounds s/he sees fit, leaving others to judge whether or not the editorial undertaking was worthwhile. This, however, does not remove the need for understanding what actually goes on during the editing process. On the contrary, the need for editorial transparency increases as inexpensive media allows more and more individuals to publish their own editions of literary works. For example,

fans of Catullus have been able to contribute their own translations and ideas to Negenborn's e-edition of Catullus' poems (Negenborn 2009), creating a community of texts from a wide range of individual and other sources which may or may not be of varying textual accuracy or artistic merit. In such a situation, if we are to understand literary works and how they are represented by the editions that we read, it is imperative to know how these edited texts have been formed over time.

3. *Some preliminary questions*

In my MA thesis, I first investigated what editions *claimed* to be doing, and then scrutinized what they actually did (Salminen 2008: Sections Five and Six, respectively). The first requires information about an editor's proposed objectives, while the latter requires a methodology for analysing how the editor in practice changes her/his *copy-text*, i.e. whichever text or texts that an editor has chosen as the basis for the edition. The framework presented in Section Four deals with the relationship of editorial claims and actual acts of editing in detail. However, before that it is necessary to answer three preliminary questions on the need for presenting the editing process in editions.

First, do readers really need information on editing processes in the first place? In Section Two above, I noted that understanding the editing process helps us understand the relationship between individual texts and the literary work that is represented by them. The editing process helps us see literary works as cultural objects that evolve with us and through our interpretation of them. As Clod points out, it is the "struggle for the text that is the text" (1991: 279). To help us evaluate and learn from this struggle, information on the editing process should be made openly available. On another level, I see this as a morally and financially confused question stemming from the present cultural and legal notions of authority and ownership in Western society. Presently, not only can physical objects be owned by individuals, but also objects on a more abstract level, such as the expression of literary works, can be subject to ownership. The ownership of literary and interpretive ideas is granted a high level of protection through moral codes, as in the field of scholarship, and through law, as in the form of intellectual property rights.¹⁰ In a culture where we are keen to attribute literary works to some particular individual, we should also be clear in correctly attributing textual changes made by others to their rightful contributors. Otherwise we risk muddling the original author's or authors' intentions, whatever they may have been, and also seriously undervaluing the later contributions of humanity at large to the collection of literary artefacts we consider part of our cultural heritage. This, in turn, can promote a falsified picture of authorship and textual stability. This seems morally objectionable. Readers

¹⁰ Of course this need not be so, as e.g. Burkitt (2001) has noted in his discussion of copyright in non-western cultures. Similarly, Lord notes that "the question of proprietary rights" is necessarily relative in oral literary traditions (2003: 159). For an interesting glimpse into the rise of scientific discourse and the attribution of scientific ideas to their 'finders' in early modern England, see also Valle (2003).

should have a clear idea of what they are reading and by whom if such information bears cultural significance.

Second, should editorial information be provided within editions or somewhere else? In the former case, the editor accounts for her/his textual objectives and changes through introductory essays and various kinds of apparatuses, commentaries and the like. In the latter case, the same information must be sought from sources outside the edition. For example, Cloud notes that it is possible to 'un-edit' texts by comparing them to different versions of the same work and to various other related material (e.g. 1994: 150). Through such methods, the different layers of editing, accumulated over time and possibly even without their being overtly recognised or acknowledged, can be studied. In most cases, however, means that employ external evidence are not within the reach of individual readers, even when such readers might benefit from a deeper understanding of the editions that they read. The most effective way to provide information on the editorial process to readers would be to take the matter into account when an edition is being prepared and to provide such information within an edition.

Third, to what extent should editions embed editorial information? A general scarcity of resources typically affects most editorial endeavours through the incompatibility of documenting every change with and the goal of producing a readable edition. Also, and perhaps more importantly, people are often not that interested in editorial information. Eggert notes that there seems to be in our culture a "deep-rooted assumption that the literary work will be represented by a single text" (1994: 5). In such a single best text world, much editorial information would of course be seen as redundant, even when it has been extensively shown, for example by McLeod (2003), that the slightest changes in line spacing may create new layers of authorship and meaning in texts (e.g. Schingsburg notes that this is true even for editions aimed at specialist audiences. Cf. 1996: 117ff.). Finally, as seen in Section Two above we can never be fully certain as to how new iterations change texts, so even with endless resources it would be impossible to capture everything that becomes knowingly or unknowingly edited in the process of reproducing a text. Due to the importance of editorial information, these points are no reason for adopting a *laissez-faire* attitude towards documenting editorial processes even in nonspecialist editions. The question is then one of balancing the need for providing editorial information with the burden of providing that same information in relation to the intended target group of an edition.

Due to scholarly motives of authorship and traceability, obligations for attributing editorial authorship within editions seem to exist in specialist editions catering for the scholarly community. Editions that cater for larger audiences are a more mixed bunch. The five editions of Catullus used as primary material in my MA thesis all catered for larger audiences while containing at least some textual commentary, although the kinds of information provided and the ways in which it was provided varied greatly (Salminen 2008: Sections Five and Six). Lacking the possibility of logging every single edit as is done

for example in Wikipedia and other electronic formats, in printed editions information on the editing process needs to be crammed into the limited space of the printed format. A framework exemplifying what information should be provided by editors is clearly needed. Towards this objective, Section Four below examines what kind of information should be provided in order to present a clear picture of the editorial process affecting a particular edition. Section Five presents some examples on how editorial processes may be presented in nonspecialist editions in light of examples from editions of Catullus.

4. The proposed framework

In this section I will discuss the four aspects of the framework of information that all editions should provide for (Salminen 2008: Sections Five and Six). These are (1) a clarity of reference, especially with regard to signatures, (2) an explanation of the textual status of the work in question, (3) a discussion of the adopted editorial methodology and objectives, and, finally, (4) a depiction of the actual editorial process undertaken by the editor. As seen below, these aspects, taken together, are absolutely necessary to bring transparency to editorial practices. Also, if such a framework is to be inherent in nonspecialist editions, all this should be accomplished with as little strain on editorial or readerly resources as possible.

4.1. Signatures

With signatures I broadly understand the use of names to refer to individuals or institutions in order to draw on their authority. In addition to mere names, signatures include the various imprints, emblems, or any other markings that relay information about some kind of institutional authority, such as the logo of a renowned university press. Signatures can be a useful form of reference to a particular set of practises informing readers, for example, what kind of scholarly or readerly standards such as editorial objectives and house-styles have been imposed by a publisher or series editor. On the other, they can also be seen as empty shells, expressing authority without clearly stating what, if anything, this implied authority actually means (e.g. Derrida 1977, da Silva 2004). Editions should thus take care in their use of signatures. Anyone using or studying editions should be aware of signatures and the different levels of reference they provide.

The relationship between the editor and the author of the edited text is one fundamental example where the use of signatures requires consideration. The editor can and should move towards the credited author's position as the new 'author' of a text while pushing the original author towards a more passive role as part of the edited work's title and, more generally, of the material for the edited work. This has been done in the titles of all the five editions studied here (see the listing of the edition titles in Section One). Such a distinction helps not only to appreciate the contributions made by others to specific literary works, but also to differentiate between the versions of a work.

As noted above, according to Stillinger all the versions of a work together can be seen to constitute that work. Any choice to be made between the different texts of a work is arbitrary. A clear system of reference to the different texts is necessary to effectively differentiate between them.

Signatures referring to publishers and series are also present in all the editions studied in my MA thesis. In the case of Catullus, many of the publisher and series imprints lack a clear reference to what they signify both in general and more specifically with regard to the edition at hand (Salminen 2008: 38). The same has been pointed out by Cloud. In his study on how editions have contributed to the plurality of Herbert's poem *Easter Wings*, he noted for example how the silent habit of a publishing house to begin each section of an edited text on the recto changed the layout of a whole collection of poems in a possibly crucial way (Cloud 1994: 123ff.). In order to form a clear picture of what such signatures represent or refer to, one would have to either study other texts with the same imprints or to contact the editor, publisher, or series editor for further information. In cases such as that noted by Cloud, the series imprint may even act as a substitute for an extra editor due to house editing.

Finally, texts may also contain various other references to individuals and institutions. Accreditations may range in form from simple 'thank you's' that are inserted into prefaces and introductions, and which acknowledge some form of help received in the preparing of an edition to bibliographies and direct references to other works. While the former seem more vague and the latter can be excessively detailed, both nevertheless refer to different kinds of support and ideas received from various sources. Both also seem to be relatively well represented in editions of Catullus, however, assessing the significance of these faces the same problem as other signatures; the significance of the reference is often unclear.

As noted above, even when a series emblem or publisher's name does provide some information on the complexity of editorial intentions and collaboration that have gone into an edition and according to what standards a text has been worked on and changed, what they in practice refer to may be unclear and the ensuing changes unidentifiable in a particular text. While all the editions of Catullus examined contained varying numbers of signatures, they typically provided meagre and, in some cases, even contradictory information on what the different signatures signify (Salminen 2008: 37–39). The relationship between Lee's edition and its *Oxford World's Classics* imprint is particularly interesting in this regard. The imprint claims that the edition provides "perceptive commentary and essential background information to meet the changing needs of readers" (Lee 1998: ii), which, like Werner (as mentioned in Section Two above), presents an editorial objective that acknowledges the pluralistic and diachronic nature of editing. Lee, however, describes how scholars have over centuries purified Catullus, bringing it "ever nearer to what its author intended" (1998: x), a distinctly synchronic position. Unfortunately, how Lee's edition ultimately accounts for both objectives is left

unclear because he does not mention any particular methodology for pursuing either goal or any practical examples of how these objectives affected his edition.

4.2. Textual status

Understanding how a text has been edited requires a reference to the point of origin of the editorial endeavour. The importance of a reference to the source text of an edition, i.e. a copy-text, is highlighted by Greetham's distinction between different categories of editing (Greetham 1994: 347 ff.). These categories are *genuine* editing, which entails acknowledging the status of the original text, and *not-genuine* editing, which does not. For Greetham, genuine editing encompasses both critical editing (which intentionally changes the copy-text for example in order to improve or correct it or to highlight a particular reading) and non-critical editing (which attempts to reproduce the copy-text as faithfully as possible, as for example in various kinds of facsimile editions). Both activities involved in 'genuine' editing are then contrasted with not-genuine editing, that is, any kind of editorial endeavour that fails to acknowledge its textual source. An example that Greetham gives of the latter is adding "a few notes and a brief introduction" to a text that has been "inherited" from "elsewhere" (1994: 348–9). Importantly, however, if an editorial endeavour simply mentions its source text, it would seem to fall under Greetham's category of 'genuine' editing (Salminen 2008: 5–7).

The most straightforward way of acknowledging textual status is by reference to the copy-text or texts on which an edition is based.¹¹ At its simplest, this is done by noting the text or texts that have been used as the starting point for the edition and to which the edition can be compared for a more precise understanding of the changes implemented through editing. Interestingly, the inclusion of such references is not automatic even in scholarly editions (e.g. Cloud 1994: 87).

However, reference to a copy-text is seldom sufficient for understanding the background and status of the collection of texts that form a literary work. Awareness of how the predecessors of the text in question were transmitted and what are general points of dispute in a particular text can help provide an overview of the stability of a text over time, particular editorial problems attributed to it, and any differing interpretations with regard to either of these. Even in cases where a viewpoint on a particular text is not generally contested, whether or not this is mentioned may prove to be crucial information for a reader evaluating the status of the edited text. As a result of the inherent evolution of texts through their reproduction commented on in Section Two above, a reader should not make assumptions about authority on the basis of an edition which does not mention a copy-text or note its textual status in any way.

Acknowledging an edition's copy-text is important as a reference and to display the basic foundation of an edition. This aspect highlights the nonspecialist nature of the

¹¹ Two of the editions studied, those of Green and Lee, use the euphemisms *benchmark* and *reference* respectively instead of the clearly appropriate *copy-text*, which seems to be out of vogue.

editions studied here, as only those of Lee and Green make reference to a copy-text. However, providing readers with information about the textual status of the literary work in general is equally important. Discussion of the textual status of the work seems to be a staple even for nonspecialist editions of Catullus, as all the editions which did not refer to a copy-text at least commented on the textual instability of Catullus' oeuvre. Evidently, textual and transmissional histories can be part of the lure of literary works for general audiences, even when acknowledging a copy-text is treated as though it were superfluous. Presenting textual status as an interesting and integral part of an edition might be a point worth considering in future editions, since this could have a positive effect on increasing understanding of texts and editing processes.

4.3. Editorial intentions

Schillingsburg has examined how the outcomes of editorial processes vary based on the different objectives that editors pursue (1996: 2ff.). These objectives can include editing for general commercial or scholarly purposes and even adapting literary works for particular goals, such as making a renaissance text more appealing or comprehensible for contemporary audiences. On the one hand, Schillingsburg discusses the issue of how editions adapt to various editorial objectives, such as different target audiences (*ibid.*). On the other, he also notes how editorial intentions are tightly linked with the chosen editorial methodology (1996: 93ff.). Schillingsburg's conclusion is that both can affect the editorial process and its outcome in critical ways, changing the edited text in the light of the editor's perception of her/his readership and her/his understanding of editorial methodology (Salminen 2008: 7–10).

As seen in Section Two above, there can be no overarching theory on how to create a single perfect rendition of a literary work. We are thus faced with a multitude of edited texts. In that section I also argued that it is important for readers to understand the cultural implications of the relationship between the editions they are reading and the literary works that those editions represent. Such a goal can be achieved through more transparent editorial processes, that is, by highlighting the different aspects that affect editing. According to Schillingsburg, these would include at least target audience and editorial methodology.

In practice, transparency in editorial intentions can be achieved by the editor or editors overtly discussing, for example in introductory sequences, what they have striven to achieve in editing the text in question. Even if the underlying methodology behind an edition is to try to avoid changing the text, this should be regarded as a methodology too. Once a text has thus been placed in an editorial context in relation to the work that it exemplifies, a reader can more easily comprehend the relationship between text and work. Further, the edition can then be judged according to its success in meeting its claims, and how it accomplishes its own claims rather than a critic's or reader's view of

the work in general. Therefore being open about one's editorial intentions should also benefit the editor and minimise the risk of being misunderstood.¹² As seen in Section 4.1 above, information on editorial intentions may also be hidden behind series imprints or publisher's labels. To ensure the sincerity of editorial intentions, such information should be made explicit in editions.

In this light, the short and vague references to editorial intentions present in editions of Catullus seem especially poignant. In Mulroy's edition, for example, the only reference to a target audience is on the back cover, where it is stated that the edition contains various information to "ease the way for anyone who is not a Latin scholar" (Mulroy 2002: back cover). Mulroy's edition makes no mention of any other editorial intentions. All the other editions note at least some kind of editorial objective, such as Garrison's, which maintains that "[t]he text is therefore a reading text ... with readings that will interfere as little as possible with the poetry as a whole" (Garrison 2004: ix). However, all elucidation on what the editorial intentions of Garrison, Lee, or Green mean in practice is lacking. The one exception is Balmer's edition, which clearly states both its editorial objective, i.e. making Catullus accessible for casual readers (Balmer 2004: 26), and how she intends to change the text in order to attain that objective, i.e. by grouping the poems thematically instead of the received and possibly authoritative ordering and by providing introductory titles to the poems (Balmer 2004: 24–26).

4.4. *The editing process*

Knowing how editorial intentions are implemented in a particular edition is as important as being aware of the intentions themselves. If editions openly portray actual editorial processes in addition to their stated objectives, readers can understand how the editor has, in practice, implemented her/his editorial objectives. On the one hand, as seen in Section Two above, editorial choices must be made consciously. Recording these choices and the reasons for them should therefore not be excessively difficult. On the other hand, as explained in Section Three above, cataloguing the reasons behind every single edit from individual words or changes in punctuation to changes in font, layout, and cover images can easily use up more space than the actual edited text. Further, such a catalogue might not be of interest or necessity to readers. Especially for nonspecialist editions the ideal end result would probably be some kind of distillation of these two points; a compromise between providing readers examples of the editing done and the necessity of keeping texts readable and enjoyable by avoiding unnecessarily cluttered and heavy texts.

¹² For a practical example of the effect of correctly attributed editorial intentions to criticism, see the exchange between Roche and Ancona in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*. In short, the author felt that the critic had misinterpreted her target audience and, because of this, also her edition of Catullus.

Various kinds of apparatuses can be used to record changes made to a copy-text by an editor. For example, footnotes or appendices may be used to simply collect and point out differences between the copy-text and the edited text. Some form of commentary may also be used to portray the reasoning behind particular changes or interpretations made in an edition. While more demanding, the latter is necessary in order to understand the process of choice by which the edition at hand has been formed. Mere lists of changes provide little insight into editorial choice and editorial processes. If this choice and these processes are not brought to light, apparatuses and even editions risk becoming meaningless collections of alternative readings, heralding a monistic ideal of literary works under the guise of providing marginal space to alternate opinions. This is apparent, for example, in Lee's edition of Catullus. While Lee proclaims various editorial intentions and also provides an extensive apparatus of readings that he has changed in relation to his copy-text, he does not explain how the changes depicted in his apparatus and commentary reflect his editorial intentions or any other reasonable objective. This relegates the apparatus to the role of a mere list of editorial changes instead of a practical tool for understanding different viewpoints to the works of Catullus.

5. Practical solutions for portraying editorial processes

As seen in Section Three, the framework presented in Section Four requires practical discussion on how editorial processes can be presented in a clear and consistent manner in different kinds of editions and nonspecialist editions in particular. As a small case study, I will in this section briefly summarize the features of three of the editions of Catullus that I studied in my MA thesis in light of the framework presented above in Section Four. In my opinion, these three editions (i.e. those of Lee, Balmer, and Green) best portray the various aspects of the framework, while the other two editions (i.e. those of Garrison and Mulroy) have features that are more or less a mixture of the rest. Exactly how the former three editions depict editorial issues is discussed here in the hope that this will help highlight the importance of each aspect of the framework above. Finally, I also hope to point towards some practical solutions for portraying editorial processes in nonspecialist editions.

In my MA thesis, I outlined how information on editorial processes is presented in recent Anglo-American nonspecialist editions of Catullus (Salminen 2008: 52ff.). Without going into detail, there seemed to be no single or consistent way of portraying the reasoning behind editorial choice. Textual arguments were scattered sporadically among other commentary items or introductory sequences. Forms of commentary ranged from simple declarative sentences to extensive, argumentative mini-essays. Argumentation on why particular editorial choices were made was based on a wide range of sources, from making sense grammatically to statements or studies by other editors. On some occasions, authorial intention was used as an argumentative device by claiming that a

particular reading best matched what the author had in mind, while on other occasions nothing was used to support a particular editorial choice. In short, the situation was confusing.

What is significant in the end, however, is that none of the editions studied even attempted to be editions aimed at textual specialists (Salminen 2008 Sections Four and Five). Nevertheless, some information on editorial processes is provided, albeit in a sporadic and incomplete manner. This information can then be collected, categorized, and analysed, bringing into light tendencies in the depiction of editorial processes in these editions. These tendencies can, in turn, be compared to the editions' claims regarding their own textual condition and editorial intentions, shining light on the relation between editorial intention and practice. Importantly, the possibility for studying the presentation of editorial processes brings with it the potential for discussing and developing the form and structure of such presentations to best suit stated editorial intentions. This is especially important in the light of the limitations of both nonspecialist and other editions discussed in Section Three above.

Lee's *Oxford World's Classics* edition (1998), *The Poems of Catullus*, provides information on the textual status of the work, a clear reference to a copy text and other works that have been used as a basis for his edition, some commentary related to textual status, and an appendix containing all the changes made to the copy-text (though apparently only changes in *substantives*). The problem with Lee's edition is that, despite a wealth of textual information, the edition provides no elucidation in its textual commentary on the editorial changes themselves or why they should have been made. This combination of features seems to communicate that Lee's edition is essentially a 'best text' with little regard for other viewpoints. This is not a problem for those who already know what to expect from the edition and can situate it within a particular context. However, from the perspective of understanding Lee's edition in relation to other viewpoints on Catullus' work, this results in a frustratingly empty shell that at first glance may seem convincing and authoritative due to features such as acknowledged copy-text, proclaimed editorial intentions, and textual apparatus. For fairness' sake, however, it must be noted that the first version of Lee's edition was published in 1990, making it older than the other editions discussed.

In her translation, *Catullus: Poems of Love and Hate*, Balmer (2004) undertakes the task of regrouping Catullus' poems. Balmer acknowledges that many scholars see the ordering of the earliest extant manuscripts of Catullus as conveying meaning that may or may not be that of the poet himself. She then uses part of her introduction to discuss arguments for and against the different reading that she has adopted, which changes the original ordering into a new thematic one. She also provides a brief discussion of the textual status of Catullus in general, a key for reading the poems in their original order, and references to works discussing the ordering of the poems as well as other matters. While textual issues are, for the most part, not otherwise addressed in her edition, taking

up this single major issue of editorial change in detail provides readers with the rare possibility to participate in debates on Catullus' poetry and textual stability. It enables readers to experience on a concrete and transparent level how editing may change text and meaning. Due to Balmer's overt expression of her intentions regarding her target audience (in this case newcomers to poetry), her edition also openly provides readers with her own assessment of their needs and how these needs are to be fulfilled through particular editorial choices.

Finally, in his edition, *The Poems of Catullus: A Bilingual Edition*, Green (2005) provides a more scholarly example of portraying editorial processes. Green accounts for the copy-text he uses. He also describes the textual status and transmission history of Catullus in detail, and implements an apparatus documenting the substantive changes he made to his copy-text. He classifies his target audience, albeit extremely widely from "Latinless lovers of literature" to all but the most serious scholars (Green 2005: xii), and establishes an editorial position centring on an attempt to locate synchronistic authorial intentions in Catullus (Green 2005: vii, xii). Most interestingly, however, he takes up some of his editorial changes in detail in his commentary, arguing against particular readings while advocating those that he adopts (e.g. Green 2005: 248–9). Green also accepts that some of the reasons for his editorial choices may be based more on a personal feeling of what Catullus would himself have written, and that in some cases substantive evidence seems lacking to such an extent that we simply need to choose the reading that we happen to find most acceptable (e.g. Green 2005: 213;239). Unlike Balmer, Green does not provide a general overview of how he intends to edit Catullus to match his editorial intentions. Nevertheless, while discussing only a minority of his editorial changes openly he nevertheless manages to provide a detailed picture of the editorial project he has undertaken, and also provides relevant sources for readers who wish to decide for themselves to follow up.

While all three editions discussed here provide information on textual matters, only those of Balmer and Green explain (even in part) what, in practice, has been done and why. These two differ in that Balmer's edition openly depicts as its agenda for accomplishing its stated editorial intentions, while the insight that Green provides into his own editing processes is only visible in connection with a number of individual poems. A further point of difference is that, in Green's edition, the depiction of editorial processes is hidden beneath other commentary on the relevant individual poems. Balmer's dedication of a small section of her introductory essay for this purpose is commendable as it provides a single, easily locatable section that deals with editorial issues.

The editions of Green and Lee are similar in that they both seem to retain an air of academia by claiming to strive for an edition that is as similar to Catullus' original as possible (Lee 1998: x–xi, Green 2005: vii, xii). Unlike these two, in detaching herself from an established standard of scholarly editing regarding Catullus (i.e. the traditional

ordering of Catullus' poems that is often seen as authorial), Balmer ironically ends up following current editorial ideals more faithfully in her edition due to a more transparent attitude towards her intended objectives and the means of attaining them. This is akin to McGann's notion that the further one goes from traditional scholarly standards of editing the freer one is to openly present editorial objectives in general and ones' alternative from the scholarly mainstream in particular (1983: 113).

In sum, simple references to potential textual problems with no argumentation, as in Lee's edition, do little to aid a reader and may even create confusion and false faith in the textual condition. This is especially so in cases such as the poems of Catullus, where the availability of multiple convincing solutions for textual problems in the individual poems may result in an editorial pick and mix without a clear methodology. To this can be added vague references to series' standards and editorial objectives, which may further mystify the ensuing collection of overt and covert references. If this is the reality of editing with regard to a particular work, then at the very least readers should be informed about the consequences. On the other hand, Balmer and Green both attempt, to some extent, to portray both how they have edited Catullus, and present some alternatives to their way of editing Catullus. Even when the extent to which such information on the editorial processes is unclear, taking up the issue at all must be seen as a positive trend.

Regarding the presentation of editorial processes in nonspecialist editions in general, the findings of this section could be summed up as follows. At its simplest, providing editorial information could be done by identifying an editorial point of origin to which the edited text can be compared and by explaining the objectives and practices behind the editorial endeavour, as seen in the different aspects of the framework presented in the previous section. Providing some key examples of the types of changes made and their motivation might be a sufficient point of departure for any nonspecialist edition concerned with not having to bore readers by explaining everything. Already this could, in turn, lead to an increased understanding of, and interest towards, the relationship between editions and the literary works that they portray in situations where editorial resources or other reasons do not allow a lengthier discussion of editorial or textual matters.

6. Conclusion

In order to study and understand the processes behind editing and textual transmission, we need to be aware of not only the objectives and issues present throughout textual studies but also how these affect editing and the interpretation of texts on a practical level. Every iteration of a text creates a possibility for editions to add, through contemporary ideas and values, something new to the literary work. The simplest way to be aware of this process of textual and cultural evolution is through increased transparency in editing. Increased transparency can also provide greater possibilities for

improving editorial methodology, thus fulfilling a need which is becoming desperate due to the exponentially increasing proliferation of written information in all conceivable forms.

To achieve editorial transparency, information on the editorial process must be taken into account to some degree in all editions, and not only those intended for specialists. This information is a combination of the various factors that affect the outcome of an editorial process and how these factors are displayed in editions. These factors are 1) acknowledging the textual status of an edition in relation to the work it represents, 2) being frank about any editorial intentions behind an edition, and 3) showing how these intentions are in practice reflected through individual editorial choices. Additionally, editions need to express their relationship to the work that they represent and to the different factors that have affected their making, such as institutions and other individuals, through clear and overt references.

On the basis of the editions of Catullus studied here, the internal processes of editors working on texts can and should be present even in nonspecialist editions. Editors have to make editorial choices. This information can be recorded during the editing process and then be made available to readers. A key problem in this is the extent to which such information can be and should be provided in editions with different target audiences or editorial objectives. In nonspecialist editions, providing information on editorial processes must be weighed against the possibility of information overflow, which can make readers indifferent towards such knowledge. An imposed requirement for editorial information might also be seen as restrictive towards more creative editorial endeavours.

Nevertheless, I feel that the need to shine light on the fickle life of the finished text outweighs these restrictions. If we do not shed light on these editorial processes, we lose a fundamental understanding of how texts evolve through editing. We run the risk of blindness towards the relationship between editions, literary works, and current concepts of authority in our society. In order to comprehend the nature of literary works, even ordinary readers have the right to know which parts of an edition are more due to an editor's individual preferences and which arise from well conceived goals. Depicting these processes is also the ethical responsibility of an editor taking part in the reforming and interpretation of someone else's work. If open or contested issues are not presented for what they are, a significant part of the text and its meaning is effectively held in the dark from its readers.

References

Primary sources

- Balmer Josephine 2004. *Catullus: Poems of Love and Hate*. Tarsset: Bloodaxe Books.
- Garrison Daniel H. 2004. *The Student's Catullus 3rd Edition*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Green Peter 2005. *The Poems of Catullus: A Bilingual Edition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lee Guy 1998. *The Poems of Catullus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mulroy David 2002. *The Complete Poetry of Catullus*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Secondary Sources

- Ancona Ronnie 2004. Ancona on Roche on Ancona: Response to review 2004.11.31. *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2004.12.18.
- Burkitt Daniel 2001. Copyrighting culture: The history and cultural specificity of the Western model of copyright. *Intellectual Property Quarterly* 2: 146–186.
- Clod Random 1991. Information on information. *Text: Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship* 5: 241–281.
- Cloud Random 1994. FIAT fLUX. In Leod Randall M. (ed.): 61–172.
- da Silva Cícero Inácio 2004. Plato on-line: Nothing, science and technology [online]. *São Paulo: All Print*. Available: www.cicerosilva.com/plato.pdf (11 November 2008).
- Derrida Jacques 1977. Signature event context. *Glyph* 1: 172–197.
- Eggert Paul 1994. Document and text: The "life" of the literary work and the capacities of editing. *Text: Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship* 7: 1–24.
- Greetham D.C. 1994. *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction*. New York: Garland.
- Hiltunen Risto and Skaffari Janne (eds.) 2003. *Discourse Perspectives on English: Medieval to Modern*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Leod Randall M. 1994. *Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance*. New York: AMS Press.
- Lord Albert B. 2003. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Macksey Richard and Donato Eugenio (eds.). *Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.
- McGann Jerome J. 1983. *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McGann Jerome J 2004. *Radiant Textuality: Literature After the World Wide Web*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McLeod Randall 2003. Gerard Hopkins and the shapes of his sonnets. In Modiano, Searle and Schillingsburg (eds.): 177–297.

- Modiano Raimonda, Searle Leroy F. and Schillingsburg Peter (eds.) 2004. *VoiceTextHypertext: Emerging Practices in Textual Studies*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Negenborn Rudy 1995–2008. Gaius Valerius Catullus [online]. Available: www.negenborn.net/catullus (7 April 2008).
- Poulet Georges 1970. Criticism and the experience of interiority. In Macksey and Donato (eds.): 56–72.
- Roche P. A. 2004. Review of Ronnie Ancona's writing passion: A Catullus reader. *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2004.11.31.
- Salminen Jaakko H. 2008. "So, who is my reader?": *Intentions, Audiences, and Editorial Discourse in Five English Nonspecialist Editions of Catullus*. University of Turku: Master's thesis.
- Schillingsburg Peter L. 1996. *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age: Theory and Practise* (3rd edition). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Stillingner Jack 1994. *Coleridge and Textual Instability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thomson Douglas F. S. 1998. *Catullus: Edited With a Textual and Interpretative Commentary*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Valle Ellen 2003. "Let me not lose yr love & friendship": The negotiation of priority and the construction of a scientific identity in seventeenth-century natural history. In Hiltunen and Skaffari (eds.): 197–234.
- Werner Marta 1998. Nor difference it knows. *Text: Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship* 12: 255–263.

The Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Track

Päivi Pietilä

Learning foreign languages is extremely important these days. In fact, most Europeans are expected to learn at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue. In Finland, foreign language education has a good reputation, and Finns in general seem to be increasingly competent in speaking foreign languages, especially English, which clearly has a very strong and established position in Finnish society. The term *Second Language Acquisition* is used to denote both formal foreign language learning in a classroom (e.g. learning English or French in Finland) and naturalistic second language acquisition in a communicative setting in the target language area (such as picking up German while working in a hotel in Hamburg). The issues covered on the SLA Track also reflect both these types of learning.

The Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Track is particularly suitable for those students who are interested in the process of language learning and in factors influencing it, especially if they are considering a career in teaching foreign languages. It is important to notice, however, that the students' choice of track will not restrict their choice of career in any way. In other words, students can choose the SLA Track as their main track and not become teachers or, on the other hand, they can become language teachers regardless of which track they choose, as long as they complete the pedagogical studies required. It is also worth noting that the main focus on the SLA Track is on language learning/acquisition and not on language teaching. Those who want to learn to teach EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and become qualified teachers will need the pedagogical studies and teacher training provided by the Faculty of Education.

As on all the tracks, the foundation course of the SLA Track provides a general introduction to the field. Some of the most important theories of second language acquisition are discussed, and some crucial phenomena associated with second language learning and use are examined. These phenomena include *code switching* (the alternate use of two languages, usually the language to be learned, i.e. the target language or L2, and the learner's mother tongue) and *communication strategies* (ways of solving communicative problems due to the learner's deficient knowledge of the L2, e.g. paraphrase, restructuring, direct appeal). Both of these phenomena are typical of learner language (or *interlanguage*), which is considered to be a language in its own right and not just a deviation from the target language. Various other characteristics of interlanguage are also discussed during the course, as they reflect not only the nature of the language that learners use but also the actual learning process.

Another example of a topic often discussed in the foundation course consists of learner differences. We all know that people learn languages in different ways: some advanced learners can hardly be distinguished from native speakers, while others seem to have tremendous difficulties in expressing themselves. We can all think of some

famous Finns whose English, especially their pronunciation, leaves much to be desired even though they have been speaking the language for years. Why is it that some people learn languages easily, while others have to struggle hard to master even the basics? This is one of the main questions that will be addressed on the foundation course of the SLA Track when we examine the influence of factors such as language aptitude, motivation, attitudes, learning styles, personality, age, etc. on learning outcomes.

After the foundation course, students will have opportunities to follow up their interests through more specialised electives. These can be lecture courses (the programme varies from year to year) or consist of independent work (book examinations and essays).

The course on SLA research methodology familiarizes students with different methods of conducting research within the field of second language acquisition. If the students have an idea about the topic of their thesis topic already, they may want to consider choosing a suitable method at this stage, but it is useful to get to know a variety of methods and approaches before actually embarking on one's own research. Moreover, such background information helps students to evaluate other people's research more meaningfully. We compare qualitative and quantitative methods, learn the basics of statistics, discuss various ways of analysing learner language, examine different data elicitation techniques, etc. As far as research data are concerned, they can be collected, for example, in the form of language tests, questionnaires, interviews, or samples of learner speech or writing. In that case, the thesis writer should have access to some language classes where the data can be gathered. Some students have gone back to their own schools, while others have contacted the headmaster of a local school and asked for this possibility. In some cases, the data have consisted of English textbooks or other materials rather than live subjects.

In the research methodology course, we also take a look at earlier thesis topics and discuss some earlier theses completed in our department. Together with the other tracks, we learn how to locate sources for the research, and revise the conventions for reporting on research.

The research methodology course leads up to the thesis seminar where the students discuss parts of their theses during regular, weekly meetings. The seminar starts in the fourth quarter of the academic year during which the topics and methods are chosen and discussed, and each student writes a research plan. Ideally, the students should work on their thesis to some extent during the summer, perhaps collecting or analysing raw data for their research or reading relevant research literature. During the next academic year (Quarters 1 to 4), students produce about 20 pages of their thesis at a time, send the text to the other members of the seminar one week ahead, and get feedback from the whole group during the following seminar meeting. By the end of the seminar, the thesis should be finished.

Many recent SLA theses have focused on the so-called CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) classes in which various school subjects are taught in English. In

such classes, the pupils learn English in two ways: explicitly in their English classes and implicitly in these other classes where English is the medium of teaching and communication. This provides an interesting point of comparison with 'ordinary' schools where English is only taught in language classes. How beneficial are the CLIL programmes? The CLIL students presumably become more fluent in their spoken English than regular students, but is their grammatical competence also better? Do they suffer less from anxiety when having to speak English than regular students? These and other questions have been explored in pro gradu theses, but there are still many questions to be answered concerning bilingual education. Examples of theses involving CLIL classes include *The development of vocabulary knowledge in Content and Language Integrated Learning in the Finnish comprehensive school* by Noora Viinikkala (2007) and *Supporting students' self-esteem in English classes: A comparison between CLIL and regular classes* by Taina Leppikangas (2008).

Other recent thesis topics have included the relationship between extraversion and language learning strategies (Paananen 2006), the effect of parental attitudes on learning English (Huhtanen 2007), sexism in English textbooks (Hurme 2008, Koivisto 2007), multiple intelligences (Mattila 2008), success and failure attributions in language learning (Martikainen 2008), the functions of code-switching in an IB class (Tassia 2008), the influence of TV input on English language skills (Rao 2005), etc. When thinking of a thesis topic, students have often been inspired by something in their own experience as language learners or as substitute teachers. Many students have found their topics during their teacher training in the university practice school. In other words, whatever a student's topic is within SLA, it is likely to have a close connection to something he or she has personally experienced as a language learner, user or teacher.

The articles in this volume are based on pro gradu theses completed recently in our department. Two of the articles in the SLA section represent topics of extreme current relevance, i.e. pragmatic competence in L2 (Susanna Rosin) and the washback effect of language testing (Sonja Vainio). *Pragmatic competence* refers to the ability to behave appropriately in a given situation, not only by choosing the right words and structures of the foreign language but also by adhering to the rules and conventions of interaction. *Washback* means the effect of testing on teaching and learning, which can be expected to manifest itself in connection with high-stakes examinations such as the Finnish matriculation examination. The third topic, the acquisition sequence of negation, or the stages that language learners go through when acquiring English negation (Terhi Ylirisku), is an area which has received less attention in recent years but is, nevertheless, extremely important and intriguing.

An article based on two recent theses completed on the SLA Track – those by Sonja Vainio and Leena Taanila-Hall) will soon be published (Pietilä, Taanila-Hall & Vainio 2009: forthcoming). Both researchers are planning to expand their theses topics into a doctoral dissertation. Furthermore, they are members of a research group – *Accuracy or*

Fluency? Cross-linguistic influence on Second Language Speaking Skills - led by Professor Päivi Pietilä, which investigates the influence of transfer on second language speaking skills. Other members of the group are Dr Heini-Marja Järvinen (from the Faculty of Education), who is interested in the effect of different language tasks on learner performance, and Dr Pekka Lintunen, whose speciality is the acquisition of L2 pronunciation.

To conclude, the SLA Track deals with issues and questions which are of direct relevance to future teachers of English, but it is open for anyone who is interested in finding out more about how languages are learned.

References

(a) The M.A. theses cited (all completed in the Department of English, University of Turku)

- Huhtanen Henna 2007. *"But Mom said we just don't have a head for languages": The Effect of Parental Attitudes on Learning English.*
- Hurme Eeva 2008. *From Man to Human: Sexism in English and its Manifestations in Four English-Language Textbooks from Three Different Decades.*
- Koivisto Suvi 2007. *The Equality of the Sexes in Education: Gender and Stereotyping in EFL Textbooks over Three Decades.*
- Leppikangas Taina 2008. *Supporting Students' Self-Esteem in English Classes: A Comparison between CLIL and Regular Classes.*
- Martikainen Minna 2008. *"Totta kai se riippuu opettajasta!" A Study of Success and Failure Attributions among Finnish Students of English.*
- Mattila Sanna 2008. *UNIQUE MINDS: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences and its Effects on English Language Learning.*
- Paananen Riina 2006. *The Influence of Extraversion on the Choice of Language Learning Strategies: An Empirical Study of Finnish Comprehensive School Pupils.*
- Rao Kati 2005. *The Simpsons, Friends and Emmerdale. The Influence of TV-Input on Language Skills.*
- Taanila-Hall Leena 2006. *Pragmatic Features in Finnish Highschool English Textbooks.*
- Tassia Elina 2008. *The Functions of Code-Switching: A Case Study of an IB-English Group in a Collaborative Task.*
- Vainio Sonja 2006. *Does Multiple-Choice Testing Lead to Multiple-Choice Teaching? Textbook Washback of the Finnish Matriculation Examination in English.*
- Viinikkala Noora 2007. *The Development of Vocabulary Knowledge in Content and Language Integrated Learning in the Finnish Comprehensive School.*

(b) Other references

Peikola Matti, Skaffari Janne and Tanskanen Sanna-Kaisa (eds.) 2009 (forthcoming). *Instructional Writing in English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Pietilä Päivi, Taanila-Hall Leena & Vainio Sonja 2009 (forthcoming). Instructional writing on English: What guides the textbook writer? In Peikola, Skaffari & Tanskanen (eds.).

Pragmatic Competence in the English of Finnish Upper Secondary School Students

Susanna Rosin

Abstract

Pragmatic competence can be defined as the ability to use a language appropriately in different communicative situations. Recently, interest in pragmatic competence has grown within language teaching and research. The pragmatic competence of Finnish upper secondary high school students (n=71) from three different schools was measured with a multiple-choice test. Background information that was assumed to be able to explain possible differences in pragmatic competence was gathered with a separate questionnaire.

The pragmatic competence of the Finnish language learners was relatively high in comparison to the few comparable international studies conducted to date. Finnish subjects did particularly well in situational routines and in implications but in speech acts, the results of the Finnish language learners were similar to those gained in studies conducted in other countries.

The higher the proficiency level and the longer the length of stay in an English-speaking country, the better was the subjects' test performance. CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) students did better than 'ordinary' language learners and female subjects did better than male subjects. Moreover, those who were highly motivated language learners gained better results than those whose motivational level was low. In this study, L1 did not seem to have any effect on pragmatic competence.

The results of this study suggest that a test of pragmatic competence should be included in language testing in Finland, for example as a part of the Finnish matriculation examination. Before this is possible, however, much work with the development of valid and practical pragmatic tests must be done.

1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence can be described as a language user's ability to use language to communicate in socioculturally appropriate ways (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000). Pragmatic competence consists of two competence areas: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. Pragmalinguistic competence equips language users with the linguistic tools that they need for expressing themselves, whereas sociopragmatic competence determines what is appropriate and socially acceptable in a communicative situation (Roever 2006).

Practically all human beings are pragmatically competent at least in one language, their L1. However, becoming pragmatically competent in a second or foreign language is not so self-evident. Although there are some common pragmatic rules among different languages and cultures, not all conventions are shared. Thus, one cannot simply transfer

the rules of one's L1 into other languages; language learners need to learn the pragmatic rules of the new languages. Fortunately, pragmatic competence is nowadays considered as a vital part of language competence, and lately, it has gained much attention both in interlanguage pragmatics research and also in language teaching. Nevertheless, there are some defects. For example, suitable teaching materials may be difficult to find and, indeed, a recent study showed that Finnish upper secondary school textbooks do not thoroughly take the pragmatic aspects of English into account (Taanila-Hall 2006).

Another important issue is the strong backwash effect of language tests on language education (see Vainio, *this volume*). Both teachers and students would be more interested in pragmatic issues if competence in this language area was tested systematically. However, only a little research has been conducted on pragmatic issues in language testing, and there are no validated tests of pragmatic competence that could be used as part of language tests such as the Finnish matriculation examination. Consequently, there is very little data on the pragmatic competence of Finnish learners of English available. This is unfortunate because knowledge of the present proficiency level and the factors affecting it would be useful in order to develop language teaching in Finland within this area of language competence.

The purpose of this study was to determine the current level of the pragmatic competence of Finnish upper secondary school students. Another objective was to establish whether there are any differences between 'normal' and 'CLIL-students' (i.e. students within Content and Language Integrated Learning classes) or between Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking students in their pragmatic competence. A further relevant research question was also whether possible differences in pragmatic competence could be explained by other factors, such as proficiency level, amount of exposure to English, or individual factors like sex or motivation. A more comprehensive review of pragmatics, pragmatic competence, and the assessment of this competence as well as a full report of the present study can be found elsewhere (Rosin 2008). In this article, I will concentrate on reporting and discussing only the main results of my study.

2. Subjects and methods

The subjects of this study were second-year students at three different upper secondary schools in the Turku region. One group consisted of students from two CLIL classes at an IB School (n=21), whereas the other two groups were a class at a Finnish-speaking upper secondary school, Kaarinan lukio (n=20), and two classes at a Swedish-speaking upper secondary school, Pargas svenska gymnasium (n=28), within ordinary language teaching. The data was collected during an English lesson at each school and the subjects were told that the purpose of the test was to test their knowledge of how to use the English language in different communicative situations.

Background information on the subjects (i.e. age, sex etc.) was collected using a questionnaire that was developed specifically for this study. There were three different

language versions of this questionnaire (Finnish, Swedish, and English) so that most subjects were able to answer the questionnaire in their native language. This questionnaire also included questions concerning the frequency with which subjects used English in their leisure-time and their attitudes towards studying English. Information about their perceptions of the quality of language teaching, especially the authenticity of the English language used during the lessons was collected. The mean age of the subjects was 17.1 years, and 59% of them were women. The native language of all subjects at Kaarinan Lukio (henceforth, KL) was Finnish, and at Pargas svenska gymnasium (henceforth, PSG), it was Swedish (Finland-Swedish). Most of the subjects from IB School (henceforth, IBS) reported having Finnish as their native language but there was one subject whose L1 was Russian and one whose L1 was Vietnamese.

More than two thirds of the subjects (70.0%) reported having good or excellent skills in the English language (scores 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale ranging from weak to excellent). Ten subjects (14.1%) had visited an English-speaking country or stayed in such a country for longer than six weeks, but half of the subjects (50.7%) had never visited an English-speaking country. The most popular English leisure-time activities were watching English TV programmes or movies, using the Internet, and listening to English music. Playing English computer or console games was also popular, but only among male subjects.

The subjects' attitudes towards studying English were generally very positive: 96% of the subjects completely agreed with the statement "I find studying English very important", and 87% of them either agreed or completely agreed with the statement "I like studying English". Most of the subjects (91.5%) also agreed or completely agreed with a statement according to which they were able to adjust their English to different communicative situations. In other words, they considered their pragmatic language skills to be good. Altogether, 79% of the subjects agreed with the statement "In language teaching, attention has been paid to as genuine use of English as possible" and 89% of them wanted to learn to speak and write as genuine English as possible. Thus, it seems likely that the subjects were interested in aspects of language like pragmatics, and that these aspects had been covered in language teaching, at least to some extent.

The pragmatic test used in this study was a multiple-choice questionnaire that was composed specifically for this study. The questionnaire was based on corresponding questionnaires that had been developed and used in previous studies (Hudson, Detmer and Brown 1995, Roever 2006, Röver 2005, Yoshitake [1997 in Brown 2001]). Thus, the questionnaire used in this study had not been used as such in previous studies, although it was composed of question items that had been used earlier. A multiple-choice questionnaire was chosen as a data collection method despite some limitations in the quality of the data it produces. Multiple-choice questionnaires do not encourage oral production but measure written receptive language only. Furthermore, they only measure the knowledge dimension of pragmatic competence and leave out the process

dimension, i.e. the actual language use in real communicative situations. However, multiple-choice questionnaires are easy to administer and to score, and they can easily be used for testing large numbers of people. Multiple-choice questionnaires also allow for a quantitative analysis of the data. For these reasons, a multiple-choice questionnaire was used in this study.

The pragmatic test comprised altogether 50 English question items. All items consisted of a short description of a communicative situation and 3 to 4 alternative responses to choose from. Only one of the alternatives was considered to be correct. The first 13 of the items considered situational routines, that is established phrases used in certain common everyday situations (e.g. the phrase "Good, how are you" used in response to the greeting "How are you?"). The following 13 questions considered knowledge of implicature, that is, understanding of the indirect, 'hidden' messages that can commonly be included in a speaker's message. There are different types of implicature but one example of an implicit message is the initially irrational answer "Do fish swim?" to the question "Do you think Dr. Gibson is going to lower our grade if we hand our paper in late?". All the above mentioned 26 questions dealt with the pragmalinguistic end of pragmatic competence and they had four answer alternatives to choose from (see Appendix One).

Knowledge of three common speech acts, namely request, apology and refusal, was measured with 24 question items (items 27-50). In these items, the context factors relative power, degree of imposition, and social distance were varied. This means that a question could, for example, comprise a situation in which a less powerful person (for example a subordinate) had to apologize to a person in a higher position (a chief) for a small accident. These speech act questions dealt with mapping the sociopragmatic rules with correct pragmalinguistic realizations, and in each question there were three answer alternatives to choose from (see Appendix One).

The data analysis was conducted using statistical programs (SPSS 13.0 for Windows), and the tests varied according to each situation tested. New categories of the explanatory variables were formed where necessary for statistical data analysis. A p-value below 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

3. Results

The main results of the present study are given below. Performance in the test on the whole and in its three different subsections is presented first. After that, factors that could explain differences in test performance are analysed.

3.1. Test performance

All subjects answered all items on the pragmatic test. When rating the test results, each correct answer was given one point whereas each incorrect answer was given zero points. Thus, test performance was calculated as the number of correct answers. The average

score was 36.35 ± 4.46 (mean \pm SD; 72.7% correct answers). None of the subjects achieved the possible maximum score on the test (50 points); the range varied from 20 to 44 points. Seven subjects answered all 13 questions correctly in the situational routines section of the test, and the weakest score in this section was 3 points. In the implications section, 6 subjects answered all 13 questions correctly, and the weakest score was 3 points here, too. In the speech act section, none of the subjects answered all items correctly; the best score in this section was 21 out of 24 items, and the weakest score was 7 points.

Most of the questions in the test were answered correctly by 80 to 90 per cent of the subjects. However, there were also questions where the percentage of correct answers was as low as 15 to 35 per cent. An example of a question where performance was excellent is the situational routine mentioned above, in which two people greet each other when they are introduced to each other. This item was answered correctly by all but one subject (98.6%). Another example of a situational routine in which test performance was excellent was the item where the subject was asked to state how a person would respond to another person thanking him or her for a small favour (97.2% correct answers). In the implications section of the pragmatic test, there was one question that was answered correctly by all but two subjects (97.2% correct answers). In this item, a boy and a girl are talking about their housemate, and the boy asks whether the girl knows where this housemate is. In answer to the question, the girl says "Well, I heard music from his room earlier." This was interpreted correctly by most of the subjects as an indirect message meaning that the housemate is probably in his room.

The speech act section seemed to be more difficult than the two other sections of the pragmatic test. There were only two items out of twenty-four possible that were answered correctly by more than 90% of the subjects. Both of these items dealt with the speech act of apology. In one of them, the subjects were asked to imagine themselves in a situation where they had to apologise to their landlady for a minor accident. In the other well-known item, the respondents were asked to state how they would apologise to their boss for being a little late for a meeting.

An example of a situational routine in which performance was poor is the item where the respondent should have known how to ask another person what time it was. Only 35.2% of the subjects were able to choose the correct alternative "Excuse me, do you have the time?". The most difficult of all test items in the whole test of pragmatic competence was in the implications section. In an item that dealt with indirect criticism, a professor criticized a student's essay by commenting on an irrelevant feature of the essay in a positive way. So, when the colleague asked "How did you like Derek's essay?" the professor answered: "I thought it was well typed." Only 15.5% of the respondents understood that the professor's answer meant that she did not like the student's essay.

One third of the speech act items (8 out of 24) were answered incorrectly by more than half of the subjects. Making a request turned out to be especially difficult, since in five of these eight items, the respondent was expected to make a request in an

appropriate way. One of the speech act items was answered correctly by only one quarter (25.4%) of the subjects. This difficult item dealt with a situation in which the subject was asked to imagine that (s)he was a personnel officer in an office hiring new employees. This personnel officer was supposed to make a high-imposition request to a possible future employee, i.e. a request that meant much extra work for the possible employee.

The pragmatic test turned out to be feasible. It only took one language lesson to complete, and the rating of the results was also easy and fast even though the test was filled in using the traditional paper-and-pen technique instead of, for example, an internet-based questionnaire. The reliability of the test on the whole was satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha 0.72) but the reliability of the speech act section was lower than generally accepted (Cronbach's alpha 0.41).

3.2. Factors affecting test performance

The overall test score at IBS was 38.7 ± 4.36 points (mean \pm SD), which was significantly better ($p=0.009$) than the average score at KL (34.6 ± 4.40 , mean \pm SD). The difference between IBS and PSG, where the average test performance was 35.90 ± 3.76 (mean \pm SD) was, however, not statistically significant. A similar difference between the schools was shown in the situational routines section of the test where the subjects from IBS performed significantly better than the subjects from KL ($p=0.02$). Furthermore, the subjects from IBS performed significantly better than the subjects from either KL ($p=0.02$) or PSG ($p=0.01$) even in the implications section of the test. The differences between the test results from KL and PSG were not statistically significant.

The subjects' own evaluation of their language skills was used as a measure of their language proficiency. Statistical analyses showed that those whose language proficiency was high (score 4 or 5 on a scale ranging from 1=weak to 5=excellent), performed significantly better in the pragmatic test overall than those whose language proficiency was weak (score 1 or 2 on the same scale) ($p=0.001$ or less). A similar difference could be seen in the situational routines section where those whose language skills were at least moderate (score 3, 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale mentioned above), scored significantly better than those whose language skills were poorer ($p=0.03$ or less).

There was some variation in the number of years that the subjects had studied English but this did not have any statistically significant effect on the subjects' pragmatic competence. The same was true with the English-speaking leisure-time activities; no statistically significant association between the combined variable describing the frequency of performing English-speaking leisure-time activities and the test performance was found. However, the longer a subject had stayed in an English speaking country, the better was his or her overall performance on the pragmatic test ($p=0.04$). Statistical significance was, however, not reached in the three different subsections of the test, nor did the analysis of the data reveal what could be an optimal length of stay in an English-speaking country.

There were statistically significant differences between the two sexes in their test performance. Female subjects performed significantly better than males both in the test on the whole ($p=0.003$) and, in two of its subsections, namely in situational routines ($p=0.047$), and in speech acts ($p=0.005$). However, no statistically significant differences between the two sexes were found in the performance in the implications section of the test.

Since there were proportionally more male subjects at Kaarinan lukio than the two other schools, further analyses were performed in order to see whether there was any interaction effect between the school and the sex on the overall test performance. However, no such interaction effect was seen. The effect of sex on the overall test performance can be seen clearly from Figure One: female subjects scored about three to four points better than male subjects in all three schools.

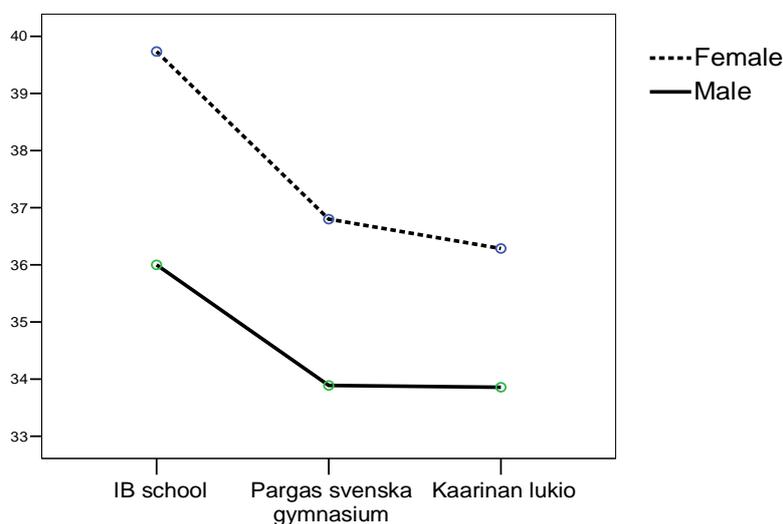


Figure One. *Mean results of the pragmatic test for female and male subjects in the three schools.*

The subjects' responses to four of the attitudinal statements presented in the background questionnaire were used as a measure of the subjects' motivation for studying English, and the subjects were divided into three groups according to their level of motivation. Significant differences between the groups having different motivational levels were found showing that those who were most highly motivated performed significantly better in the pragmatic test overall ($p=0.002$), as well as in the speech acts part of the test ($p=0.014$), when compared to the least motivated students.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to measure the level of pragmatic competence in Finnish upper secondary high school students, and to identify possible explanatory factors for differences in pragmatic competence. The study was conducted in the Turku area with a

limited number of subjects. Thus, the results can at best be seen as indicative rather than representative of the whole age group or educational group in Finland. Furthermore, the data collection methodology that was used only allows the respondents to choose from pre-formed alternatives. This means that the study does not provide any information concerning the respondents' actual pragmatic performance in real communicative situations. However, this study does give an insight into the level of pragmatic competence in Finnish upper secondary school students and, because very little research has been conducted on the assessment of pragmatic competence in Finland, the information produced by this study can be considered a valuable starting point.

Even internationally, there are only a few studies in which pragmatic competence has been assessed, which is why it is difficult to compare the results of the Finnish respondents with those of other language learner groups. Roever (2006) assessed the knowledge of English pragmalinguistics of 267 university or upper-level high school students in Germany, Japan and Hawaii. His data collection method was partly identical with the one used in this study, which is why the results of the two studies can be compared with relative ease. On average, Roever's subjects scored somewhat worse than the Finnish students (61.92% correct answers compared to 72.7% in the present study). The Finnish subjects also performed better on the two subsections that were measured almost identically in the two studies, namely the situational routines and the implications sections. On average, the Finnish subjects answered correctly on 85.5% of the questions in the implications section whereas the corresponding figure for Roever's subjects was 60.41%. In the situational routines section, again, the Finnish subjects answered correctly to 80.7% of the questions, whereas Roever's subjects only succeeded in choosing the correct alternative in 59.57% of the questions.

Yoshitake (1997 in Brown 2001) measured the sociopragmatic competence of Japanese EFL learners by using the methodology developed by Hudson, Detmer and Brown (1995). In Yoshitake's study, multiple-choice questions dealing with different speech acts, identical to those used in the present study, were applied, and so the results of these two studies can be compared. The two language learner groups performed similarly on this aspect of pragmatic competence. The Finnish subjects responded correctly to 62.8% of the test items whereas the Japanese language learners succeeded in choosing the correct answer alternative in 58.3% of the questions. Another study where competence in speech acts was found to be on the same level as among the Finnish subjects is the study by Liu (2007). In Liu's study, knowledge of the speech act *apology* was measured by using a multiple-choice test specifically developed for the study in question. The subjects were 16 to 24 years old university-level students of English in China and approximately 90% of them were female. These subjects scored on average 56.6% of the test items correctly. Yet another study in which knowledge of speech acts has been measured is the study by Roever (2006). In Roever's study, knowledge of speech acts was measured with a discourse completion test in which the respondents replied to

situational prompts by writing down their probable answer. Roever found that the subjects answered correctly to 61.92% of the speech act items.

The Finnish upper secondary school students appear to have done rather well when compared with other English language learner groups whose pragmatic competence has been measured. The Finnish subjects did well especially on situational routines and implications, and even in speech acts, the results were on the same level as for the other groups studied. Interestingly, on average, Finnish upper secondary school students scored slightly higher on items testing the knowledge of speech acts than university-level students of English in China.

The reliability of the pragmatic test used in the present study was satisfactory but one of its subsections, the speech act section, did not fill the criteria of a reliable indicator of competence in this area. It has been shown in previous studies (Yoshitake 1997 in Brown 2001) that it may be difficult to measure pragmatic competence in the area of speech acts with multiple-choice questions. This is mainly because developing answer alternatives that are wrong, but still credible, is not easy. Future studies are needed in order to develop reliable and valid and, yet, practical assessment tools for as many aspects of pragmatic competence as possible.

What can then be the reason for the good performance of the Finnish language learners in the pragmatic test? Previous research has shown that there are several possible explanatory factors for a positive pragmatic development. Some of these findings were also confirmed in this study but new findings were also made. The present data showed that subjects studying in a school where English was used both as the language of instruction and the object of study did best on the pragmatic test. In such a school, the average result was three to four points higher than that of the subjects from the two 'ordinary' schools. Thus, the results of the present study suggest that content and language integrated learning (CLIL) may be a more successful way of conveying pragmatic knowledge to students, compared to ordinary language teaching. However, as no previous studies have been conducted on this topic, the results of this small scale study remain speculative.

Since no significant differences between the results from KL and PSG were found, it seems that there was no difference between the subjects with the two different native languages, namely Finnish and Finland-Swedish. This is interesting because Swedish belongs to the same language family as English, and these two languages could be expected to share at least some pragmatic features. This could in turn have led to successful transfer of pragmatic features from Swedish to English. The pragmatic aspects of Finnish have not been compared in scientific studies with those of Finland-Swedish. However, these two languages may share many pragmatic characteristics, even though they do not belong to the same language family. In a geographically restricted area like the Turku region, similarities in culture may be more significant than similarities between the languages.

Proficiency in English was found to explain pragmatic competence, since the better the subjects estimated their proficiency in English to be, the better was their performance on the pragmatic test. Another factor that had an effect on test performance was the subjects' exposure to English in the form of a stay in an English speaking country. Although no threshold value for a noteworthy length of stay could be suggested based on this data, subjects clearly seem to have benefited from their visits or stays in such countries. Only Roever (2006) has previously directly looked at the effect of language exposure on the performance in a pragmatic test. He found that learners who had exposure to English in a genuine language environment scored higher in situational routines than unexposed learners, and the differences between groups were remarkable. In the Finnish study population, even those who had never visited an English-speaking country did relatively well in the situational routines. They scored correctly on about 70% of the items, compared with about 75 to 80% correct answers for those who had visited such countries for variable lengths of time. It is interesting to speculate on the reasons for this relatively equal test performance. One reason may be the Finnish subjects' enthusiastic watching of English-speaking TV-series and movies. In Finland, these programmes are subtitled and not dubbed as in, for example, Germany. Thus, one possibility is that the Finnish language learners may have learned valuable 'situational language chunks' from them.

A new finding was that female subjects seemed to do better than their male counterparts in the pragmatic test. Neither Roever (2006), Liu (2006) nor Yoshitake (1997 in Brown 2001) have looked at any sex differences in their studies assessing pragmatic competence. Furthermore, there is very little data available on possible sex differences in pragmatic competence, which is why any speculations concerning the possible reasons for a female superiority in pragmatic competence must remain speculative. However, the result in itself is interesting and deserves further investigation.

Motivation is another not very widely studied factor that seemed to explain test performance in the present study. The more motivated the subjects were, the better they did on the pragmatic test. For example Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) and Niezgoda and Roever (2001) have stated that motivation may play a role in pragmatic performance but the effect of a subject's motivational level on his or her performance in a pragmatic test has not been studied before. Highly motivated language learners may be more aware of the subtle features of language, such as pragmatic aspects (Kasper and Rose 2002) and indeed, Takahashi (2005) showed that motivation was associated with higher pragmalinguistic awareness. Schauer (2006), on the other hand, found that future interpreters and translators who could be expected to be highly motivated language learners were poorly aware of pragmatic infelicities. Schauer's finding may, however, only mean that pragmatic issues are not always discussed comprehensively enough even in the education of professional language users. In the present study, the subjects agreed with the statement saying that attention had been paid to the genuine use of language.

However, the results do not reveal what the subjects understood by the term 'genuine'. The term may have meant, for example, pragmatically correct language use but also authentic pronunciation.

5. Conclusion

The results of the present study showed that CLIL students did somewhat better in the pragmatic test than the other language learners. However, my results cannot confirm whether this was due to the mode of teaching itself, or whether the CLIL students' frequent use of English, for example, was the main explanatory factor. Those who had used or at least heard English in genuine contexts in English-speaking countries also seem to have benefited from this language input. Thus, even in learning pragmatic skills in L2, awareness, motivation, and comprehensible input seem to be the factors crucial for success.

Even sex seemed to have an impact on pragmatic competence. Thus, based on the results of the present study, I suggest that both sex and motivational level should be taken into consideration in future studies assessing pragmatic competence. Another suggestion that stems from the results is that the Finnish language learners' motivation for learning L2 pragmatics should be further strengthened. This could be done, for example, by including test items that measure pragmatic competence within the matriculation examination because important language tests have a strong backwash effect on both teaching and studying. However, much development work must be done before valid but practical pragmatic tests will be available for such purposes.

References

- Bardovi-Harlig Kathleen and Dörnyei Zoltan 1998. Do language learners recognize pragmatic violations? Pragmatic vs. grammatical awareness in instructed L2 learning. *TESOL Quarterly* 32: 233-259.
- Brown James Dean 2001. Pragmatic tests: Different purposes, different tests. In Rose and Kasper (eds.): 301-325.
- Celce-Murcia Marianne and Olshtain Elite 2000. *Discourse and Context in Language Teaching: A Guide for Language Teachers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson Thom, Detmer Emily and Brown J.D. 1995. *Developing Prototypic Measures of Cross-Cultural Pragmatics*. Manoa: Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center, University of Hawaii.
- Kasper Gabriele and Rose Kenneth R. 2002. *Pragmatic Development in a Second Language*. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Liu Jianda 2007. Developing a pragmatics test for Chinese EFL learners. *Language Testing* 24: 391-415.
- Niezdoda Kimberly and Röver Carsten 2001. Pragmatic and grammatical awareness: A function of the learning environment? In Rose and Kasper (eds.): 63-79.

- Roever Carsten 2006. Validation of a web-based test of ESL pragmalinguistics. *Language Testing* 23: 229-255.
- Rose Kenneth R. and Kasper Gabriele (eds.) 2001. *Pragmatics in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosin Susanna 2008. *Pragmatic Competence in L2 English: A Study of Finnish Upper Secondary School Students*. University of Turku: Master's thesis.
- Röver Carsten 2005. *Testing ESL Pragmatics*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Schauer Gila A. 2006. Pragmatic awareness in ESL and EFL contexts: Contrast and development. *Language Learning* 56: 269-318.
- Taanila-Hall Leena 2006. *Pragmatic Features in Finnish High School English Textbooks*. University of Turku: Master's thesis.
- Takahashi Satomi 2005. Pragmalinguistic awareness: Is it related to motivation and proficiency? *Applied Linguistics* 26: 90-120.

Appendix One: The items in the test of pragmatic competence.

Items testing knowledge of situational routines (items 1 to 13).

1. Jack is introduced to Pam at a party. Pam says: “how are you?”

What would Jack probably say?

- a “I have a headache.”
- b “Thank you.”
- c “I’m Jack.”
- d “Good, how are you?”

2. Tim is ordering food at a restaurant where you can sit down or take the food home with you.

What would the woman behind the counter probably ask Tim?

- a “For home or here?”
- b “For going or staying?”
- c “For taking it with you?”
- d “For here or to go?”

3. Carrie has done some shopping at a grocery store. The man at the checkout counter has just finished packing her groceries and hands her the bags.

What would the man probably say?

- a “Here you go.”
- b “There they are.”
- c “You’re very welcome.”
- d “Please.”

4. Tom ordered a meal in a restaurant and the waitress just brought it and put it on the table. She asks him if he wants her to bring him additional items.

What would the waitress probably say?

- a “Would you like anything extra?”
- b “Is there more for you?”
- c “What can I do for you?”
- d “Can I get you anything else?”

5. Jane is at the beach and wants to know what time it is. She sees a man with a watch.

What would Jane probably say?

- a “Excuse me, can you tell the time?”
- b “Excuse me, how late is it?”
- c “Excuse me, what’s your watch show?”
- d “Excuse me, do you have the time?”

6. Sam is having dinner at a friend’s house. His friend offers him more food but he couldn’t possibly eat another bite.

What would Sam probably say?

- a “No thanks, I’m full.”
- b “No thanks, I’ve had it.”
- c “No thanks, I’ve eaten.”
- d “No thanks, I’ve done it.”

7. Ted is inviting his friend to a little party he’s having at his house tomorrow night.

Ted: “I’m having a little party tomorrow night at my place.”

How would Ted probably go on?

- a “How would you like to come in?”
- b “Do you think you could make it?”
- c “How about you’re there?”
- d “Why aren’t you showing up?”

8. The person ahead of Kate in line at the cafeteria drops his pen. Kate picks it up and gives it back to him. He says “Thank you.”

What would Kate probably reply?

- a “Thank you.”
- b “Please.”
- c “You’re welcome.”
- d “It’s nothing.”

9. The phone rings. Stan picks it up.

What would Stan probably say?

- a "Hi."
- b "Hello."
- c "It's Stan."
- d "Who is speaking?"

10. Claudia calls her friend Dennis. Dennis isn't at home but Claudia would like the person who answered the phone to tell Dennis something.

What would Claudia probably say?

- a "Can you write something?"
- b "Can I give you information?"
- c "Can you take a note?"
- d "Can I leave a message?"

11. Jack and Jamal were just introduced to each other. They're shaking hands.

What would Jack probably say?

- a "Nice to meet you."
- b "Good to run into you."
- c "Happy to get to know you."
- d "Glad to see you."

12. Candice is talking to her friend Will from a payphone on a noisy city street. She can't understand something Will said because a large truck passed by.

What would Candice probably say to Will?

- a "Repeat yourself, please."
- b "Another time, please."
- c "Restate what you said, please."
- d "Say that again, please."

13. In a crowded subway, a woman stepped on Jack's foot. She said "Sorry".

What would Jake probably reply?

- a "That's okay."
- b "No bother."
- c "It's nothing."
- d "Don't mention it."

Items testing knowledge of implicature (items 14 to 26)

14. Jay is waiting for the light to change so he can cross the street when a woman approaches him and says: "Do you have a watch?"

What does the woman probably mean?

- a She wants to know what time it is.
- b She wants to sell Jay a watch.
- c She thinks Jay may have lost his watch.
- d She wants to steal Jay's watch.

15. Jack is talking to his housemate Sarah about another housemate, Frank.

Jack: "Do you know where Frank is, Sarah?"

Sarah: "Well, I heard music from his room earlier."

What does Sarah probably mean?

- a Frank forgot to turn the music off.
- b Frank's loud music bothers Sarah.
- c Frank is probably in his room.
- d Sarah doesn't know where Frank is.

16. Toby and Ally are trying a new buffet restaurant in town. Toby is eating something but Ally can't decide what to have next.

Ally: "How do you like what you're having?"

Toby: "Well, let's just say it's colourful."

What does Toby probably mean?

- a He thinks it is important for food to look appetizing.
- b He thinks food should not contain artificial colours.
- c He wants Ally to try something colourful.
- d He does not like his food much.

17. Jane notices that her co-worker Sam is dirty all over, has holes in his pants, and scratches on his face and hands.

Jane: "What happened to you?"

Sam: "I rode my bike to work."

What does Sam probably mean?

- a Today he finally got some exercise biking.
- b He hurt himself biking.
- c It's hard to get to work without a car.
- d He does not want to talk about what happened.

18. Felicity is talking to her co-worker Brian during a coffee break.

Felicity: "So, life must be good for you. I hear you got a nice raise."

Brian: "This coffee is awfully thin. You'd think they'd at least give us decent coffee."

What does Brian probably mean?

- a He does not want to talk about his income.
- b He likes his coffee strong.
- c He is planning to complain about the coffee.
- d He doesn't care very much about money.

19. Jose and Tanya are professors at a college. They are talking about a student, Derek.

Jose: "How did you like Derek's essay?"

Tanya: "I thought it was well typed."

What does Tanya probably mean?

- a She likes it if students hand in their work type-written.
- b She did not like Derek's essay.
- c She thought the topic Derek had chosen was interesting.
- d She doesn't really remember Derek's essay.

20. Maria and Frank are working on a class project together but they won't be able to finish it by the deadline.

Maria: "Do you think Dr. Gibson is going to lower our grade if we hand it in late?"

Frank: "Do fish swim?"

What does Frank probably mean?

- a He thinks they should change the topic of their project.
- b He thinks they will get a lower grade.
- c He thinks their grade will not be affected.
- d He did not understand Maria's question.

21. Jenny and her housemate Darren go to college in Southern California. They are talking one morning before going to class.

Jenny: "Darren, is it cold out this morning?"

Darren: "Jenny, it's August!"

What does Darren probably mean?

- a It's surprisingly cold for August.
- b It's so warm that he feels like August.
- c It's warm like usual in August.
- d It's hard to predict the temperature in August.

22. Carrie is a cashier in a grocery store. After work, she's talking to her friend Simon.

Carrie: "I guess I'm getting old and ugly."

Simon: "What makes you say that?"

Carrie: "The men are beginning to count their change."

What does Carrie probably mean?

- a She has given wrong change a number of times, so people count their change now.
- b Male customers aren't staring at her anymore like they used to.
- c The store might lose business if she doesn't look good.
- d It gets harder to give correct change as you get older.

23. Max and Julie are jogging together.

Max: "Can we slow down a bit? I'm all out of breath."

Julie: "I'm sure glad I don't smoke."

What does Julie probably mean?

- a She doesn't want to slow down.
- b She doesn't like the way Max breath smells.
- c Max is out of breath because he is a smoker.
- d Max would be even slower if he smoked.

24. At a recent party, there was a lot of singing and piano playing. At one point, Matt played the piano while Brian sang. Jill was not at the party, but her friend Linda was.

Jill: "What did Brian sing?"

Linda: "I'm not sure but Matt was playing 'Yesterday'."

What does Linda probably mean?

- a She was only interested in Matt and didn't listen to Brian.
- b Brian sang very badly.
- c Brian and Matt were not doing the same song.
- d The song that Brian sang was 'Yesterday'.

25. Hilda is looking for a new job. She's having lunch with her friend John.

John: "So how's the job search coming along?"

Hilda: "This curry is really good, don't you think?"

What does Hilda probably mean?

- a She's very close to finding a job.
- b She's no longer looking for a job.
- c She just found a job.
- d Her job search isn't going very well.

26. Mike is trying to find an apartment in New York City. He just looked at a place and is telling his friend Jane about it.

Jane: "So, is the rent high?"

Mike: "Is the Pope Catholic?"

What does Mike probably mean?

- a He doesn't want to talk about the rent.
- b The rent is high.
- c The apartment is owned by the church.
- d The rent isn't very high.

Items testing knowledge of speech acts (items 27 to 50)

27. You work in a small department of a large office. You have worked here for a number of years and are the head of the department. You are in the office of another member of the department in a meeting. You accidentally knock over a framed picture on the desk. It doesn't break.

What do you say?

- a Oh!
- b Oh! Sorry.
- c Oh, this picture frame is stiff. It hurt me!

28. You are applying for a job in a company. You go into the office to turn in your application form to the manager. You talk to the manager for a few minutes. When you move to give the manager your form, you accidentally knock over a vase on the desk and spill water over a pile of papers.

What do you say?

- a Oh, I'm very sorry. How terrible! All your papers are wet now.
- b Oh, I'm sorry.
- c Oh, I'm so sorry! Where can I get some paper towels to clean this up?

29. You are applying for a student loan at a small bank. You are now meeting with the loan officer. The loan officer is the only person who reviews applications at this bank. The loan officer tells you that there are many other applicants and that it should take two weeks to review your application. However, you want the loan processed as soon as possible in order to pay your tuition by the deadline.

What do you say?

- a I'm sorry I am applying so late, but the tuition payment deadline is on the tenth of the month. Could you possibly try to get the processing speeded up so I could pay my tuition on time?
- b Seems like lot of people want to get student loans. You must be really busy. I'm very happy that I have an opportunity to apply. However, I want to pay my tuition as soon as possible, I wonder if there is any way I could do this...
- c Could you review my application as soon as possible? The deadline to pay my tuition is very near.

30. You work for a large company. You and a few of your co-workers are working on a special project. You are just finishing a meeting with the group. The leader of the project asks you to give a message to your secretary. You cannot deliver the message because you are going directly to a meeting scheduled at one of the branch offices.

What do you say?

- a I'm sorry, but I'm going straight to another meeting. I won't be going back to my office until 4 o'clock.
- b I wish I could complete your mission right away but I have to go to another meeting directly from here. If it's all right to deliver it after my other meeting I'm happy to do so.
- c Would you mind asking someone else? I've got to go to another meeting right now.

31. You are a member of the local chapter of a national ski club. Every month the club goes on a ski trip. You are in a meeting with the club president, helping plan this month's trip. You want to borrow some paper in order to take some notes.

What do you say?

- a Excuse me, please give me some paper.
- b Oh, I'd like to take some notes, but it seems that I have no paper with me.
- c Could I borrow some paper?

32. You are shopping in a store that sells handmade crafts. You have shopped here a number of times before and usually make a substantial purchase. Today you are looking for a present for your mother's birthday. You are browsing near a clerk. You pick up a statuette to get a better look at it and accidentally drop it on the floor. It breaks.

What do you say?

- a Oh, I'm sorry.
- b Oh, I'm so sorry. Can I pay for it?
- c Oh, I'm sorry. But I'm covered under an insurance. I'm glad of that.

33. You rent a room in a large house. The person who holds the lease lives in the house as well. Each person in the house is responsible for a few hours of chores every week. Your chore is to vacuum the house. This morning when you were using the lease-holder's vacuum cleaner you accidentally dropped it and now it does not work. You are now in the living room and the lease-holder walks in.

What do you say?

- a I'm sorry, but I accidentally broke your vacuum cleaner. I was using it this morning and I dropped it and now it doesn't work. Do you know where I can get it repaired?
- b I just wrecked your vacuum cleaner. What should I do?
- c It's strange the vacuum cleaner suddenly stopped working, after I dropped it just now. But I don't think it was so hard.

34. You are on an airplane. It's dinner time. The flight attendant sets your food on your tray. You need a napkin.

What do you say?

- a Excuse me, I seem to be missing a napkin. Could you give me one?
- b Excuse me! Give me a napkin.
- c Excuse me, could I have a napkin please?

35. You work in a small department of a large office. You have worked here for a number of years and are the head of the department. You have an important meeting scheduled with another member of your department this afternoon. You are in your office when the member stops in and asks to cancel the meeting in order to work on a special project that is due tomorrow. You cannot schedule the meeting for later because you have to report the information to others at a meeting tomorrow.

What do you say?

- a I'm sorry but we can't postpone this meeting. It is very important since I have to report on the information at a meeting tomorrow. I'll try to make it short.
- b No, I can't. I need that information today.
- c I wish I could do it, but I have to report on the meeting tomorrow, so...

36. Last week you had trouble with your company car and took it to a company mechanic. The mechanic promised to have it ready tomorrow morning. You are going on a business trip tomorrow afternoon and need the car. You stop by the repair shop to make sure the repairs will be finished in time. Now the mechanic tells you the shop is very busy and asks if you can wait an extra day for your car. You cannot delay your trip.

What do you say?

- a But you promised to fix it by tomorrow morning. Look, I'm going on a business trip and I do need the car. Please hurry.
- b Sorry, I can't wait. I really need the car tomorrow morning because I'm going on a trip.
- c No, I can't wait a day. I have to go on a trip tomorrow, and I need the car. You said you'd repair the car by tomorrow.

37. You are in the airport going through customs after a trip to a foreign country. It is your turn, but when the customs officer asks you for your papers, you realize you do not know where they are. You look in your bag for a little while, find them, and give them to the waiting officer.

What do you say?

- a Oh, here they are. I knew they were in here somewhere. Sorry it took so long.
- b Oh I found them! Thank you for your patience. I'll keep them together with me next time.
- c Sorry.

38. You work in a restaurant. You have just taken a customer's order and are ready to leave the table. The customer is still holding the menu and you need it.

What do you say?

- a Excuse me, are you finished with that?
- b Excuse me, would you give me that menu? I need it.
- c Excuse me. If it's not too much trouble could I please take your menu?

39. You are the president of the local chapter of a national camping club. Every month the club goes on a camping trip and you are responsible for organizing it. Last week you were supposed to meet with another member of the club to plan this month's trip. You had to reschedule because you were too busy. The rescheduled meeting was for 7: 30 this morning, but you got caught in heavy traffic and just now arrive at the club headquarters. It is 9: 00 a.m.

What do you say?

- a I'm terribly sorry. I got caught in a traffic jam. It was terrible. Anyway, I rescheduled the meeting and came late. I'm sorry.
- b I'm really sorry I'm so late. I got caught in a terrible traffic jam. Do you still want to meet me or is it too late now?
- c I'm terrible sorry to be late. But I couldn't help it. I got caught in a traffic jam.

40. You live in a large house. You hold the lease to the house and rent out the other rooms. The washing machine is broken. It is Saturday and the repair person is scheduled to fix it this morning. However, you will not be home because you have to pick up your parents at the airport. You want one of your house-mates to stay home this morning. You are in the kitchen when a house-mate walks in.

What do you say?

- a Hi, how are you today? I have to go to the airport to pick up my parents but a repair person is coming while I'm gone to the airport. He's coming to fix the washing machine.
- b Would you mind staying home this morning? I've got to go to the airport to pick up my parents.
- c Are you going to be around this morning? I need someone to be here when the washing machine repair person comes. I have to go to the airport to pick up my parents.

41. You work in a small printing shop. It is late afternoon and a valued customer comes in to ask if you can print 1500 copies of a new advertisement by tomorrow morning. To do this, you have to work into the night. You are tired after a long day and cannot stay late.

What do you say?

- a I'm sorry but we're closing soon. I really can't do it by tomorrow morning, but if you can come back I can finish it by tomorrow afternoon.
- b I'm sorry but I can't help you. In order to help you I would have to work into the night, but I have to go home and feed my kids. Sorry about that.
- c Well, I hate to tell you, but it would be impossible to prepare 1500 copies by tomorrow morning.

42. You work in a small department of a large office. You have worked here for a number of years and are the head of the department. You are in a meeting with other members of your department. You need to write some short notes, but realize you do not have any paper. You turn to the person sitting next to you.

What do you say?

- a Excuse me, I'd like to take some notes, but I forgot to bring my paper.
- b Could I please borrow some paper?
- c Excuse me, might I borrow some paper? I seem not to have any with me.

43. You are a member of the local chapter of a national camping club. Every month the club goes on a camping trip. The president of the club is responsible for organizing the trips, a job that takes a number of hours. You are on this month's trip talking to the president of the club. The president is going to be out of town for a week and asks you to plan the next trip. You cannot plan the trip because you are going to be very busy with work.

What do you say?

- a I can't. I'm going to be very busy. Can't you ask somebody else?
- b Oh, I wish I could do it, but the thing is, I'm now really busy with my work, and I'm afraid I have no time to do anything else. I'm sorry.
- c I'd like to help out, but I can't this week. I've got a really busy schedule at work this week.

44. You are in a small family-owned restaurant. You go up to the counter to pay your bill. When you reach to hand your check to the restaurant worker, you accidentally knock a few of the menus on the floor.

What do you say?

- a Oh, I'm sorry. I hope I didn't make them dirty.
- b Oh, I hope I didn't get them dirty. Let me pick them up for you, please.
- c Oops! Sorry. Let me get them.

45. You teach in a small school. You have a meeting with the lead teacher for your grades at two o'clock today. When you show up at the meeting it is a few minutes after two.

What do you say?

- a Sorry to be late. But it is no big deal.
- b Sorry, I'm late.
- c Hi!

46. You live in a large house. You hold the lease to the house and rent out the other rooms. You are in the living room when one of your house-mates asks to talk to you. Your house-mate explains that it will take only a few minutes and is not important. However, you cannot talk now because you are on your way out.

What do you say?

- a Sorry. Can it wait until later? I've got to leave now or I'll be late.
- b I can't talk to you now. Let's talk later.
- c I'm sorry, but I'm on my way out right now and I'd rather not be late. Postpone it until I come back.

47. You are on your lunch hour. You go into a small shop to look for a present for your friend's birthday. You find something you like and buy it. As you are ready to leave the clerk explains that the shop would like to learn more about its customers and asks if you would fill out a short questionnaire. You cannot fill out the form because you have to hurry back to work.

What do you say?

- a No, I must go back to work right now. Will you ask somebody else?
- b I wish I could but I'll be late for my work so I can't.
- c Sorry, but I'm in a hurry.

48. You work for a small department in a large office. The assistant manager of the office gave you a packet of materials to summarize for tomorrow. However, when you start working on the assignment, you realize that you do not have all of the information. You know that the head of the department has the information. You need to get the information, but you know it will take the head of your department about an hour and a half to locate it. You see the head of the department.

What do you say?

- a Could you do me a favour? I hate to ask you but I need the information on last year's financial report. Could you find that for me?
- b I'm working on this summary for tomorrow but the materials Mary gave aren't complete. I really need last year's financial report. Could I get that from you?
- c Hi. The assistant manager told me to summarize these materials by tomorrow but I need last year's financial report from you in order to continue. Can you give it to me, please.

49. You are the personnel officer in an office that is now hiring new employees. The application form is quite long and takes most applicants several hours to complete. The form must be typed. An applicant comes in and gives you a completed form. However, it has been typed with a very faint ribbon. The application needs to be retyped.

What do you say?

- a Well, it looks fine but it's hard to read the letters. May I ask you to type it again to have them clearer?
- b I'm sorry, but you'll have to retype this in order for anyone to be able to read it. I regret to say this application needs to be retyped. This is illegible because it was typed with a very faint ribbon.

50. You work in a small store. A customer comes into the store and asks for change for a ten dollar bill. You cannot give the change because you don't have it in the register.

What do you say?

- a I'm sorry, we don't have change for a ten dollar bill.
- b No, we are short of change, sorry.
- c I'm sorry, but I don't have change for ten right now. Maybe you could next door.

Does Multiple-Choice Testing Lead to Multiple-Choice Teaching? Textbook washback of the Finnish matriculation examination in English

Sonja Vainio

Abstract

The article presents the main findings of a study conducted in spring 2006 as part of a Master's thesis in the field of textbook washback (Vainio 2006). More precisely, the purpose of the study was to examine what kind of washback effect the Finnish matriculation examination in English had on the textbooks used in upper secondary schools. After a detailed overview of earlier research in the field of textbook washback, the matriculation examination, the textbooks and the research tools used in the empirical research are introduced. The main results of the research are discussed in terms of whether they can be explained by washback.

1. Theoretical background – washback

Washback, the influence of testing on teaching and learning, has existed since testing began, but it has been the subject of research only for the last two decades (Cheng and Curtis 2004: 5). Charles Alderson, a pioneer in washback research, notes that the crucial question to ask is not whether washback exists or not – for it certainly does exist – but rather what forms it takes (Alderson 2004: ix). Below, washback is briefly considered from three perspectives: the washback hypotheses, the quality of washback, and textbook washback.

1.1. Washback hypotheses

The Washback Hypothesis at its most general, as defined by Alderson and Wall (1993: 120), states only that a test will affect teaching. Alderson and Wall formulated a total of 15 washback hypotheses, which are listed in Table One. The hypotheses are based on the assumption that teaching and learning are not necessarily identical, although they are related. The hypotheses also assume that the content of teaching can be separated from teaching methodology (Alderson and Wall 1993: 120). As Alderson states in an interview conducted by Vongpumivitch and Carr (2001: 94), the washback hypotheses were the beginning of theorising about washback. Washback hypotheses can be seen as a theoretical framework for washback research, and the case studies as ways of exploring that framework. The hypotheses went beyond the earlier assumption that tests automatically have a negative effect on teaching and learning to a more neutral statement that tests have a general effect instead of a necessarily negative one (Vongpumivitch and Carr 2001: 94). Alderson and Wall's intention was not to prove the hypotheses right or wrong, but to clarify the questions that should be addressed in studies of washback (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996: 282).

1. A test will influence teaching.
2. A test will influence learning.
3. A test will influence what teachers teach.
4. A test will influence how teachers teach.
5. A test will influence what learners learn.
6. A test will influence how learners learn.
7. A test will influence the rate and sequence of teaching.
8. A test will influence the rate and sequence of learning.
9. A test will influence the degree and depth of teaching.
10. A test will influence the degree and depth of learning.
11. A test will influence attitudes to the content, method, etc. of teaching and learning.
12. Tests that have important consequences will have washback.
13. Tests that do not have important consequences will have no washback.
14. Tests will have washback on all learners and teachers.
15. Tests will have washback effects for some learners and some teachers, but not for others.

Table One. *Washback hypotheses according to Alderson and Wall (1993: 120–121).*

Washback on teaching content seems to be more direct than washback on teaching methodology. In their extensive study of impact in Sri Lanka, Alderson and Wall (1993) discovered that the new exam clearly affected the content of teaching, but not the methodologies used. They conclude that although an exam may determine *what* is taught, it will not influence *how* teachers teach (Alderson and Wall 1993: 127). Cheng (1999: 268) reached similar conclusions; she discovered that the teaching patterns had not changed significantly after the introduction of a new English examination in Hong Kong. She states that "changes tend to happen at the obvious and format level" (Cheng 1997: 52). Teaching methods, which are more affected by the actual teaching situations, are less easily changed (Cheng 2005: 169). In any case, the washback hypotheses only state that tests will influence what and how teachers teach; there is no indication of a difference in the degree to which methodology and content are affected. Perhaps that is how the hypotheses should remain until there is sufficient evidence to reject them. One cannot make plausible generalisations on the basis of such scant research findings. Rather, all that can be said for certain is that the amount of washback on teaching methods varies between different contexts and different teachers (Spratt 2005: 17).

1.2. Positive and negative washback

In the abstract, teaching to the test is neither good nor bad (Mehrens and Kaminski 1989: 14). As Takala (1985: 26) wittily puts it, "the testing tail wagging the teaching dog" need not be a problem as long as the tail is compatible with the dog. According to Spolsky

(1995: 17), reasonable teachers will focus their students' efforts on the items that will be tested, and "no bright pupil will want to spend time on anything but preparation for what is to be in the examination". The value of this practice depends on whether one considers the test valid and significant. If one agrees that success on the test represents meaningful learning, then testing can be a productive tool for encouraging educators to focus on valued skills (Herman and Golan 1993: 24). For example, it has been suggested that if performance tests could be designed to be so closely linked with the aims of teaching that the two were almost indistinguishable, teaching to the test would become a virtue (Cheng and Curtis 2004: 16).

Since washback is not an inherent quality of a test, what may produce positive washback in one context may cause harmful effects elsewhere. Messick (1996: 242) emphasises that the relationship between the quality of a test and the quality of washback is not straightforward, because "a poor test may be associated with positive effects and a good test with negative effects because of other things that are done or not done in the educational system". Similarly, Alderson and Wall (1993: 116) point out that negative washback is not necessarily due to an invalid test; there are other factors, both within society in general and in education, that may also affect the quality of washback.

The instructional value of multiple-choice questions is generally considered poor, some even see them as "rather unnatural activities" (Baker 1989: 100). They are, indeed, unnatural in the sense that outside testing situations one scarcely ever has to choose between four alternatives to indicate understanding (Weir 1988: 47). According to Qi (2005: 162), the use of multiple-choice format by several large-scale examinations is problematic since the format is not "conducive to the creation of good teaching". Baker (1989: 100) argues that practising multiple-choice tasks brings little benefit to learners, whereas Oller (1979: 256) goes one step further to state that they may even cause damage. He aptly remarks that "nowhere else in the curriculum is it common procedure for educators to recommend deliberate confusion of the learner" by offering multiple choices and asks why matters should be different in language testing (Oller 1979: 256). Multiple-choice testing is said to downplay originality and flexibility of thinking (Eckstein and Noah 1993: 233). Furthermore, multiple-choice questions give the impression that the curriculum is comprised of "bits and pieces" for which there is always only one correct answer (Pandey 1990: 45). If the test is in the multiple-choice format, there is a risk that teachers will focus on "practice in test-taking tricks and the tactics of guessing" rather than on more meaningful learning (Eckstein and Noah 1993: 233). As Hughes (1989: 62) aptly points out, practice at multiple-choice questions, especially if attention is paid to improving educated guessing skills, is not normally the best way to improve language proficiency.

1.3. Textbook washback

The term *textbook washback* was first used in 1994 by Hiu Por Lam in his article 'Methodology washback – an insider's view' (Lam in Bailey 1999: 7). Textbook washback refers to the influence exams have on textbooks. Noteworthily, the influence may also be reversed: textbooks may affect exams (Bailey 1999: 30). Given that the textbook is "an integral component of the educational process" (Davies 1999: 337) and that "the authority of knowing" has been observed to rest with teachers and textbooks (Wideen et al. 1997: 441), it is surprising that textbooks have not received more attention in washback research.

Although a very limited number of studies focussing on textbooks have been conducted, teaching materials are mentioned in several washback studies. For example, Wall (2005) and Cheng (2005) noted that textbooks may play a greater role in the washback process than initially thought. Two washback studies have specifically addressed TOEFL preparation materials. The researchers, Hilke and Wadden (1997), and Hamp-Lyons (1998), subscribe to the claim that the quality of TOEFL preparation materials varies dramatically, but other than that, the two studies present very different viewpoints. Hilke and Wadden examined the relationship between the TOEFL exam and the preparation materials, whereas Hamp-Lyons' purpose was to "direct critical attention toward all unethical test preparation materials" (Hamp-Lyons 1999: 271). Hamp-Lyons studied five TOEFL preparation textbooks and found that they contained mostly practice tests or exercises that followed the format of the TOEFL test. According to Hamp-Lyons (1998: 335), spending time on "unproductive, test-mimicking exercises" instead of "well-designed classes" is problematic, whereas Wadden and Hilke (1999: 264) consider it natural that test preparation textbooks focus on exercises that are part of the test. What Hilke and Wadden (1997: 35) found in their study was that the practice tests in the TOEFL preparation textbooks did not accurately represent the TOEFL and thus the practice tests cannot be said to give an accurate estimate of the candidate's final TOEFL score.

Saville and Hawkey (2004) describe the development of data collection instruments for the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) impact study. The Instrument for the Analysis of Textbook Materials (IATM) was developed as part of the project. The IATM is intended to elicit information from teachers who use a particular textbook, covering the contents of the book as well as the teaching methodology used (Saville and Hawkey 2004: 79). Hawkey (2005) used the IATM when conducting the CPE Textbook Washback Study. CPE, the Certificate of Proficiency in English, is the highest level Cambridge exam for non-native speakers of English (Cambridge ESOL 2008). The study examined whether the CPE test exerts washback on test preparation textbooks. Each book was evaluated independently by two experienced language-teaching specialists using the IATM. The results of the study supported the hypothesis that the CPE exerts strong washback on the textbooks (Hawkey 2005: 20).

2. *Materials and methods*

The present study belongs to the fairly limited group of washback studies examining traditional large-scale tests that are claimed to have predominantly negative washback because they often employ multiple-choice techniques. Textbook washback was chosen as the focus of the study, because the area clearly lacks research and could profit from further empirical evidence. The lack of research has been noted, for example, by Spratt (2005: 13), who welcomes studies of washback on teaching materials. Studying textbooks in Finland is especially appropriate, as textbooks play a central role in the Finnish education system (Heinonen 2005: 232).

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether the washback hypothesis holds true in the context of Finnish upper secondary schools, and whether the matriculation examination really exerts the asserted negative washback. As teaching for the test is neither good nor bad *per se*, the purpose of the study was not to evaluate the quality of the textbooks, nor to endorse one textbook series over the other. The main research question was whether the matriculation examination has a washback effect on the English textbooks used in upper secondary schools. In addition, I investigated how the use of multiple-choice format in the exam affects the textbooks. As noted above, the instructional value of multiple-choice questions is considered poor and thus determining whether the number of multiple-choice questions increases as the matriculation examination approaches was deemed important. If this was found to be the case, the increasing number of multiple-choice questions would serve as an example of textbook washback. In order to find answers to the research questions, a research tool for determining washback had to be constructed as there were no ready-made models that could be employed. First, however, the matriculation examination was carefully studied.

2.1. *The matriculation examination*

The Finnish matriculation examination is a typical, high-stakes, national, school-leaving examination taken at the end of general upper secondary education by more than half of the age group. The examination is held every spring and autumn at the same time in all upper secondary schools in Finland (Matriculation Examination Board 2008). The Foreign Language Test is comprised of "listening and reading comprehension and sections demonstrating the candidate's skill in written production in the language in question" (Matriculation Examination Board 2008). There are two distinct parts in the examination: a listening comprehension test and a written test, which are held on separate dates (Ylioppilastutkintolautakunta 2005: 1). The written part of the exam is further divided into three sections called Reading Comprehension, Grammar and Vocabulary, and Composition.

According to the exam specifications, the following task types are possible in the listening test: multiple-choice, open-ended questions, completion, and writing a summary of the passage heard. The questions may be in either Finnish or English and the

candidates must submit answers in the language specified. There are three to four alternatives in the multiple-choice questions, or alternatively the questions may be in True/False format (Ylioppilastutkintolautakunta 2005: 6–7). Multiple-choice and open-ended questions may also be used in the written part of the exam. In addition, the following task types are possible: multiple-choice gap filling, ‘productive’ gap filling (‘produktiivinen aukkotesti’), transformation, summary or guided summary in Finnish or English, translation into Finnish or English, explaining the meaning in English, composition, and short communicative writing tasks (Ylioppilastutkintolautakunta 2005: 13–17).

The maximum score of the Foreign Language Test is 299 points; a maximum of 90 points are awarded for the listening comprehension section and 209 points for the written part of the exam (Ylioppilastutkintolautakunta 2005: 19). Part of the study was to investigate the extent to which these task types are actually employed in the exam. In order to gain an accurate picture of the Finnish matriculation examination, the A-English exam papers from spring 1996 to autumn 2005 were studied. Since the exam is administered twice annually, and the listening comprehension test and the written part are taken on separate dates, the corpus comprised a total of 40 exam papers from 1996 to 2005. The data were then compared to two textbook series.

2.2. Textbooks for upper secondary school

The two textbook series analysed in the study were *Culture Café* and *In Touch*, the only series that are based on the 2005 national core curriculum and were complete by the time the study took place. Each *Culture Café* and *In Touch* book is an independent unit and contains both texts and exercises that follow the themes determined by the national core curriculum for each of the eight courses in upper secondary school. *Culture Café* books are divided into four or five themes, which usually include two texts each. In addition, there is an Appetizer, which leads into the theme. In books 1–6, there is also a section called Recipe Book, which gives hints on many aspects of learning English. In books 7 and 8, Recipe Book has been replaced by a section called Revision, which is aimed at preparing for the matriculation examination. The structure of the *In Touch* books is very similar to that of *Culture Café*. In each book, there are approximately four units. The *In Touch* books contain ‘appetizers’ as well, but this section is called Get Going. The *In Touch* books also have special Introductions before sections labelled Key Text and Key Listening. As their titles suggest, these sections serve as introductions to the main texts and listening comprehensions. The *In Touch* exercises have been categorised under eleven titles. Although these are referred to as ‘task types’ on the Table of Contents, they do not refer to specific task types as such, but rather to the main focus of the exercise. For instance, exercises labelled Understanding the Text include a wide variety of task types from multiple-choice questions to summarising the main content of the passage.

In addition to the textbooks, both series also have websites with quizzes and links, and separate exercises for each course. Both series also include tests, teacher's guides and audiotapes. *Culture Café 1, 2, 3* and *7* include a student's CD, while there is a CD in *In Touch 1, 2, 4* and *8*. *Culture Café* series includes a separate grammar book called *Grammar Rules!* (Silk, Mäki and Kjisik 2003). That is why there are no grammar sections in the student's books, only suggestions for teachers as to which part of grammar should be covered in each course. The *In Touch* series does not have a separate grammar book.

2.3. Constructing the research tool

As there were no checklists that could be employed as such, it was necessary to construct a research tool. The analysis had three stages, the first was to explicate the concept of textbook washback, to determine the variables to be investigated, and to construct a research tool to be used in stages two and three. In the first phase of the research, textbook exercises were classified according to two criteria: first, the skill they concentrated on, and second, whether they represented a task type found in the matriculation examination. Altogether, 1986 exercises were classified according to these criteria. Several problems occurred in the classification process; for example, defining what constitutes an exercise was not always straightforward. A more refined research tool was clearly needed to study the textbook washback of the examination.

As the classifications made in the first round were not wholly consistent, the results of the research are based almost entirely on its second and third stages. Yet, the first round was extremely useful for revealing the possible problem areas so that clear criteria for classifications could be established before the second phase. The second phase of the research is unquestionably the most important one and thus the results presented here are mainly based on the second round of analysis. A third round of analysis was, however, conducted to verify the results. In essence, constructing the research tool meant answering questions so that the answers would be as helpful as possible in detecting washback, if any was to be found.

The number of exercises that followed the matriculation examination format was counted in each of the textbooks. The principal guideline was that for an exercise to qualify as a matriculation examination task type, it should effectively familiarise the students with the exam. Another principle was that an exercise could only be judged as following the matriculation examination format if completing the task would give students some kind of indication as to how well they might succeed in the exam. First, the exam papers were investigated to see which task types were actually employed in the exam and second, the textbook tasks were compared to those in the exam.

For some task types, such as summarising a text, the classification was fairly easy. In most cases, composition tasks were also unproblematic to classify. Other task types proved more complicated. For example, judging whether an exercise represented what is termed 'productive' gap filling was difficult as there was a wide variety of exercises that

could be classified as gap filling tasks. Consequently, only those exercises that clearly followed the exam format and also resembled it in terms of appearance were classified as gap filling exercises. Translation was another area where clear rules had to be established. Translation tasks were widely employed in the textbooks, but only those that followed the matriculation examination format were included in the figures for washback. Translation is a commonly used teaching technique and so considering each translation exercise evidence of washback from the matriculation examination would be an exaggeration. To qualify as an open-ended question, an exercise did not necessarily have to strictly follow the format used in the final examination. Distinguishing between questions that could be employed in the examination and those that would be unlikely to be used was deemed elusive, as the exam specifications do not state what kind of open-ended questions can be asked. All that was required to qualify as an open-ended question was that the question could be answered on the basis of what was read or heard.

As there are either three or four alternatives in the multiple-choice questions in the matriculation examination, no distinction was made on the basis of the number of distractors in the multiple-choice exercises. All listening and reading comprehension questions in the multiple-choice format were counted as types occurring in the matriculation examination, whereas with the multiple-choice gap filling, only those exercises that were as versatile as the ones used in the exam were counted. However, due to difficulties in classification – and in order to gain a more versatile picture of the number of multiple-choice questions – a separate category was created for those exercises that were in multiple-choice format, but which did not otherwise resemble the tasks in the matriculation examination. Even True/False questions, which can be seen as an extension of the multiple-choice format, belonged to this category. This categorisation process resulted in a fairly complex classification which will be outlined in more detail below.

3. Results

This section answers the two main questions related to task types: what task types are used in the matriculation examination, and how often are these task types employed in the textbooks? The section is divided into three subsections, of which the first concentrates on listening tasks and the second on reading tasks. The last subsection discusses the Composition and the Grammar and Vocabulary section, and provides an overview of the occurrence of multiple-choice tasks in the examination and in the textbooks. Each subsection first briefly discusses the matriculation examination, and then the textbooks in greater detail.

3.1. Matriculation examination listening tasks

Each of the matriculation examinations from 1996 to 2005 includes a listening comprehension test with both multiple-choice and open-ended questions; completion

and summary tasks are not employed. However, some changes in the number of alternatives and the language of the open-ended questions have taken place during the period. Prior to 2000, there were four alternatives in the multiple-choice questions, but since the spring of 2000, there have been only three alternatives. The open-ended questions have been in Finnish only since the spring of 2002, earlier they were always in English. The multiple-choice questions, in turn, are still in English. As the textbooks were published between 2001 and 2005, it is likely that not all of these changes are reflected in the first textbooks.

As Table Two shows, all the matriculation examination listening task types are employed in the *Culture Café* series, but the occurrence of different types seems to be random between the different courses. The greatest number of multiple-choice listening comprehension questions occurs in *Culture Café 2*. *Culture Café 7* has only the second highest number of multiple-choice listening tasks, whereas book 8 includes none. There are more questions in English than in Finnish, although the open-ended questions in the listening section have been in Finnish since 2002. In the *In Touch* series, there are no open-ended listening comprehension questions in Finnish at all.

Course	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Culture Café</i>								
Multiple-choice	-	4	1	2	1	2	3	-
Questions in Finnish	1	1	3	-	1	-	2	2
Questions in English	2	2	2	4	4	2	-	1
<i>In Touch</i>								
Multiple-choice	2	-	-	1	-	1	-	3
Questions in Finnish	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Questions in English	-	2	-	1	1	2	-	1

Table Two. *The number of matriculation examination type listening tasks.*

The number of listening tasks adopting the matriculation examination format is not very high in any of the books, but they form a significant percentage of all the listening comprehension tasks in the textbooks. Generally speaking, the number of matriculation examination type listening tasks is much lower in the *In Touch* series than in the *Culture Café* series. Figure One shows the distribution of the tasks in the two textbook series.

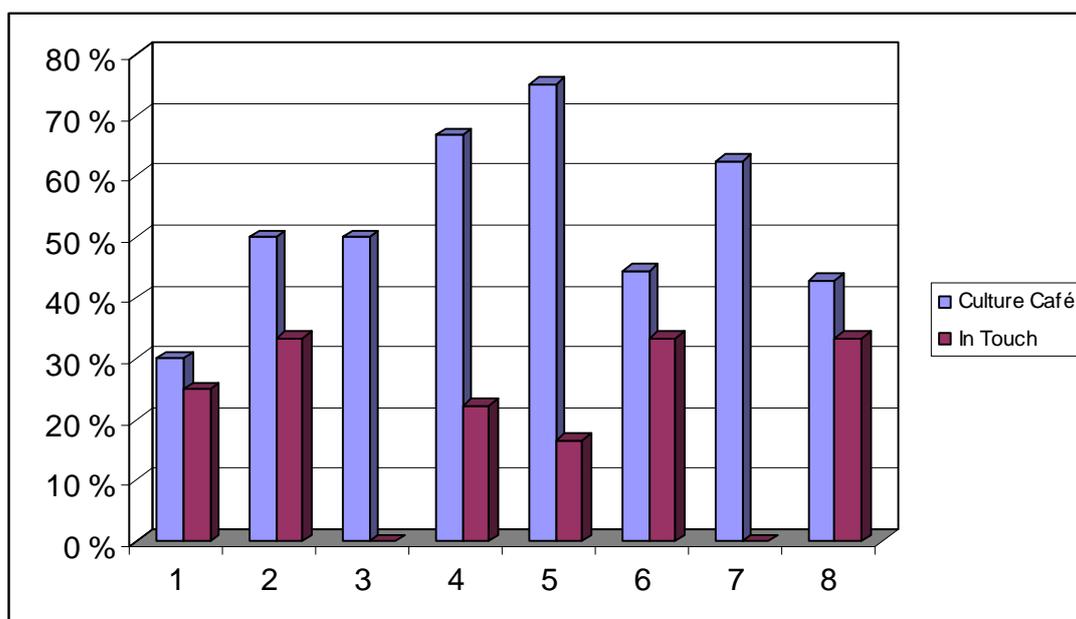


Figure One. The percentage of matriculation examination type listening tasks as a percentage of all listening tasks.

As can be seen in Figure One, more than 70% of all listening comprehension tasks in *Culture Café 5* are in the matriculation examination format. Even in Book One, which has the lowest percentage in the *Culture Café* series, almost 30% of the listening tasks are in the examination format. As Figure One shows, the situation is somewhat different in the *In Touch* series. In fact, there are two books, *In Touch 3* and *In Touch 7*, that do not include a single listening task that follows the matriculation examination format. In books 2, 6 and 8, which have the highest percentage in the *In Touch* series, exactly one third of the listening tasks are in the examination format. Compared to the *Culture Café* series, the percentage is fairly moderate.

3.2. Matriculation examination reading tasks

In the written part of the examination, there are always multiple-choice reading comprehension questions in English. Until spring 1999, there were four choices in the questions but since autumn 1999, there are usually only three alternatives. In most English matriculation examinations there are also open-ended reading comprehension questions. These open-ended questions have been in Finnish with the exception of spring 1998 when the questions were in English. Occasionally the open-ended questions have been replaced or supplemented by summary or translation tasks. As the last two task types have been employed so rarely, they are not included in Table Three. For the multiple-choice and open-ended questions, Table Three contains figures for each course. Again, the task types are relatively randomly distributed across different courses and there are fewer open-ended questions in Finnish in the *In Touch* series than in *Culture Café*. In fact, only the last three *In Touch* books contain open-ended reading comprehension questions in Finnish.

Course	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Culture Café</i>								
Multiple-choice	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	3
Questions in Finnish	3	-	-	3	2	1	3	4
Questions in English	1	1	1	1	3	2	5	1
<i>In Touch</i>								
Multiple-choice	-	-	1	1	1	1	3	2
Questions in Finnish	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2
Questions in English	2	3	4	5	4	2	-	3

Table Three. *The number of matriculation examination type reading tasks.*

Figure Two reveals what percentage of all reading comprehension tasks in the textbook series are in the matriculation examination format. To count the percentages, the number of multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions both in Finnish and English, summaries, and translation tasks in the exam format was divided by the total number of reading comprehension tasks in each book.

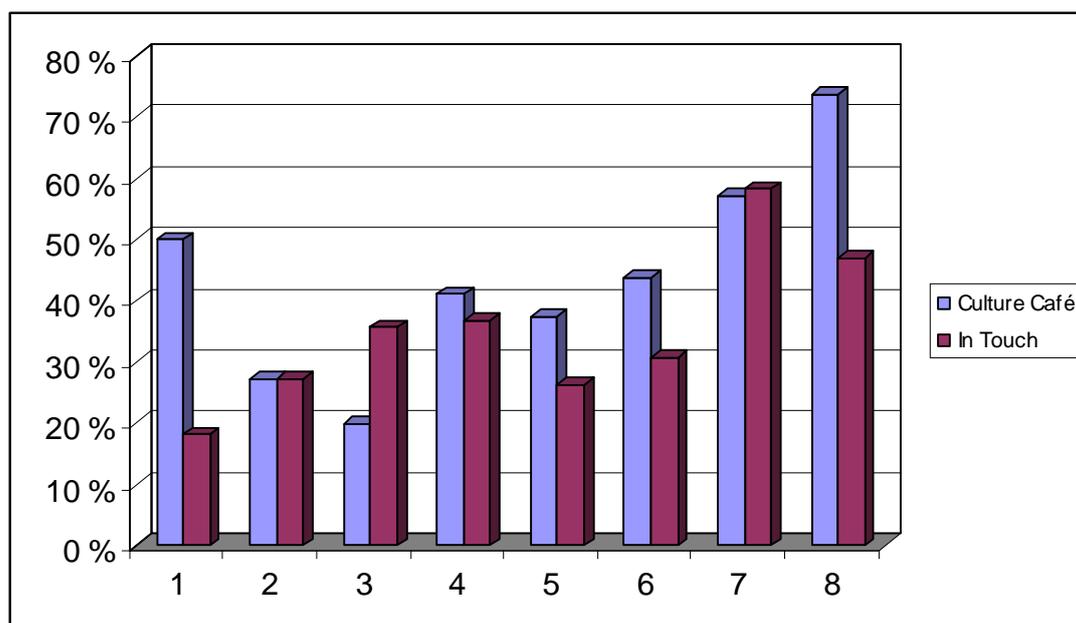


Figure Two. *The percentage of matriculation examination type reading tasks of all reading tasks.*

In both series, courses 7 and 8 clearly have the highest percentage of reading comprehension tasks in the exam format, although the percentage of exam type tasks cannot be said to grow gradually. As can be seen in Figure Two, the percentage is highest in *Culture Café 8*, where as many as 74%, or 14 out of 19, of the reading tasks are in the matriculation examination format. The situation is slightly different in the *In Touch* series,

where book 7 has a higher percentage of reading comprehension tasks in the exam format than book 8: 58% and 47%, respectively.

3.3. *Composition, multiple-choice and other tasks*

The listening and reading comprehension task types have now been covered, but two sections of the exam remain unconsidered: Composition, and Grammar & Vocabulary. All the matriculation examinations from 1996 to 2005 include a composition task. One can score a maximum of 99 points in the composition, which means that it accounts for one third of the total score available in the English examination. Students are given a choice of four composition titles, the great majority of which fall into the category of argumentative essays. However, in approximately half of the exam papers, students are given the possibility to write a speech for a certain situation. Less commonly, there is the option of writing a letter.

With the exception of *Culture Café 1*, there is one page of composition titles in each *Culture Café* book. Each of these pages comprises around a dozen composition titles and, for most titles, there are questions to guide the writing process, just as in the examination. The topics reflect the content of the courses, but generally they are very much like those used in the final exam. What is more, the majority of the titles are for argumentative essays, but some compositions are to be written either in speech or letter format, just as they can in the exam. In most cases, the number of words is not specified, but in *Culture Café 4*, published in 2004, the instruction is to write a composition of between 150 and 200 words, whereas in *Culture Café 8*, published in 2005, the number of words required is 150–250 (*Culture Café 4*: 93, *Culture Café 8*: 106). This reflects the changes in the matriculation exam: before 2005, students were required to write 150–200 words, but since then the number of words was raised to 150–250.

In the *In Touch* series, books 7 and 8 are the only ones that include whole pages of composition titles. The *In Touch* series usually includes a considerable number of writing exercises, but many of the exercises concentrate on types of writing that are not used in the matriculation examination. Thus *In Touch 1, 2, 3, 5* and *6* do not include any exercises that are in the matriculation examination composition format. Argumentative essays are first introduced in *In Touch 4*. The structure of an essay is explained, a model essay provided and three topics suggested for writing a composition of around 200 words (*In Touch 4*: 81–82). In *In Touch 7*, there are two pages of essay titles (*In Touch 7*: 85–86). In addition, students are presented with a brief revision of the structure of argumentative essays and asked to write a composition of 150–200 words on one of four topics (*In Touch 7*: 70). *In Touch 8* includes an eleven-page writing section, which begins with general guidelines for writing a composition, and then goes on to explore informal letters, speeches and essays, each in turn (*In Touch 8*: 104–114). The section concludes with four pages of composition titles, three for essays and one for speeches and letters. Again, the distribution of genres matches their occurrence in the matriculation examination.

The Grammar and Vocabulary section of the exam invariably includes a multiple-choice gap filling task and possibly also a 'productive' gap filling task. Without exception, there are four alternatives in the multiple-choice gap filling tasks in the exam. The only multiple-choice gap filling tasks that are almost identical to the ones used in the exam are three exercises in *Culture Café 8* and one exercise in *In Touch 8*. The total number of multiple-choice gap filling tasks that can be said to follow the matriculation examination format is relatively low: there are 15 tasks of this type in the *Culture Café* series and only 5 in the *In Touch* books. 'Productive' gap filling occurs much less frequently than multiple-choice gap filling both in the matriculation examination and in the textbooks. In both textbook series, there are three gap filling tasks that are in the matriculation examination format.

Course	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Culture Café</i>								
Exam multiple-choice	2	7	6	4	2	5	7	7
Other multiple-choice	4	2	8	6	10	4	2	7
<i>In Touch</i>								
Exam multiple-choice	2	1	1	2	1	2	5	7
Other multiple-choice	6	4	4	4	2	6	1	7

Table Four. *The number of multiple-choice tasks in the matriculation examination format and other multiple-choice tasks.*

Before concluding the section on results, another look at multiple-choice tasks is in order. After all, 49.8% of the points in the matriculation examinations from 1996 to 2005 were awarded for answering multiple-choice questions. Composition accounts for one third of the points and other task types for the remaining 17%. In addition to the listening and reading tasks in the multiple-choice format and the multiple-choice gap filling tasks, there are several other types of multiple-choice questions in the textbooks. For example, True/False questions are widely employed. Table Four presents the occurrence of matriculation examination type multiple-choice questions and the number of other multiple-choice tasks in each textbook. These figures were summed to obtain the total number of multiple-choice questions, which was then divided by the total number of exercises in each book.

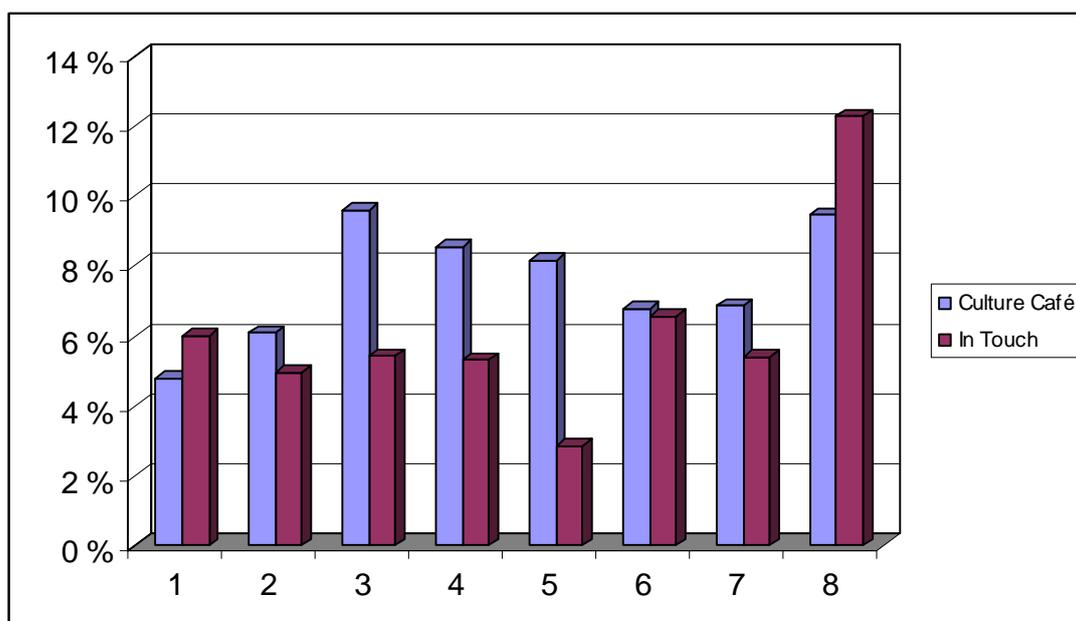


Figure Three. The percentage of multiple-choice tasks of all tasks in the textbooks.

Figure Three shows the percentage of multiple-choice tasks of all tasks in the textbooks. As can be seen in Figure Three, the percentage of multiple-choice tasks is much lower in the textbooks than in the matriculation examination. In the *Culture Café* series, the highest percentage of multiple-choice tasks is in book 3 with 9.6% of all tasks being in the multiple-choice format, but *Culture Café 8* comes very close with 9.5%. In the *In Touch* series, book 8 has the highest percentage of multiple-choice exercises, 12.3%. In comparison, in *In Touch 6*, which has the second highest percentage in the series, only 6.6% cent of all tasks are in the multiple-choice format.

4. Discussion

Both textbook series overtly state that they familiarise students with matriculation examination task types. The *Culture Café* homepage claims that all the task types of the matriculation examination become familiar right from the beginning (Otava 2008). Similarly, the *In Touch* homepage explicitly states that, in addition to improving language skills in general, one of the main purposes of courses 7 and 8 is to prepare students for the matriculation examination, for example, by introducing students to the task types used in the exam (WSOY 2008). A careful investigation of the textbooks reveals that these claims are not entirely truthful.

In the *In Touch* series, washback from the listening section seems to be weaker than from other parts of the exam. For example, *In Touch 7* does not contain any matriculation examination type listening tasks. In addition, there are no listening comprehension questions in Finnish in the whole series, although Finnish questions have been employed in every examination since 2002. A textbook writer who was interviewed for the study explained that the low number of matriculation examination type listening tasks in the *In Touch* series is due to the “technical skills” the matriculation examination requires. In

other words, in order to score highly one has to be familiar not only with the language, but also with the exam format. According to the interviewee, this is especially relevant for the listening section of the exam (Vainio 2006: 108). Thus, instead of trying to imitate past exam papers, the *In Touch* authors decided to concentrate on those task types that may come up in the exam but have not been employed yet. After all, preparing material that is already readily available in the form of past exam papers is pointless. On the other hand, *In Touch 7* and *8* prepare candidates well for the reading tasks in the exam, except that summary is practised only in *In Touch 4*. *In Touch 7* and *8* are the only books in the series that include matriculation examination type translation tasks or 'productive' gap filling exercises. In addition, they contain far more composition titles than the other books and nearly all the multiple-choice gap filling tasks in the series. Thus these two books familiarise students with the exam more effectively than the other *In Touch* books.

Washback from task types used in the reading comprehension section of the exam is much stronger than that of the listening comprehension test. In both textbook series, all the types of reading tasks which appear in the matriculation examination are employed, and courses *7* and *8* have the highest percentage of exam type reading tasks. The translation tasks of the matriculation examination, for example, have a fairly strong washback effect on the textbooks. There are as many as five exam format translation exercises in *Culture Café 8*, whereas each of the seven earlier books contain less than two translation exercises in this format. Similarly, in the *In Touch* series, only books *7* and *8* include translation tasks in the exam format. There are, however, also some differences between the textbook series. For example, the matriculation examination summary exerts much stronger washback on the *Culture Café* series than on the *In Touch* books.

The matriculation examination composition is an area which exerts washback on the textbooks, but does so implicitly rather than explicitly. This is well illustrated by a section called "How to write a composition" in *Culture Café 6*. Neither the matriculation examination, nor even the word *examination* is mentioned, yet the advice is implicitly directed at writing a matriculation examination composition. For example, students are reminded to copy the number of the composition title and warned against changing the topic of the composition (*Culture Café 6: 96*). Thus "How to write a matriculation examination composition" would be a much more honest title for the section. Students are also encouraged to count the number of words in their composition, a practice that is not an inherent part of writing a composition, nor an aid to learning a language. In the matriculation examination composition, however, having the right number of words is of great importance. The composition certainly exerts washback on both series, but in the *Culture Café* series, washback can be seen mostly in the vast quantity of practice students are given on writing exam compositions, whereas in the *In Touch* series the prominence of composition practice in the last two books indicates washback from the exam.

Both multiple-choice and 'productive' gap filling grammar and vocabulary tasks are signs of washback, in part because their number is the highest or they occur only in the

last books of the series. Although these exercises do not necessarily differ greatly from the ones used in the earlier books, the textbook authors have chosen to closely follow the matriculation examination format only in the last books of the series. These exercises are perhaps not pedagogically the most useful, but they have been included in the books because they effectively familiarise students with the examination. There could hardly be a clearer sign of washback.

The high number of multiple-choice questions in the examination does not seem to exert very strong washback on the textbooks. In neither of the series does the number of multiple-choice questions increase towards the last courses, nor at any point do they approach the high percentage employed in the examination. *In Touch 8* includes a higher percentage of multiple-choice questions than the other books in the series, but the same phenomenon does not appear in the *Culture Café* series. One might thus perhaps argue that the prominence of the multiple-choice format in the examination has *some* effect on the textbooks. There is a washback effect, but one has to look very carefully to see it.

The washback effect of multiple-choice tasks can be seen more clearly in the advice students are given than in the number of multiple-choice questions. Of course, if there were no multiple-choice tasks in the examination, the textbooks would not include advice on answering multiple-choice questions. As was discussed earlier, practice at multiple-choice tasks is not considered a good way to learn a language. Thus reading advice on how to answer multiple-choice questions is hardly a good way to improve one's language proficiency. Yet, both textbook series include this kind of advice (*Culture Café 6*: 92, *In Touch 7*: 47, 83). That the advice first appears only in *Culture Café 6* and in *In Touch 7* is itself a sign of washback. For if answering multiple-choice questions was a skill valued outside the matriculation examination, the advice would be introduced much earlier in the series. In the *In Touch* series, there are several tips concerned with completing multiple-choice tasks. In the *Culture Café* series, on the other hand, the advice is only implicitly directed towards the final exam. For example, the section on answering multiple-choice questions in *Culture Café 6* ostensibly refers to any "test situation" although the advice is clearly aimed at the matriculation examination (*Culture Café 6*: 92).

The main finding of the study is that, despite the pressure from the matriculation examination, the *Culture Café* and *In Touch* textbooks are extremely versatile. It is because of this versatility that drawing conclusions is so hard. Had the textbooks simply imitated past exam papers, establishing washback would have been simple. In the present situation, there are so many factors that need to be taken into account that to know whether a certain phenomenon can be assigned to washback is next to impossible. This problem is, however, a delightful one since it means that students are receiving instructions not only for the matriculation examination but also for life. That the researcher's questions cannot be answered in a clear cut manner is of no importance.

The present study shows that the matriculation examination is not the only force that drives the textbooks, far from it. The multiple-choice format does not dominate the

textbooks at any point. Nonetheless, one must bear in mind that the situation is probably very different in the classrooms. Although there is not very much washback at the textbook level, the washback effect is more likely to be visible in the classrooms. Especially in the last courses, the matriculation examination guides the actions of both teachers and students. What is important is that the textbooks themselves do not restrict the teaching and learning processes by focusing solely on the examination. To answer the question posed in the title of this article, multiple-choice testing does not lead to multiple-choice teaching. At least not in the *Culture Café* and *In Touch* textbooks.

References

Primary sources

- Benmergui Raquel, Lampinen Anni, Leinonen-Nuorgam Sanna, Mäki Jaakko, Päckilä Teijo and Silk Riitta 2004. *Culture Café* courses 1-8. Keuruu: Otava.
- Davies Mikael, Mäkelä Annukka, Nikkanen Lynn, Sutela Tuula, Säteri Leena and Vuorinen Petri 2004. *In Touch* courses 1-8. Porvoo: WSOY.
- Ylioppilastutkintolautakunta [1996–2005]. *English: Pitkä oppimäärä*. Unpublished exam papers.

Secondary sources

- Alderson J. Charles 2004. Foreword. In Cheng, Watanabe and Curtis (eds.): ix–xii.
- Alderson J. Charles and Hamp-Lyons Liz 1996. TOEFL preparation courses: A study of washback. *Language Testing* 13: 280–297.
- Alderson J. Charles and Wall Dianne 1993. Does washback exist? *Applied Linguistics* 14: 115–129.
- Bailey Kathleen M. 1999. *Washback in Language Testing*. (TOEFL Monograph Series, 15.) Princeton: Educational Testing Service.
- Baker David 1989. *Language Testing: A Critical Survey and Practical Guide*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Cambridge ESOL 2008. CPE (Certificate of Proficiency in English) [online]. Available: <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/general-english/cpe.html> (30 August 2008).
- Cheng Liying 1997. How does washback influence teaching? Implications for Hong Kong. *Language and Education* 11: 38–54.
- Cheng Liying 1999. Changing assessment: Washback on teacher perceptions and actions. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 15: 253–271.
- Cheng Liying 2005. *Changing Language Teaching through Language Testing: A Washback Study*. (Studies in Language Testing, 21.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Cheng Liying and Curtis Andy 2004. Washback or backwash: A review of the impact of testing on teaching and learning. In Cheng, Watanabe and Curtis (eds.): 3–17.
- Cheng Liying, Watanabe Yoshinori and Curtis Andy (eds.) 2004. *Washback in Language Testing: Research Contexts and Methods*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Davies F. I. 1999. Textbooks. In Spolsky (ed.): 337–343.
- Eckstein Max A. and Noah Harold J. 1993. *Secondary School Examinations: International Perspectives on Policies and Practice*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hamp-Lyons Liz 1998. Ethical test preparation practice: The case of the TOEFL. *TESOL Quarterly* 32: 329–337.
- Hamp-Lyons Liz 1999. The author responds... *TESOL Quarterly* 33: 270–274.
- Hawkey Roger 2005. The CPE textbook washback study [online]. Available: www.cambridgeesol.org/rs_notes/rs_nts20.pdf (13 June 2006).
- Heinonen Juha-Pekka 2005. *Opetussuunnitelmat vai oppimateriaalit: Peruskoulun opettajien käsityksiä opetussuunnitelmien ja oppimateriaalien merkityksestä opetuksessa*. Helsinki: Dark.
- Herman Joan L. and Golan Shari 1993. The effects of standardized testing on teaching and schools. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice* 12(4): 20–25, 41.
- Hilke Robert and Wadden Paul 1997. The TOEFL and its imitators: Analyzing the TOEFL and evaluating TOEFL-prep texts. *RELC Journal* 28: 28–53.
- Hughes Arthur 1989. *Testing for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kohonen Viljo and Pitkänen Antti J. (eds.) 1985. *Language Testing in School: AFinLA Yearbook 1985*. Tampere: The Finnish Association for Applied Linguistics.
- Kulm Gerald (ed.) 1990. *Assessing Higher Order Thinking in Mathematics*. Washington: American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- Matriculation Examination Board 2008. The Finnish matriculation examination [online]. Available: www.ylioppilastutkinto.fi/en/ (30 August 2008).
- Mehrens William A. and Kaminski John 1989. Methods for improving standardized test scores: Fruitful, fruitless, or fraudulent? *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice* 8 (1): 14–22.
- Messick Samuel 1996. Validity and washback in language testing. *Language Testing* 13: 241–256.
- Oller John W. Jr. 1979. *Language Tests at School: A Pragmatic Approach*. London: Longman.
- Otava 2008. Culture Café: Oppikirjasarja lukion A-englantiin [online]. Available: www.otava.fi/oppimateriaalit/oppimateriaali_sarjat/culturecafe/fi_FI/oppikirjat/ (30 August 2008).
- Pandey Tej 1990. Power items and the alignment of curriculum and assessment. In Kulm (ed.): 39–51.
- Qi Luxia 2005. Stakeholders' conflicting aims undermine the washback function of a high-stakes test. *Language Testing* 22: 140–173.

- Saville Nick and Hawkey Roger 2004. The IELTS impact study: Investigating washback on teaching materials. In Cheng, Watanabe and Curtis (eds.): 73–96.
- Silk Riitta, Mäki Jaakko and Kjisik Felicity 2003. *Grammar Rules!* Helsinki: Otava.
- Spolsky Bernard (ed.) 1999. *Concise Encyclopedia of Educational Linguistics*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Spolsky Bernard 1995. *Measured Words: The Development of Objective Language Testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Spratt Mary 2005. Washback and the classroom: The implications for teaching and learning of studies of washback from exams. *Language Teaching Research* 9: 5–29.
- Takala Sauli 1985. Criterion-referenced testing in foreign language teaching. In Kohonen and Pitkänen (eds.): 9–32.
- Vainio Sonja 2006. *Does Multiple-Choice Testing Lead to Multiple-Choice Teaching? Textbook Washback of the Finnish Matriculation Examination in English*. University of Turku: Master's thesis.
- Vongpumivitch Viphavee and Carr Nathan 2001. An interview with J. Charles Alderson. *Issues in Applied Linguistics* 12: 91–109.
- Wadden Paul and Hilke Robert 1999. Comments on Liz Hamp-Lyons' "Ethical test preparation practice: The case of the TOEFL". Polemic gone astray: A corrective to recent criticism of TOEFL preparation. *TESOL Quarterly* 33: 263–270.
- Wall Dianne 2005. *The Impact of High-Stakes Examinations on Classroom Teaching: A Case Study Using Insights from Testing and Innovation Theory*. (Studies in Language Testing, 22) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weir Cyril J. 1988. *Communicative Language Testing with Special Reference to English as a Foreign Language*. Exeter: University of Exeter.
- Wideen Marvin F., O'Shea Thomas, Pye Ivy and Ivany George 1997. High-stakes testing and the teaching of science. *Canadian Journal of Education* 22: 428–444.
- WSOY 2008. WSOY oppimateriaalit: Englanti [online]. Available: www.wsoyoppimateriaalit.fi/oppi/?aste=LU# (30 August 2008).
- Ylioppilastutkintolautakunta 2005. Kielikokeen määräykset ja ohjeet [online]. Available: www.ylioppilastutkinto.fi/fi/maaraykset/ainekohtaiset/kielikokeet.html (30 August 2008).

Development of L2 Negation: An empirical study of Finnish learners of English

Terhi Ylirisku

Abstract

In this article I will present the main results from the study of the development of EFL negation conducted for the purposes of my Master's thesis (Ylirisku 2008). In the study the central objective was to identify the regularities in the development of L2 English negation. My goal was to create a description of developmental stages for L2 negation and to place each subject on the stage corresponding to his or her achieved level of negation development. In addition, I wanted to discover whether there was an implicational scale that would portray the development of negation in Finnish learners of English. In this article, I will first introduce the central research questions and some focal points regarding the methodology of the study. After that, I will move on to explain how the data was organised and analysed. The subsequent part of the article concerns the results from the study. The results are discussed from two different viewpoints: the implicational scale perspective and the developmental Stages of Negation point of view.

1. Introduction

The development of L2 negation is a subject that has intrigued me since I first read about developmental sequences in second language learning. I could not help but wonder how it was possible that learners from different language backgrounds, of different ages, in different parts of the world could acquire English negation in almost exactly the same way. Why do these learners go through the same phases of negation development in the same order without even being exposed to formal language teaching? I started to consider whether the same order also applied to Finnish school children and adolescents acquiring English as their second language in an instructed learning environment. I wanted to discover what happens between the utterances **James doesn't are a doctor* and *James is not a doctor?*

Although the development of negation has been studied, it is not a popular research topic at the moment, nor has it been for the past two decades. Although a vast amount of research was conducted during the 1970s and 1980s, the past two decades are characterised by a void in this area of study. I wanted to adduce current data concerning the development of negation, especially in connection with instructed language learning. I aimed to determine what kind of negative structures were present in the interlanguages of Finnish students learning English as a second language, and whether they exhibited the same kind of developmental stages that were described for learners acquiring English in a naturalistic environment. Since the early studies of negation development emphasised the large degree of regularity in the interlanguages of second language

learners, I wanted to pinpoint those regularities concerning the development of negation in the production of Finnish learners of L2 English. The research presented in this article is based on my own study which I conducted for the purposes of my MA thesis (Ylirisku 2008). I will begin by outlining the most important research questions, and then report on the methodology of my study and my findings.

2. The Development of L2 Negation

My research concentrated on one specific language structure, namely the negative. While negation is post-auxiliary in Standard English, this is not necessarily the case in the interlanguages of second language learners. I wanted to observe what negative structures were present in the interlanguages of the learners I studied, and the extent to which they followed the norms of the target language, English. I wanted to find out whether there were any differences in these structures according to the age of the subjects or according to how many years they had been studying English. The study focused on observing the regularities governing the acquisition of negation. My goal was to formulate a continuum which would describe the developmental process shared by the subjects. In addition, I aimed at discovering whether the learners exhibited Stages of Negation development which paralleled those found by Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann (1978). Since so many of my sources deal with L2 English learning in a naturalistic setting, I wished to establish whether those learners who have received mainly formally instructed input follow the same developmental sequence as learners who have learnt English in a more naturalistic setting.

2.1. Research methods

A questionnaire was used to collect the data for this study. It contained both sentences where the subjects had the opportunity to produce the structure on their own as well as grammaticality judgements which forced them to state whether they accepted a particular structure or not. I based this distinction between active and passive understanding and use of the negative on Mackey and Gass's (2005) ideas about how to define a person's language competence. This choice is thoroughly explained in the MA thesis (Ylirisku 2008: 46). Two different questionnaires were developed to respond to the differing abilities of the large age range of the subjects. Although there were separate questionnaires for the older students, who were in their second year of upper secondary school when the study was carried out, the structure and content were the same for all subjects. I did, however, want to make the questionnaire slightly more challenging for the older respondents.

At the end of the questionnaire, I had a background section where the respondents filled in their sex, how many years they had studied English, how much they used English in their free time and their last grade in English. I gathered this information so

that it would be possible to compare the subjects according to their grades, use of English and the number of years they had studied the language.

2.2. Subjects

Although the aim of this research was to shed light on the *development* of a structure, the time frame prohibited me from using a longitudinal research method. Instead, I decided to employ a cross-sectional study method. This meant that I needed a relatively large group of respondents who would be in different Stages of Negation development at the time of measuring. Accordingly, I wanted to reach respondents from different school levels. Moreover, since one of my research goals was to determine whether the amount of exposure affected the developmental sequence of the negative, I wanted to include respondents from a standard Finnish comprehensive school as well as from a school where students had started studying English earlier than is customary in Finland. As a result, my subjects were drawn from a purposive convenience sample of respondents comprising of 131 subjects altogether.

The respondents from the regular comprehensive school all came from Uotila, Rauma. The youngest respondents were in the sixth grade in Uotilan koulu (School of Uotila, basic education for grades 1-6) when the research was carried out. The 27 subjects had studied English for almost four years. The next school level to be studied was a group of eighth graders in Uotilanrinteen peruskoulu (comprehensive school of Uotilanrinne, grades 7-9). This group consisted of 15 students who had studied English for six years (this did vary slightly from student to student). The oldest subjects in this study came from Uotilanrinteen lukio (upper secondary school of Uotilanrinne). They were all in the middle of the English course 6 when the study was conducted. There were two separate English 6 courses going on at the same time so I included both groups in my study, thereby gaining 37 responses from this age group. Since the students are not in separate grades in upper secondary school, their ages and the duration of their English studies varied.

The other section of the sample came from the Puolala School in Turku where it is possible to study English from the first grade onwards. I gathered information from 26 sixth graders who had studied English for six years on average. The older students from the Puolala school were eighth graders who had already studied English an average of eight years. This group consisted of 27 students. My intention was to have two groups of respondents from all of the three school levels but this proved to be problematic since I was not able to locate respondents at upper secondary school level who would have had a background in the Puolala School (or any other language-oriented class for that matter). This meant that I managed to gather collateral material from regular comprehensive school versus language-oriented school only on the two school levels of sixth graders and eighth graders but not from the upper secondary school.

2.3. Coding the gathered data

Each questionnaire was numbered and coded. Sixth graders from Uotilan koulu were coded as A1: 1-13 and A2: 1-14, altogether 27. Eighth graders from Uotilanrinteen peruskoulu were coded as Y1: 1-8 and Y2: 1-7. Students in Uotilanrinteen lukio received codes L1: 1-20 and L2: 1-17. When moving on to Puolala school the codes are PA1: 1-12 and PA2: 1-14 for the sixth graders and PY1: 1-14 and PY2: 1-13 for the eighth graders. The reason why there are two separate code groups (for instance A1 and A2, PA1 and PA2) for each class of subjects is that there were two separate questionnaires used in each group, the only difference being the order of test sentences.

As stated above, I asked the subjects to fill in information concerning their sex, the number of years they had studied English prior to the study, how much they used English in their free time, and their last grade in English. The feature that proved to be most valuable in analysing the data was the length of the subjects' English studies. As regards to how many years the subjects had studied English, I divided the answers into three categories. Those who had studied English for 0-4 years, fell into Category 1. Those who had studied for 5-7 years fell into Category 2, and those who had studied English for eight years or more were in Category 3. The subjects from Uotila had started their English studies in the third grade while the subjects from Puolala were mainly students who had begun their English studies already in the first grade. Accordingly, Category 1 included the sixth graders from the school of Uotila, Category 2 the eighth graders from Uotila and the sixth graders from Puolala, Category 3, in turn, included the students from the upper secondary school in Uotila and the eighth graders from Puolala. This division is only descriptive in the sense that there were subjects who would have belonged to one group on the basis of their school and current school grade but actually fell into another category based on the years they had studied English. This happened because some students had joined the language class later than the majority. The same also applied the other way around, that is, some students in the regular school had studied English longer than expected.

2.4. Analysing and organising the data

The data collected from the questionnaires was assessed from two different viewpoints, namely the implicational scale and developmental stages perspectives. Numerous regularities were identified in the errors the subjects had produced in their answer sheets. The discovery of these regularities, in turn, led me to construct an implicational scale of the various characteristics of L2 negation. The construction process of the implicational scale will also be introduced below. After considering the implicational scales perspective, I will move on to discuss the developmental stages of negation.

After examining several answer sheets, I started to see certain regularities in the errors produced by the subjects. The errors were categorised systematically and fed into an Excel table reflecting the raw data. Each error category constituted a column in the

table while each subject was represented by a row in the table. I used the coding I had created for the subjects which was introduced above. Thus, the respondents from the upper secondary school in Uotila were coded as L1: 1-20 and L2: 1-17, for example. When I inserted data into the table, I used three symbols, namely S for stable correct, Si for stable incorrect and V for sometimes correct, sometimes incorrect. Accordingly, subjects who placed the negative particle correctly in every sentence received the symbol S in the column responding to negation placement. Subjects who placed the negator incorrectly on every possible occasion were classified Si whereas, subjects whose performance varied from sentence to sentence were classified as V. This distribution into three separate levels, S, Si and V, is adapted from Collin and Holec (1985).

The questionnaires revealed that the subjects had had considerable problems with the inflection of the auxiliary *do*, regarding both tense and person. Many subjects who produced sentences (or who left sentences uncorrected) such as **I doesn't like that* or **Jack doesn't like spaghetti yesterday*. As a result, I labelled two of the columns in the raw data table as *do Tense* and *do Person*, respectively. Another characteristic of the auxiliary *do* which proved problematic for the subjects was placing it in the sentence to begin with, meaning that some of the respondents, for example Y2: 4, formed negative sentences such as **Rebecca not play ice-hockey*. The English language requires the auxiliary *do* in the negative sentence if there is no other operator (modal auxiliaries, the main verb *to be* or the main verb *to have*) in the corresponding affirmative sentence. Some of the subjects had not yet mastered this characteristic of English negation. Therefore, I labelled one of the columns *do-Support Exists* to capture its possible absence.

The verb *to be* can act as the operator in the negative sentence in a manner that resembles do-support, for example *That is not a teddy-bear*. Some of the subjects created sentences which had neither do-support nor the copular verb *to be* as an operator resulting in expressions like **That not a teddy-bear* in the answer sheet of subject Y2: 4. A number of subjects had, indeed, inserted the copula *be* but not in concurrence with the subject. As a result, there were utterances like **Jane aren't funny* as opposed to the correct form *Jane isn't funny*. I combined these two types of errors, i.e. the lack of copula and the incorrect form of copula, and labelled that category of errors as *Copula be*.

Initially, I was concerned that I would not find any evidence of the initial stages of negation, i.e. of preverbal placement of the negative particle and the use of *no* as the negator instead of the correct negator *not*. This apprehension was due to the fact that the youngest subjects in my sample had already studied English for approximately three years prior to the study. I conjectured that the subjects would have acquired more advanced Stages of Negation development by the time of the study. As it happens, this was not the case. In fact, I did find signs of both of the above mentioned features and not just from the youngest students' answer sheets but also in the questionnaires of older respondents. For example, subject L2: 17 had accepted the sentence **James not is a doctor* as correct and subject A1: 13 had produced the sentence **Rebecca no plays ice-hockey*.

Consequently, I named one of the columns in the raw data table as *Placement of Negation* and another as *Negative Morpheme* to refer to instances where the respondents had misplaced the negator or used the incorrect negator, respectively. Again, each respondent received one of the symbols S, Si or V to denote their control of these features. Although I did come across errors in these features, the majority of the respondents had mastered both of them very well.

In addition to the features presented above, several errors concerning the use of auxiliaries were also observed. In fact, the problem lay in the subjects' overuse of auxiliaries and it was connected to their employment of operators in the English negation which was discussed above. Even though *do*-support is an integral element within English negation, it is unnecessary if there already is a modal auxiliary or the copula *be* in the sentence. Thus, subjects who occasionally produced sentences such as **You don't must eat apples* received V for this column which was labelled *Only One Auxiliary*. This category of errors included expressions with *do + neg + aux* constructions (like the example above), as well as expressions with *do + neg + copula* constructions like **That doesn't be teddybear*. Although these kinds of errors were not particularly frequent, I did, however, identify 20 respondents whose answer sheets contained such problems.

It is often stated that if a researcher is looking for certain things, he or she will find them in the data because the focus of the search affects the results. Naturally, I had planned the questionnaire so that examples of the above mentioned error categories would appear. In addition, I had sentences which would show evidence of the subjects' use of modal auxiliaries. Whereas the features of negation discussed above were represented rather extensively in the questionnaire, there were only one or two sentences dealing with each of the modals. Thus, the distributions of S, Si and V in the columns concerning the modals do not reveal much of the subjects' real usage of them. If a subject translated one sentence correctly with *will*, he or she would have been labelled as S, i.e. all correct. The matter was further complicated by the condition that many of the subjects managed to paraphrase the sentences so that they were correct according to the target language norm but they did not use the auxiliaries I had anticipated. For example, in connection with the auxiliary *will*, there was the Finnish sentence *En tule kouluun huomenna*. I had anticipated a translation such as *I will not come to school tomorrow* but subjects produced sentences such as *I'm not coming to school tomorrow*. As far as the auxiliaries are concerned, I labelled all the target-like forms correct even if they did not include the anticipated auxiliary.

However, I noted that the problem I had with several of the modal auxiliaries, namely that the subjects tended to paraphrase the sentence and not use the modals at all, was not as prevalent in the case of the auxiliary *can*. Actually, the situation was quite the opposite for *can*, since many of the respondents had paraphrased the sentence where I had intended them to use the modal auxiliary *must* and had used *can* instead! I dealt with this situation by marking each appearance of *can* as either correct or incorrect regardless

of whether or not it was anticipated. As a result, the data for *can* was more extensive than for other modal auxiliaries. In addition, the column *can* in the raw data table had one of the highest number of S's. This implied that it was among the most widely acquired features of negation. As a result of these two factors, I decided to include *can* in a further analysis as the only modal auxiliary.

When I went through the answer sheets, I calculated how many sentences were completely correct according to the target language norms and, additionally, corresponded to the requirements of the questionnaire. Subsequently, I counted the percentage of correct sentences of all the sentences in the questionnaire and inserted this data in the table for each subject.

During the analysis, I collected the information about the different distributions of S, Si and V in different error categories i.e. in different columns in the table. As a result, there was data of each of the categories: *do Tense*, *do Person*, *Placement of Negation*, *Negative Morpheme*, *Copula be*, *do-Support Exists*, *Only One Auxiliary* and *can*. I also counted the percentages for the three symbols with regard to each of the columns.

Once I had determined how many of the subjects had reached the label S for each error category respectively, I arranged the columns so that the one with the most S's (*Negative Morpheme*), was at the leftmost end of the table and the one with the least S's (*do Tense*) was at the rightmost end. Thus, the order of the columns, according to the number of stable correct answer sheets, was from left to right *Negative Morpheme*, *Placement of Negation*, *can*, *do-Support*, *Only One Auxiliary*, *Copula Inflection*, *do Person* and *do Tense*. After this, I arranged the subjects according to the percentages they had reached. The one with the highest percentage is at the top and the one with the lowest score is on the bottom. Since the subjects were already organised according to the percentage of correct answers they had received in the study, I felt that it would be useful to see whether there was a tendency for subjects who had the longest exposure to English to be placed in the upper part of the table. For this reason, I added a new column to the table. This column demonstrated how many years each subject had studied English when the study was conducted. I used the categories mentioned above: 1 for 0-4 years, 2 for 5-7 and 3 for 8 years or more. Table One demonstrates how all of this information is organised.

3. Results

The results from my study can be divided into two separate sections. I will first discuss the implicational scale perspective resulting from the analysis above and will then proceed to examine the developmental Stages of Negation and the subjects' positioning on those levels.

3.1. The implicational scale perspective

SUBJECT	DURATION OF ENGLISH STUDIES	1 NEGATIVE MORPHEME	2 PLACEMENT OF NEGATION	3 can	4 do-SUPPORT EXISTS	5 ONLY ONE AUXILIARY	6 CORPULA INFLECTION	7 do PERSON	8 do TENSE	%
L2:15	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,00	
L2:16	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,00	
PA1:4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,00	
PA1:8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,00	
PY1:1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,00	
PY2:12	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,00	
PY2:2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,00	
L1:14	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,80	
L1:2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,80	
L1:4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,80	
L2:4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,80	
L2:7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,80	
A2:13	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
PA1:10	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
PA2:8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
PY1:10	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
PY1:12	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
PA2:9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
PY1:16	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
PY2:10	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
PY2:3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
PY2:6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
PY2:7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
Y2:7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96,30	
L1:13	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	93,50	
L1:15	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	93,50	
L2:1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	93,50	
L2:6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	93,50	
A1:3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
PA1:3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
PA2:5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
PA2:7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
PA2:9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
PY1:5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
PY1:9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
PY2:1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
PY2:8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
Y1:3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
Y1:5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
Y2:5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92,60	
L1:16	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	90,30	
L1:18	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	90,30	
L1:20	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	90,30	
L1:5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	90,30	
L2:12	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	90,30	
L2:2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	90,30	
A1:1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,90	
A1:6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,90	
A2:8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,90	
PA1:1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,90	
PA1:6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,90	
PA1:9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,90	
PA2:11	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,90	
PY1:8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,90	
Y2:3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,90	
L1:11	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	87,10	
L1:14	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	87,10	
L2:11	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	87,10	
A1:5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,20	
PA1:12	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,20	
PA2:13	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,20	
PA2:2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,20	
PA2:6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,20	
PY1:14	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,20	
PY1:3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,20	
PY2:4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,20	
PY2:9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,20	
Y2:2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,20	
L1:3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	83,90	
L1:7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	83,90	
L1:9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	83,90	
L2:10	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	83,90	
L2:13	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	83,90	
A1:8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	81,50	
A2:9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	81,50	
PA1:7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	81,50	
PA2:14	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	81,50	
PY1:13	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	81,50	
PY1:2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	81,50	
PY2:5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	81,50	
Y1:7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	81,50	
L1:19	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80,60	
L2:8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80,60	
PA1:2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77,80	
PA1:5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77,80	
PA2:3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77,80	
PY1:4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77,80	
PY1:7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77,80	
L1:1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77,40	
L1:12	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77,40	
L2:17	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77,40	
L2:3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77,40	
L1:10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74,10	
A1:9	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74,10	
A2:10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74,10	
A2:7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74,10	
PA2:1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74,10	
PA2:4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74,10	
PA2:13	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74,10	
PA2:12	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74,00	
L1:16	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	71,00	
L2:5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	71,00	
PA1:11	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,40	
PY2:11	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,40	
Y1:4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,40	
Y2:6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,40	
A1:12	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	66,70	
A2:2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	66,70	
A1:4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	63,00	
A1:7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	63,00	
A2:14	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	63,00	
Y1:6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	63,00	
PA2:10	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59,30	
Y1:8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59,30	
L1:17	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58,10	
L1:8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58,10	
L2:9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58,10	
PY1:11	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55,60	
A2:3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	51,90	
A2:11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48,10	
A2:5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48,10	
A1:13	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,70	
A2:1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,70	
A2:12	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,70	
A2:6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,70	
A2:4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	37,00	
Y1:2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	37,00	
A1:11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33,30	
A1:2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33,30	
Y1:1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33,30	
Y2:4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29,60	
Y2:1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29,60	

Table One. The implicational scale without the modals.

Table One is constructed as follows: the different features of negation (the error categories called *Negative Morpheme*, *Placement of negation* etc.) make up the columns in the table. They are arranged according to their degree of difficulty. This degree was deduced from the proportion of S's the subjects had achieved for each category respectively. The one with the most S's was considered to be the easiest and was positioned at the left end of the table. I numbered these columns from 1 to 8 starting from the left. The subjects I had studied made up the rows. They are positioned in the table

according to how far from the target they are, those who were closest to the target are at the top. For each subject there are S's in the columns describing negation features in which he or she performed according to the target norm, Si's in which he or she performed against the target norm in every possible occasion, and V's if the performance of the subject varied.) At this point in the analysis, I utilised Hyltenstam's work on implicational scales (Hyltenstam 1977). I followed his ideas but modified them to fit my data. If there are implicational patterns in the data, i.e. if the column 1 is always acquired before 2, and 2 always acquired before 3 etc., then this fact is mirrored in the scale in such a way that in a certain row all the S's come to the left of all the V's and Si's (Hyltenstam 1977: 391). In general terms, this is the situation in Table One.

Accordingly, when one looks at Table One, the first seven rows are all S's since these subjects reached the total of 100% of correct sentences when all the features of negation were concerned. Then again, in row 9 (subject L1: 2) there is only one V and it is at the rightmost end of the scale. Looking at Table One, 1 one could state that, at least broadly speaking, there, indeed, is an implicational pattern in the data. This can be concluded from the fact that whenever there is a row which has S's, (Si's) and V's in it, there are always more S's to the left of the vertical line in the scales than to the right of it. Of course, this distribution is not without deviations since there are some V's or Si's to the left of the S's in a few rows (Hyltenstam 1977: 391-394). This is unsurprising given that some of the columns are represented by only one or two sentences in the questionnaire and the label S, Si or V is assigned on this limited data. Thus, a subject might have failed to notice an error in a grammatical judgement sentence and gained a V for a certain column as a result.

Although there may be some irregularities in Table One, the data are nonetheless surprisingly consistent: there are only two subjects (PY2: 6 and PA1: 1) out of the 131 whose row represents a situation with more S's on the right side of the vertical line than on the left. Moreover, there are four subjects (PA2: 11, L1: 19, A1: 7 and Y1: 1) who have the same number of S's on both sides of the vertical line, meaning that in the remaining 125 rows there are more S's on the left side of the vertical line than on the right side. This indicates that there *are* implicational patterns in this data. When looking at Table One, one can see that the bulk of S's are mainly located in the upper left part of the table while the majority of V's and Si's are located on the lower right side. Hence, Table One can be regarded as reflecting the development of negation proceeding from simpler features such as the correct use of the negative particle towards the more complex ones like the inflection of copula *be* and the auxiliary *do*. One thing that should be kept in mind when viewing Table One is that the percentages include all the features of negation, also those are not visible in Table One. Subsequently, I will progress to analysing of the data in terms of what they revealed about the development of negation.

3.2. The developmental stages of negation perspective

Having organised the collected data into implicational scales, I turned to an entirely different way of reviewing the results, namely the developmental Stages of Negation introduced by Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann (1978). I will briefly summarise Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann's conception of the developmental sequence of negating devices because this cataloguing approach provided the basis for my conception of the stages in negation development. This is how Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann categorised the negating devices used by their subjects on different levels of negation development:

1. *no V*
 2. *don't V*
 3. *aux-neg*
 4. analyzed *don't*; disappearance of *no V*
- (Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann 1978: 218)

When I began to categorise my subjects into successive stages, I made some modifications to the categorising principles of Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann.

According to my cataloguing system, the first stage would be exemplified by the constructions *no V* or *not V*. For example, subject A1: 13 showed signs of the first stage with expressions such as **He not is small*. I added a further element to this first stage when I went through the answer sheets individually, namely the absence of *do Support*. Thus, although there was no sign of preverbal negation in the subject's answers, I categorised each sentence without the *do Support* as belonging to the first stage of development. Hence, a sentence such as **I like not that* would be an example of the first stage. Later on in the analysis, I chose to include any sentence without an operator (whether it was supposed to be *do* or *be*) within this category. As a result, sentences such as **Tim not interesting* were also classified as belonging to the first stage. I also considered this to be justified when it came to the distribution of S's, Si's and Vss in relation to the columns *do Support* and the *Copula be*. Both of these features were widely acquired, meaning that many of the subjects were already able to deal with these at the time of the study. Thus, it is probable that they belong closer to the initial Stages of Negation development.

If the subjects belonged to the second stage, their predominant form of negation was the *do + neg + V* construction. At this stage, the *do + neg* structure functioned as an unanalysed chunk, as an allomorph for *no* and *not*, and it was not perceived to consist of *do + neg* by the subjects. I considered utterances with *don't/doesn't/didn't + aux/copula* constructions to support this view because, in these kinds of structures, the *don't*, *doesn't* or *didn't* acted as the negator of the sentence. This particular feature of the second stage is exemplified by the subject A1: 5 who had used the following structure: **You don't should eat apples* and the subject A1: 11 who had used an utterance like **James doesn't are a doctor*.

I also included sentences such as **He don't small* (used by subject A1: 2) to the second stage. The common denominator in these sentences was the fact that the subject had used the operator *do* by itself without a main verb.

Once the subjects had reached the third stage, there were appearances of the *aux + neg* construction. So, at this stage the subjects had learned to place the negative particle correctly after the auxiliary, but there were still problems with the operator *do*. Since *do* is both the tense and person carrier, one should see it in its various forms *don't*, *doesn't* and *didn't* according to the person and tense of the sentence. The use of these forms, however, varied among the subjects at this stage. The copula *be* should also vary according to the person of the sentence, as well as according to the tense. Thus, I interpreted sentences with *be* in the same way as sentences with *do*; if the auxiliary was there but not in accordance with the person and tense of the sentence, it was treated as a sign of the third stage of negation development. The transition to the final stage was marked by the correct use of the different forms of *do* and *be*. These four stages are introduced in Table Two.

EXAMPLES

<u>STAGE 1</u>	
- <i>no V</i>	* Rebecca no plays ice-hockey.
- <i>not V</i>	* I not like that.
- <i>V no</i>	* Rebecca play no ice-hockey.
- <i>V not</i>	* I want not it.
- utterances without <i>do</i> -support	* You not eat apples.
- utterances without auxiliary <i>be</i>	* Tim not interesting.
<u>STAGE 2</u>	
- <i>don't V</i>	
- unanalysed <i>don't</i> , <i>doesn't</i> and <i>didn't</i> as negators	
- <i>do+neg+aux</i> constructions	* Vivian don't can sing.
- <i>do+neg+be</i> constructions	* James don't is a teacher.
<u>STAGE 3</u>	
- <i>aux + neg</i>	
- unanalysed <i>do+neg</i> forms	* He don't like spaghetti.
- unanalysed <i>be+neg</i> forms	* Tim aren't interesting.
<u>STAGE 4</u>	
- analysed <i>so+neg</i> forms	* He doesn't like it.

Table Two. *The Developmental Stages of Negation.*

Table Two brings together the information presented above concerning the four Stages of Negation development according to my data. I included several characteristics of each stage within Table Two because I wanted the description to mirror the data I had collected and to function as the basis for assigning subjects into successive stages. Next, I

will advance to the introduction of these four developmental stages when it comes to the subjects in my study.

3.2.1. Developmental stages of negation

When each subject was labelled as belonging to a certain stage of negation development, it soon became apparent that it was not just the percentual portions of each stage that was significant. This was, at least partly, due to the fact that there were certain kinds of errors in the answer sheets that did not clearly belong to a specific stage. In addition, I felt that in a situation where a subject had reached a percentage of 64% of the Stage 4 sentences, I could not automatically place him or her at Stage 4 since he or she could simultaneously have 22.2% of Stage 3 sentences which definitely did not mirror achievement as high as Stage 4. This is why I had to look at the bigger picture. I decided to utilise the principle of exclusion when assigning the subject into the developmental stages. By this I mean that with every subject I began with the assumption that he or she is at Stage 4 and then started to search the answer sheet for possible signs of lower level of development. If I found enough errors typical of earlier stages of development to ascertain that the specific subject is not at Stage 4 yet, then I assumed s/he was at Stage 3 and began to seek indication of yet a lower stage and so on. With the help of the method described above, I managed to assign a Stage for each subject. The distribution of the four Stages among the 131 subjects is demonstrated in Figure One.

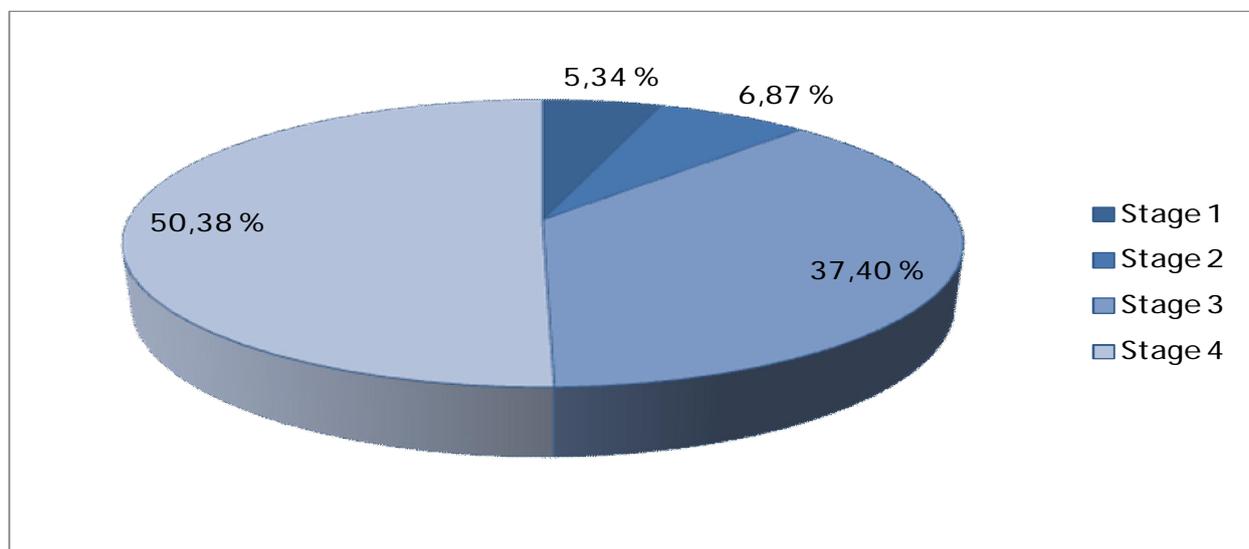


Figure One. *Distribution of the four developmental stages among the subjects.*

As Figure One shows, just over half of the subjects (50.4%) had already reached Stage 4 prior to the study. The second largest group were the subjects at Stage 3. They constituted over one third (37.4%) of the sample. There were nine subjects (6.9%) at Stage 2 and 7 subjects (5.3%) at Stage 1.

3.2.2. Differences in achieved developmental stage in relation to the subjects' school group

Figure One above demonstrated the developmental Stages of Negation that the subjects had achieved by the time the study was conducted. In this section, I will present the results for each school group separately. The focus will be on comparing the results of each school group to the sample average. In the next section, I will move on to discuss these results in relation to the duration of the subjects' English studies. I will begin with groups A1 and A2.

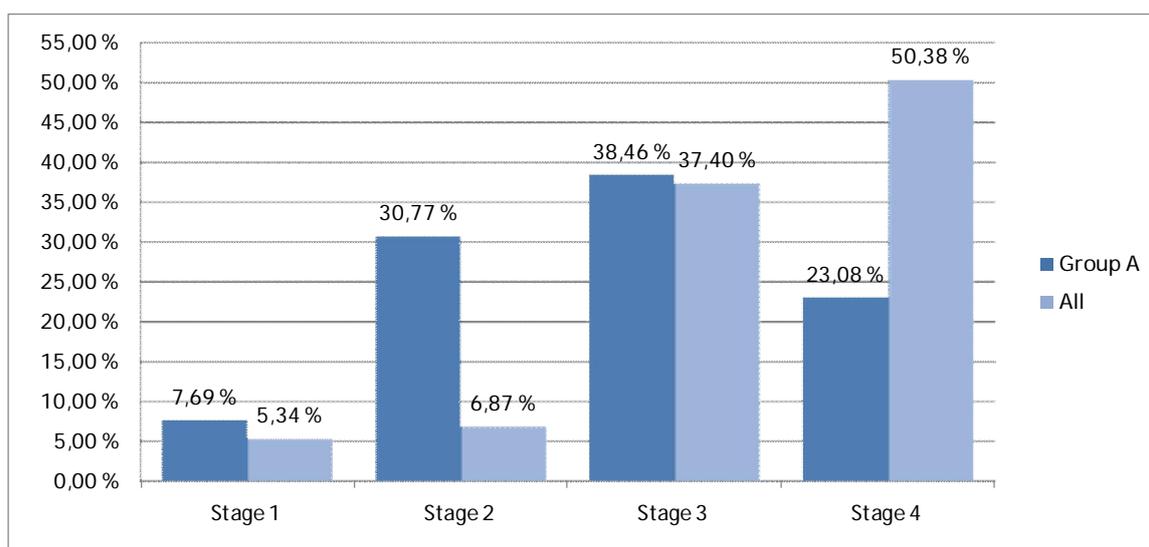


Figure Two. *The distribution of the developmental stages for Group A and for the whole sample.*

Figure Two describes the situation for the subjects in groups A1 and A2. When comparing the data of students in Group A (I will treat the groups A1 and A2 together here), i.e. sixth graders from a regular comprehensive school, to the Stages of subjects on average, it is obvious that there are differences. Only 23.1% of the subjects in Group A were at Stage 4 compared to the 50.4% of all the subjects. This divergence is also mirrored in the proportion of subjects at Stage 2. Of the subjects in Group A, 30.8% were at Stage 2, while only 6.9% of the whole sample were at Stage 2. As pictured in Figure Two, Stages 1 and 3 do not show any significant differences, when the A group is compared to the sample averages. In general, the subjects in Group A are on the lower end of the scale when the developmental Stages of the whole sample are compared.

Next, I will move on to discuss the performance of Group Y, which includes both Group Y1 and Group Y2, namely all the eighth graders from the regular comprehensive school. When I compared their achieved Stages of Negation development to the whole sample, I was surprised to find that 26.7% of them were at Stage 1 compared to the 5.3% of the whole sample (and 7.7% for Group A). The percentage is so high partly because of the small number of subjects in Group Y. While the percentage is 7.7% for A group, it includes only two students. The 26.7% portion of subjects at Stage 1 in Group Y means in practice that four of the students are at Stage 1. There was also a wide divergence as far

as Stage 4 is concerned. As mentioned earlier, 50.4% of all the subjects had reached Stage 4, but only 33.3% of the subjects in Group Y had acquired the highest stage of negation development. Stages 2 and 3 were fairly close to the average results. The comparison between Group Y and the whole sample is demonstrated in Figure Three below. Parallel to the A group, Group Y seems to fall behind when compared to the sample average as far as the developmental Stages achieved by the subjects in that group are concerned.

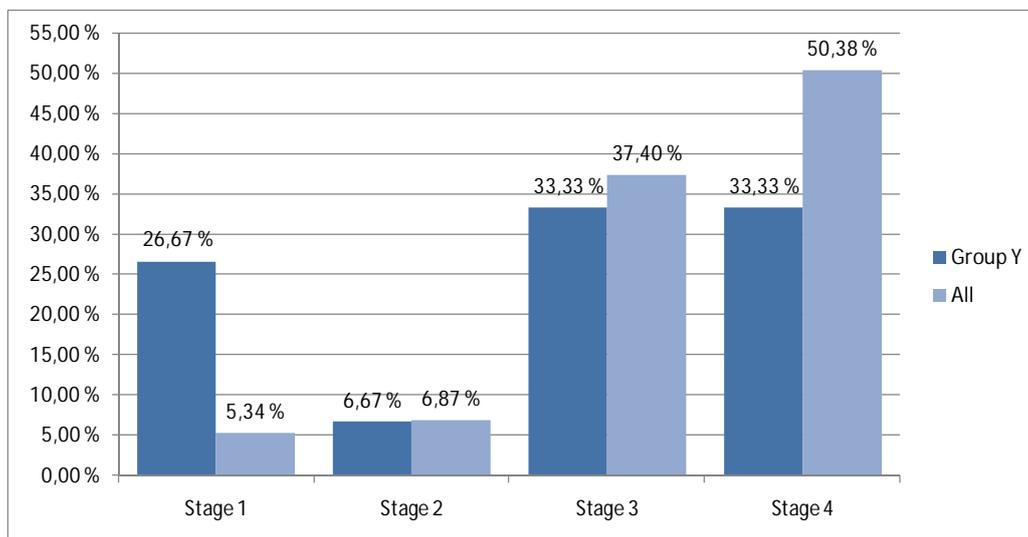


Figure Three. *The distribution of the developmental stages for Group Y and for the whole sample.*

The results from groups L1 and L2 (upper secondary school students) showed that the majority of these students had already reached Stage 4 when the study was conducted. The percentage of subjects at Stage 4 was slightly higher for the Group L than it was on average: the figures being 59.5% and 50.4%, respectively. Another difference between this group and the average is that while 6.9% of all subjects were at Stage 2, this percentage was 0% for the L group. The portion of subjects at Stage 1 is somewhat smaller for Group L than on average. Stage 3 is very similar for Group L and for the whole sample. Thus, it seems that Group L is above average when it comes to the developmental stages the subjects had achieved. Figure Four sums up this information.

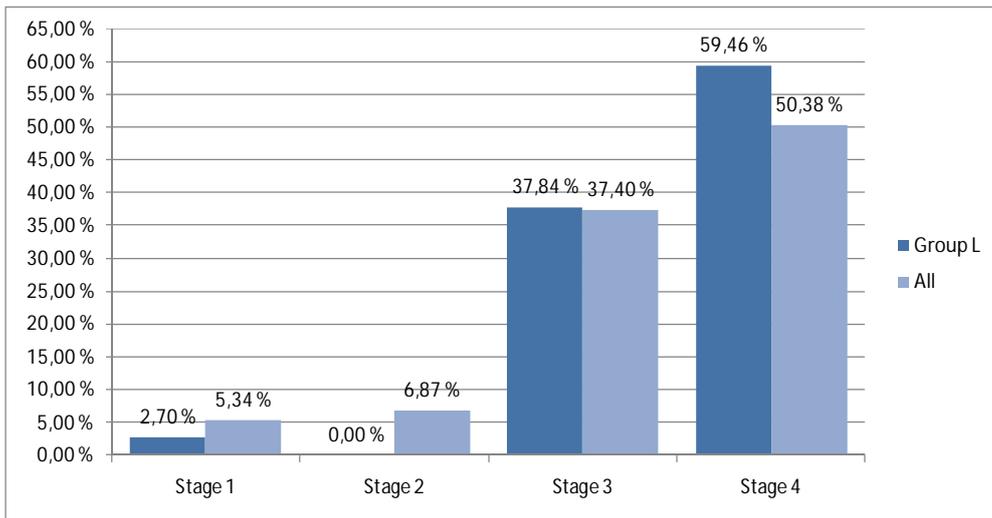


Figure Four. *The distribution of the developmental stages for Group L and for the whole sample.*

Subsequently, I will advance to view the results from subjects who had studied English in a language class all the way from the first grade. First, the subjects in groups PA1 and PA2 will be treated together as Group PA. When I viewed these results, I noticed that, startlingly, there were no subjects at Stages 1 or 2 in the PA group. Moreover, over half the subjects were already at Stage 4. The remainder, 46.2%, of the Group PA was at Stage 3. This somewhat surprising distribution of the results is demonstrated in Figure Five. Consequently, one can deduce that the subjects in the PA group were more advanced in their negation development than the subjects on average.

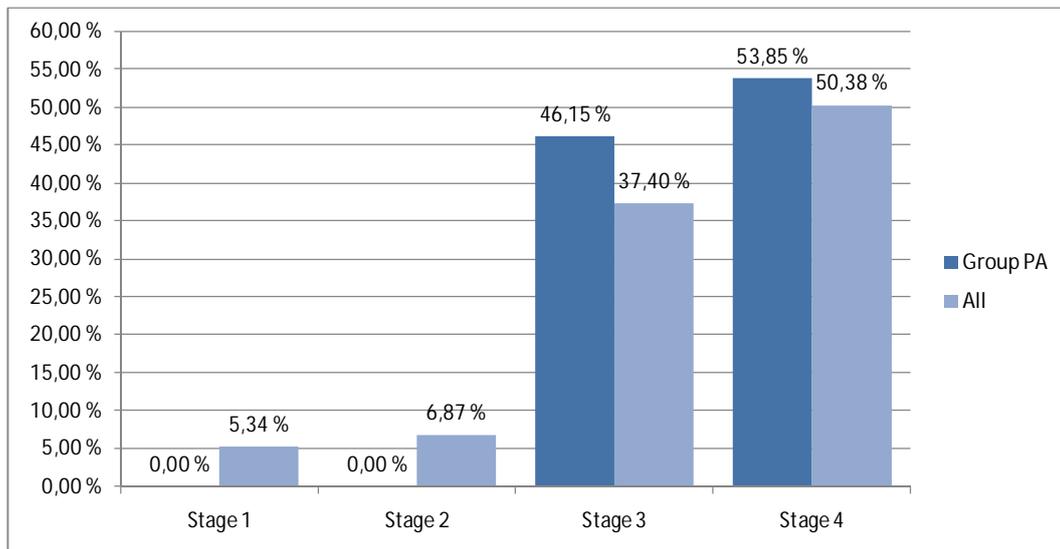


Figure Five. *The distribution of the developmental stages for Group PA and for the whole sample.*

The last group to be introduced is Group PY, which includes the language class students from the eighth grade. The percentages for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 are 0.0%. But, the PY group had achieved even higher percentage for Stage 4 than Group PA,

namely 70.4%. Stage 3 included 29.6% of the subjects in Group PY. Figure Six depicts this situation. The subjects in Group PY were clearly more advanced than the sample average.

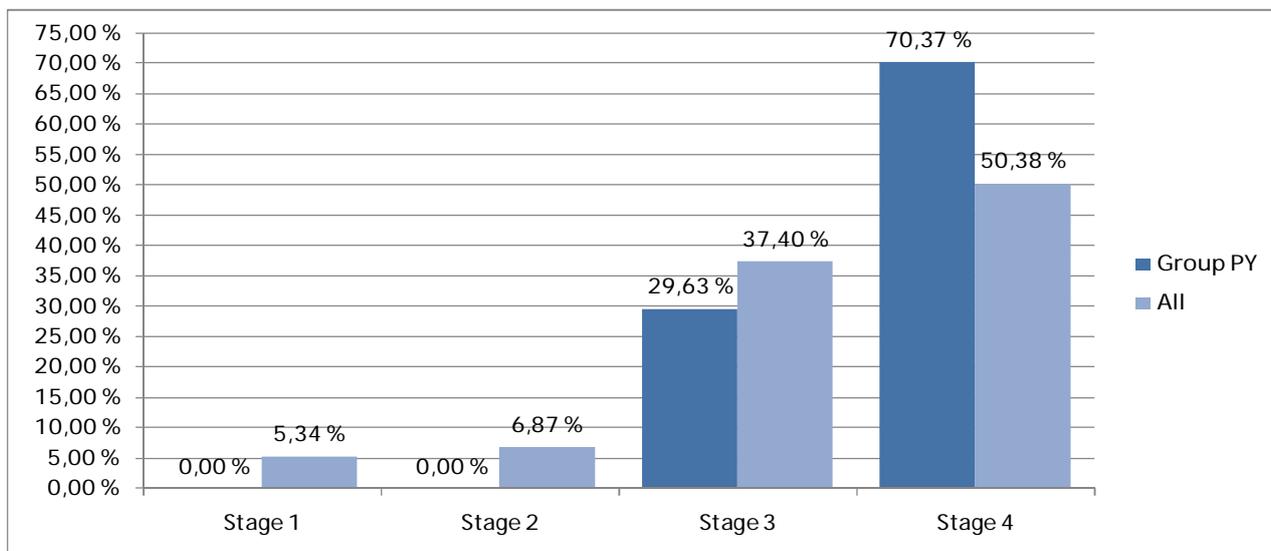


Figure Six. *The distribution of the developmental stages for Group PY and for the whole sample.*

In this section, I have dealt with each of the school groups separately. Figure Seven summarises this information to reflect the different distributions of the four developmental stages in the different school groups.

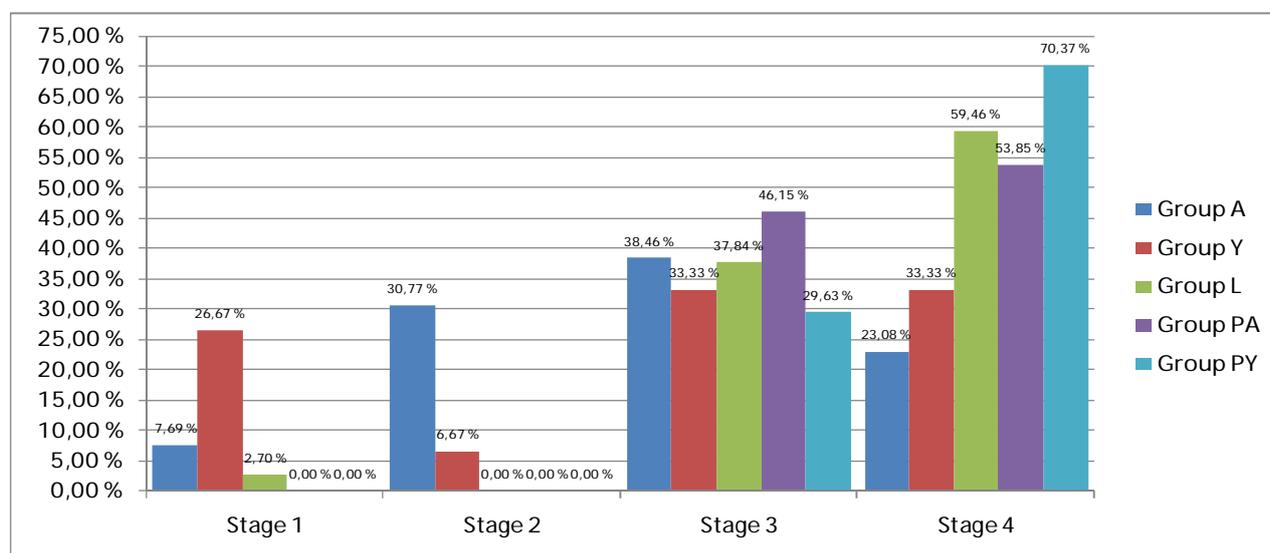


Figure Seven. *The distribution of the developmental stages according to the subjects' school group.*

Figure Seven clearly illustrates that there are significant differences between the school groups in the distribution of the four stages. For instance, if one views the results of the Group A and the Group PY side by side, the disparity is obvious. While the Group A's percentage is highest at Stage 3, the Group PY does not peak until Stage 4. Then again,

the Group A was well represented at Stage 2 but none of the subjects in the Group PY was at Stage 2 at the time of the study.

3.2.3. The development of negation and duration of English studies

Above I compared the school groups as chunks, but in this section I will treat the subjects according to the number of years they had studied English. The subjects were divided into three categories according to the duration of their English studies. 29 of the subjects belonged to Category 1 (had studied English for 0-4 years), 44 subjects belonged to Category 2 (i.e. they had studied English for 5-7 years) and the remaining 58 subjects had already studied English for more than 8 years and thus belonged to Category 3.

As seen in Figure 8 below, the distribution of the developmental Stages of Negation is clearly related to the duration of the subjects' English studies. While the percentage of subjects at Stages 1, 2 and 3 decreases as the number of English study years increases, the situation is just the opposite for Stage 4. The impact of the duration of English studies becomes evident when one compares the portion of Stage 4 subjects in these three categories. For students who have studied English for four years or less, the percentage of subjects at Stage 4 is only 24.1%. This percentage doubles when one moves on to review the results of subjects who have studied English for 5-7 years, hence the percentage for group 2 is 47.7%. Subjects belonging to Category 3 had already studied English for eight years or more and 65.5% of them had reached the Stage 4. What is notable in Figure Eight is that even in Category 1 the dominant stage is Stage 3. The lowest Stages, 1 and 2, do not dominate in any of the categories.

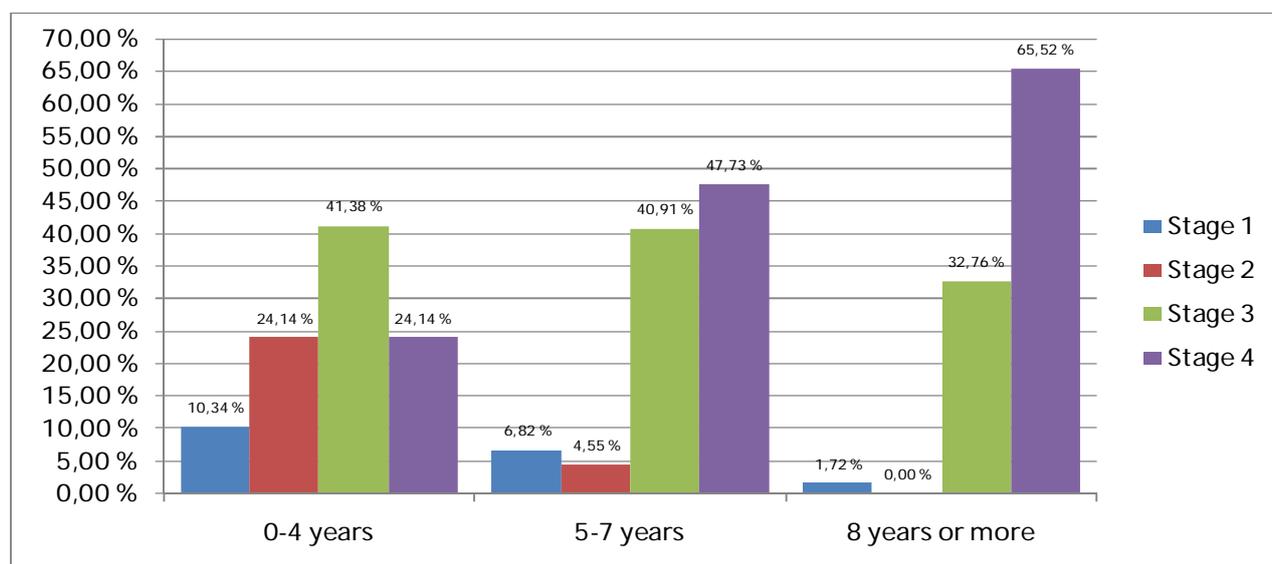


Figure Eight. *The distribution of the developmental stages in relation to the duration of English studies.*

Above I stated that the duration of the subjects' English studies has an impact on the achieved Stage. Related to this is the issue of age, that is, whether age has an impact on the distribution of the developmental Stages of Negation. Earlier I reviewed the

distribution of the four developmental stages in each of the school groups. In that connection, I did not consider the subjects' age at all. I will examine this issue now. If one looks at Figure Seven above, it is clear that the distribution of the stages is not so much a matter of age as it is a matter of the amount of exposure. Subjects in Groups A and PA are of the same age since they were all in the sixth grade at the time of the study. However, their results are not parallel at all. Group PA is far more advanced than Group A. At this point, one should bear in mind that the students in Group A had studied English only for 0-4 years which explains why they were in Category 1. On the other hand, students in Group PA mostly belonged to Category 2 when it came to the length of their English studies. Thus, they had studied English for 5-7 years. The differences between these two groups of subjects of the same age is presented in Figure Nine.

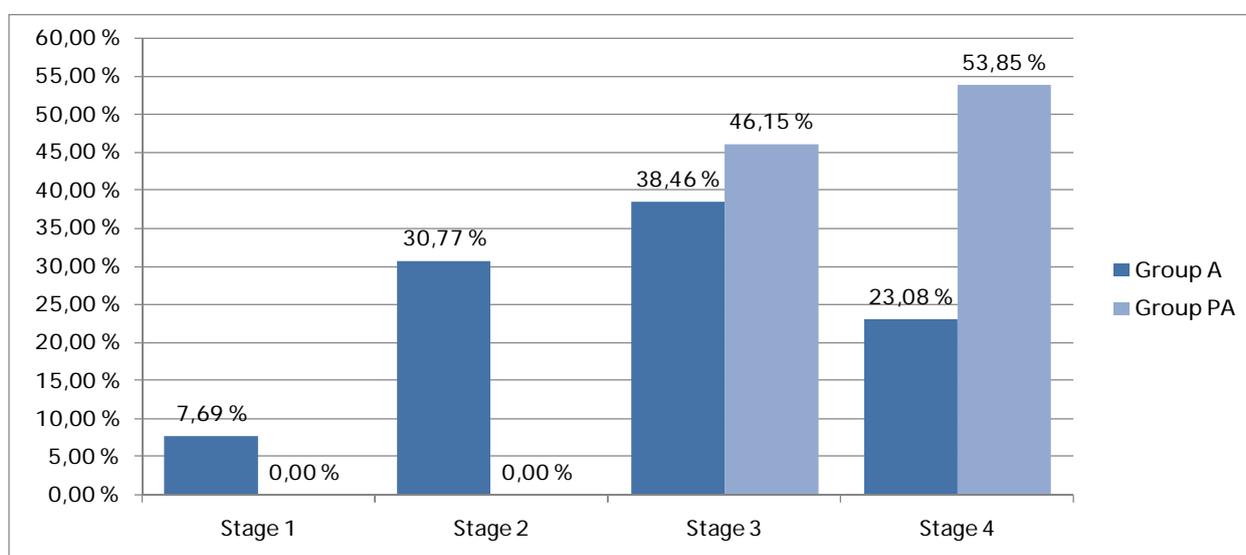


Figure Nine. Comparing the distribution of the developmental stages in groups A and PA.

The same is true for the Groups Y and PY, both of which include subjects who were in the eighth grade when the research was conducted. There is an apparent divergence in the distribution of the developmental stages when these two groups are compared to each other. Again, it is the PY group that has advanced to the higher stages compared to the Group Y. Once more, it has to be noted that most of the students in the Group Y belonged to Category 2 on the basis of the duration of their English studies, meaning that they had studied English for 5-7 years. However, the majority of students in Group PY had studied English for eight years or more and therefore were in Category 3 as far as the duration of their English studies was concerned. Groups Y and PY are compared to one another in Figure Ten. It is apparent that these subjects who are coeval are far away from each other as regards the developmental Stage of Negation.

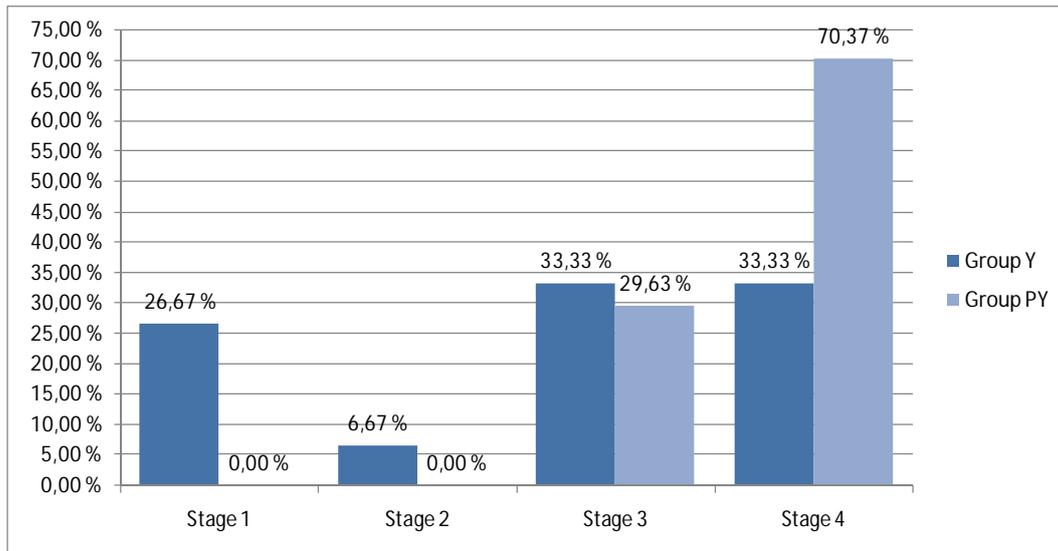


Figure Ten. Comparing the distribution of the developmental stages in groups Y and PY.

Thus far I have stated that although the two groups of subjects are coeval, the one with more exposure to English has achieved higher Stages of Negation development. What about a situation where there are two groups of subjects who have studied English for approximately the same number of years but one of the groups consists of younger students? This situation is reflected in Figure Eleven where the PY group is compared to the L group. There we can see that the PY group was at a higher level of negation development also when compared to the L group which included the subjects from upper secondary school, who must have been several years older than the subjects in the PY group.

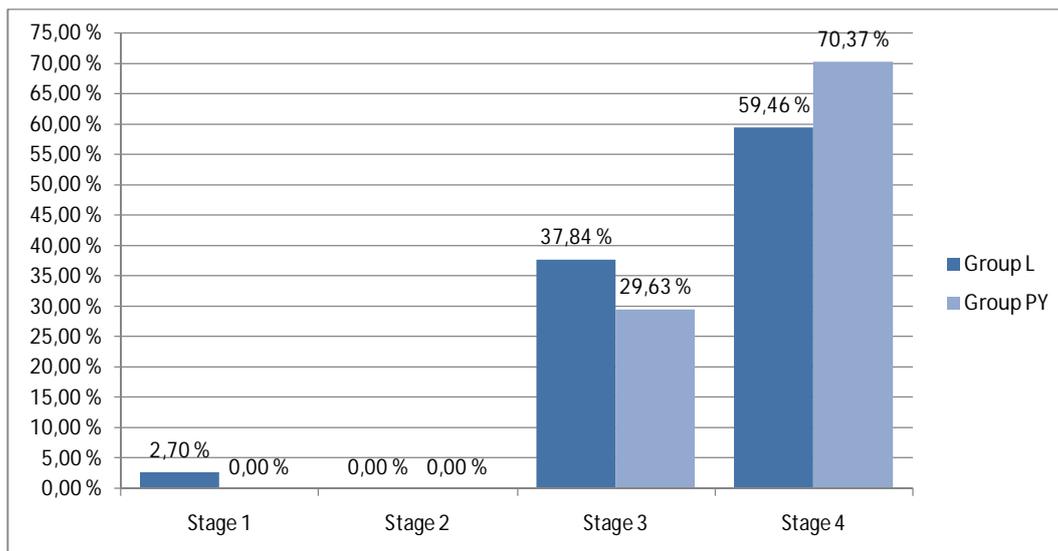


Figure Eleven. Comparing the distribution of the developmental stages in groups L and PY.

However, age is not the only difference between Groups PY and L. Although both groups have studied English approximately the same time, they have not done so in the same way. As I have mentioned earlier in this thesis, the students in the school of Puolala learn English mostly by studying different school subjects in English. The subjects in Group L have studied English in a regular English class, meaning that they have been taught English per se. It is possible that this has had an effect as well. This hypothesis can be tested by placing Groups PA and L side by side. Group PA consists of subjects who are at least five years younger than the subjects in Group L. In addition, they belong to Category 2 (5-7 years) based on the duration of their English studies while the subjects in Group L all belong to Category 3 (8 years or more). The main difference is that the subjects in Group PA have studied English by mainly focusing on the subject areas instead of the language itself. Figure Twelve demonstrates what happens when these two groups are perceived side by side.

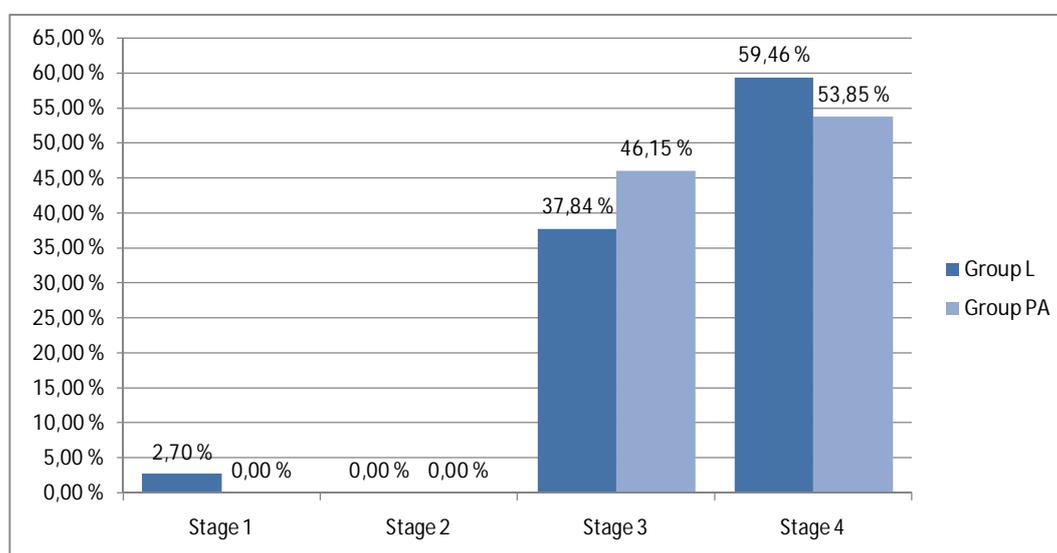


Figure Twelve. *Comparing the distribution of the developmental stages in groups L and PA.*

Figure Twelve basically shows how close to one another Groups PA and L are, which is quite remarkable when one considers their age differences and the differences in the duration of their English studies. Based on the data presented above, it can be concluded that age is not a defining feature when it comes to the developmental stages of negation. Instead, the important features here are the length of the subjects' English studies and also the way in which they study.

Throughout the Results -section, I have pointed out that the subjects from the language classes seem to be acquiring the English negation faster than subjects from the regular comprehensive school. However, it has to be taken into account that the students who are studying in an English language class are a selected group as such. Before starting the first grade, these students have applied to the language class and have achieved that goal through an entrance exam. There is no requirement for prior

knowledge of English when one applies to a language class. All that is needed is sufficient skills in the child's first language (City of Turku 2008). However, this indicates that the child (or, more accurately, his or her family) is interested in developing his or her language skills.

4. Discussion

My objective in this study was to collect current data from L2 English learners concerning the development of negation. I wanted to identify what kind of structures were present in the interlanguage of these second language learners and to what degree they followed the rules of standard English. The focus was on forming a single developmental continuum that would adequately describe the negation development of all the subjects. Since there were learners of different ages who had studied English for a different number of years, I aspired to ascertain whether the use of negative structures fluctuated accordingly. In addition, I aimed at defining developmental stages for the subjects' use of negation with the help of Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann's results (1978). An additional perspective in my analysis was to consider the distribution of the developmental Stages of Negation among the subjects.

My data did indicate a clear implicational scale of negation development, in that the feature in Column One tended to be acquired before the one in Column Two and so on. There was a common continuum in the development of negation that the subjects followed. Table One demonstrated the second language learners' movement from the earlier, simpler structures towards the more complex, target-like forms. In fact, at the end of this interlanguage continuum, some of the subjects merged with the target when they reached a total of 100% of correct answers in the questionnaire and thus were able to master all the aspects of negation presented in this study. The results of my study seem to point to the same direction as Hyltenstam's research, namely that it is possible to describe one developmental path for the negation and then place each individual subject at a certain point on that continuum. In addition, this continuum appears to be moving from simplified utterances towards the more complex ones. Hence, a learner at Stage 1 produces sentences like **Rebecca no plays ice-hockey* while a learner at Stage 4 is able to use a construction as complex as *Rebecca doesn't play ice-hockey*.

Following in the footsteps of earlier researchers, I formulated four developmental stages for the acquisition of negation. The four stages were introduced in detail earlier in this article, in Table Two in section 3.2. What I consider to be essential here is that I was able to utilise these four stages to assign each and every subject in my sample to successive Stages of development as regards negation. In addition, I found clear differences between the subject groups in respect of the distribution of the four stages. It became evident that the length of the subjects' English studies was an important factor when determining their Stage of Negation development. This was revealed when I

compared the distribution of the developmental stages in relation to the duration of the subjects' English studies.

In general, the subjects who had had the longest exposure to English were the ones who had achieved the highest levels of development. However, when comparing two groups with the same amount of exposure to English, the one with the language class background achieved more developed Stages of Negation than the group consisting of subjects from a regular comprehensive school. This applied when I compared the groups Y (eighth graders from a regular comprehensive school) and PA (sixth graders from the language class) to one another. Both groups mainly consisted of subjects who had studied English for 5-7 years. Even though the subjects in the Group PA were younger than the subjects in the Group Y, the Group PA still surpassed the scores of the older subjects. Thus, it appears that CLIL language classes positively affect the development of negation.

It was also apparent that age, by itself, did not affect the negation development stage of a subject. Students of the same age, but with a different amount of exposure to English, reflected the impact of the length of the English studies and not the effect of age. Thus, a subject belonging to Group A (a sixth grader in a regular comprehensive school) showed more signs of the earlier Stages of Negation development than a subject in the Group PA (a sixth grader from a language class) although both were of the same age. The difference between them was the duration of their English studies (as well as the style of English teaching). The same was evident when subjects from groups Y and PY were compared to each other.

5. Conclusion

When analysing the results from my study, I was able to deduce that there is an implicational scale in the development of negation. Based on that scale it is possible to formulate a developmental continuum that describes the subjects' movement from the simplified structures towards a more complex and target-like form of language. Furthermore, I managed to outline four stages of development that fitted the whole data I had gathered. These stages reflected the same kind of development from simpler, erroneous constructions towards the structures of Standard English as demonstrated by the implicational scale. The distribution of the four developmental stages among the 131 subjects mirrored how the length of the subjects' English studies affected the developmental stage of negation they had achieved. It also became evident that age did not have an impact on the subjects' developmental stages.

Although the sample in this study was quite large, the research method was not longitudinal, meaning that any statement made on the basis of this study is generalisable, but the developmental aspect has to be considered separately. It is my hope that in the future there will be a true longitudinal study on the development of L2 negation among Finnish learners of English. It would be fascinating to see how an individual learner

proceeds from one developmental stage to another and whether it, indeed, follows the implicational scale that I have outlined.

References

- Cancino Herlinda, Rosansky Ellen J. and Schumann Joh H. 1978. The acquisition of English negatives and interrogatives by native Spanish speakers. In Hatch (ed.): 207-230.
- City of Turku: Teaching and Education 2008. The School of Puolala [online]. Available: <http://www.turku.fi/Public/default.aspx?contentid=15441&nodeid=4666> (13 March 2008).
- Collin A. and Holec H. 1985. Foreign language acquisition processes in a secondary school setting: Negation. In Riley (ed.): 135-153.
- Hatch Evelyn Marcussen (ed.) 1978. *Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers.
- Hyltenstam Kenneth 1977. Implicational patterns in interlanguage syntax variation. *Language Learning* 27: 383- 411.
- Mackey Alison and Gass Susan M. 2005. *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Riley Philip (ed.) 1985. *Discourse and Learning*. London: Longman.
- Ylirisku Terhi 2008. *Development of L2 Negation: An Empiric Study of Finnish Learners of English*. University of Turku: Master's thesis.

The Discourse Track

Risto Hiltunen & Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen

1. *The study of discourse*

[The study of discourse is concerned] with what and how language communicates when it is used purposefully in particular instances and contexts, and how the phenomena we find in 'real language' can be explained with reference to the communicative purposes of the text or the interaction. (Cameron 2001: 13)

The central concerns in the study of discourse, outlined above by Deborah Cameron, also form the focus of the Discourse Track: the aim of the track is to train students to analyse language in use, in its real-world context, taking into account the linguistic, cognitive and social actions required in its production and interpretation. Therefore this track is not restricted to any narrow definition of discourse analysis; our central concerns, however, are bound up in the term *discourse*, which is used widely and in different ways across and even within academic disciplines. In addition, the study of *discourse* or *discourse analysis* can mean slightly different things to researchers active within the various fields of discourse analysis. Exploring these two terms – discourse and discourse analysis - will help clarify what studies on the Discourse Track entail.

Definitions of discourse include "language in use" (Brown & Yule 1983: 4), "language use, whether speech or writing, seen as a type of social practice" (Fairclough 1992: 28), "language used to do something and mean something, language produced and interpreted in a real-world context" (Cameron 2001: 13) and "communicative events wherein linguistic, cognitive and social actions converge" (de Beaugrande 1997: 11). What unites these definitions is their concern with language beyond the boundaries of the sentence, language used or in action, language in an active role in its context of use. Such a perspective entails that language is approached from a *functionalist* perspective, i.e. with the belief that language has functions that are external to the linguistic system itself and that influence the forms and the internal organisation of the linguistic system.

The great number of definitions for discourse reflects the fact that the relationship between language and its context of use is viewed differently across the different fields within discourse analysis. During their studies on the Discourse Track, students become familiar with various approaches within this wide field. The approaches covered in the foundation course include speech act theory, interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, conversation analysis, interactional linguistics, pragmatics, critical discourse analysis and computer-mediated discourse analysis.

There is considerable overlap between the approaches, because they all share an interest in the ways in which we give meaning to experience in language. It is equally important to realise, however, that the different origins of the approaches can and do lead to different theoretical premises and different assumptions about language. Each

approach also displays its particular beliefs about suitable data as well as methods of collecting such data; some approaches are primarily intended for the analysis of spoken discourse, some for written discourse, while some can be applied to both. Finally, the aims and goals of the approaches also differ.

By providing a survey of different analytical approaches, the foundation course helps students find the most applicable approach for the material they want to discuss in their Master's thesis, and enables them to understand the connections between different approaches. The foundation course is followed by the methodology course, which explores various research instruments and tools for analysing spoken and written discourse by means of practical 'hands-on' experience. In addition, more detailed explorations of specific topics take place in the elective courses offered on the track; these are available either as taught courses or as book exams.

To conclude this section, the study of discourse is one of the most dynamic and rapidly expanding fields of linguistic inquiry today. Its dynamism is, in part, due to the importance of discourse as a channel for exploring a variety of processes of human behaviour and the human mind. This is why it is relevant to all disciplines that have such a focus, including cognitive and social psychology, philosophy, communication studies, the social sciences and, of course, linguistics. Within linguistics, which is where our main focus lies, the study of discourse has come to play an important role in a number of its subfields, historical as well as synchronic, applied as well as theoretical. The materials investigated by students on the Discourse Track range from historical to present-day discourse, and from classroom discourse to media discourse. Thus, in the framework of our track programmes in the Advanced Studies, discourse appears in close interaction with the subject matter of the other tracks; it may be investigated in the contexts of historical and literary texts, as well as from the perspective of second language acquisition and translation.

2. On Master's theses on the Discourse Track

A closer look at the topics of discourse-oriented MA theses produced in the Department during the last few years bears evidence of the vitality of discourse studies as a field of research. At the same time, it is indicative of its multifarious connections with other branches of linguistics and its relevance to linguistic structures at large, whether individual lexical items or units that extend beyond the limits of the sentence. The latter point deserves to be emphasized, for, in effect, the Discourse Track also provides a forum for pursuing those linguistic topics that do not automatically fall within the scope of other tracks.

More specifically, the thesis titles mentioned in the References below show clearly that critical discourse analysis (CDA), which explores the impact of issues such as power, ideology and dominance on language, is by far the most popular approach. Of the 23 theses cited below, as many as ten have been written in the spirit of CDA (Borg 2001,

Isohella 2005, Koskinen, 2008, Kyrölä & Virtanen 2006, Lappalainen 2001, Nikulainen 2007, Saarakkala 2006, Suojanen 2005, Taustila 2007, Vähäkangas 2005). Such a concentration on one particular approach is a significant indicator of its appeal to students. The reasons for the popularity of CDA stem from several sources, two of which are undoubtedly the data and methods. On the one hand, the focus of CDA on matters such as ideology and social change makes it possible to bring exciting materials into the analysis. On the other hand, the heuristic nature of CDA, relying heavily on the interpretative strategies and close reading of the data by the researcher in bridging discourse structures with social structures, proffers the writer unusual freedom to interpret the material. Pitfalls may, naturally, occur on both accounts.

The data for most of the CDA theses come from newspapers (Borg 2001, Isohella 2005, Lappalainen 2001, Suojanen 2005) and journalism (Kyrölä & Virtanen 2006, Vähäkangas 2005). In one instance, both popular and professional journals constitute the data (Taustila 2007). Other sources include governmental publications (Koskinen 2008), political speeches (Nikulainen 2007) and interviews conducted in a religious community (Saarakkala 2006). The materials deal with a variety of subjects, including scandalous court cases (Borg 2001, Isohella 2005), racial issues (Koskinen 2008), politics (Nikulainen 2007, Savola 2007), the representation of women (Suojanen 2005), attitudes (Saarakkala 2006), and crime (Kyrölä & Virtanen 2006, Vähäkangas 2005).

Another theme that has stimulated several theses is the analysis of genre-based discourse, whether in present-day texts (Harsunen 2006, Savola 2007, Heiniluoma 2008, see also *this volume*) or historical texts (Mäkinen 2008, see also *this volume*; Salmi 2008, see also *this volume*). The focus in these studies is either on the analysis of generic features at large (Savola 2007, Mäkinen 2008), or notable linguistic devices of the genre (Harsunen 2006, Heiniluoma 2008). A related group of theses deals with genres of computer-mediated discourse (Hänninen 2008, Karhukorpi 2003, Law 2007; Martomaa 2008). The practices of various forms of electronic communication, including message-board discussions (Hänninen 2008, Martomaa 2008), e-mail communication (Karhukorpi 2003), and internet-relay chat (Law 2007) provide exciting data for analysing language use in a new medium, characterised by adaptation and interplay of features of spoken and written discourse. Yet another recent source of data are the scripts English-speaking television shows (Mäntylä 2007, Suikkanen 2007, Tuupanen 2008). These have been utilized to study, for example, politeness strategies (Mäntylä 2007), phraseology (Suikkanen 2007) and gender issues in specific TV-series, where the script is a more or less polished reflection of face-to-face communication. Politeness and fictional dialogue in a literary context are studied in Kettunen (2008) and Satterthwaite (2008).

What the theses cited above all have in common is a functional approach to the analysis of communicatively significant linguistic units in their specific contexts of use. These, in turn, may include a variety of parameters influencing the shape and rhetoric of the texts, in which the roles of the discourse participants are paramount. Such a scene

provides a wide range of possibilities for students to conduct interesting work on their research materials on the Discourse Track.

The two articles representing the Discourse Track in this volume exemplify the diversity of the track: one investigates annual business reports and the other American runaway slave advertisements. In her MA thesis, Maria Heiniluoma looks at interpersonal metadiscourse in the chairman's letter to shareholders in company annual reports. In other words, the focus of the study is on elements such as hedging and emphasis, with which the chairman can either mitigate or emphasise the likelihood of the company's future success. Heiniluoma is interested in finding out whether the company's recent financial performance correlates with the certainty with which the company's prospects are discussed.

Susanna Mäkinen's thesis addresses a very interesting but under-researched question in the history of slavery in America, viz. the description of runaway slaves in eighteenth-century slave advertisements. The data, representing New York, Pennsylvanian and Virginia, are subjected to a thorough generic analysis, modelled chiefly on the work of Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993, 2004). The study demonstrates the usefulness of an interdisciplinary research approach; specifically, it demonstrates the relevance of linguistic discourse analysis to American Studies.

References

(a) The M.A. theses cited (all completed in the Department of English, University of Turku)

Borg Kimmo 2001. *Bias in the Newspaper Presentations of the "Clinton Trial": A Critical Study of the Language Presentations of "Clinton Trial" in Four English Speaking Newspapers.*

Harsunen Heli 2006. *"Redemption, Rebirths and Relentless Attacks": Conceptual Metaphors in Written Football and Tennis Commentaries.*

Hänninen Eija 2008. *"You all knew about birth control": Politeness and Impoliteness Strategies in a Message-Board Discussion.*

Isohella Merja 2005. *Man or Monster: Representing Paedophilia in the Irish media: A critical Discourse Analysis of Reporting on Child Pornography Trials of January 2003 in The Irish Times and The Irish Independent.*

Karhukorpi Johanna 2003. *English as Lingua Franca in Cyberspace: Aiming at Successful E-Mail Communication.*

Kettunen Minna 2008. *Speech Realisation in Dramatic Dialogue: A Study of Irish English in John B. Keane's Plays.*

Koskinen, Johanna 2008. *Whiteness in Multicultural Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Australian Government's Multicultural Discourse.*

- Kyrölä Eveliina & Virtanen Melina 2006. *"Freed to kill: Robber murders mum three days after release": A Critical Comparative Analysis of Articles of Violence Towards Women in The Sun and Three British Women's Magazines.*
- Lappalainen Piritta 2001. *An Analysis of British News Texts Dealing with Immigration and Racial Discrimination.*
- Law Riina 2007. *Conversational Repair on Internet Relay Chat.*
- Mäntylä Leena 2007. *Characterisation of Polite Language: Manifestations of Politeness in the Dialogue of the American Television Show Frasier.*
- Martomaa Katri 2008. *Grice's Conversational Maxims and Message Board Discussions.*
- Mäkinen Susanna 2008. *Generic Features of Eighteenth-Century American Runaway Slave Advertisements.*
- Nikulainen Elina 2007. *"So we extend the hand of friendship to our enemies as a sign of our strength and our willingness to be inclusive": History and Group Creation in Gerry Adams' Ard Fheis Speeches 1996 and 2006.*
- Saarakkala Outi 2006. *"Birds of a feather flock together": A Critical Discourse Analysis of Attitudes to Church, Gender and Education in a West-Michigan Community.*
- Salmi Hanna 2008. *Language of Immediacy and Turn-Taking in The Owl and the Nightingale: Bo wel stille & lust nu to me!*
- Satterthwaite Anna 2008. *Facework and Negation of (Im)politeness in W.M. Thackeray's Vanity Fair.*
- Savola Pauliina 2007. *More than Words?: An Analysis on the Language and Structure of General Election Manifestos of the British Labour Party 1983-2005.*
- Suikkanen Minna 2007. *The Effect of Context on Idiom Usage: A Study Based on the Television Show Friends.*
- Suojanen Terhi 2005. *"Posh goes to war as she fights for her marriage": A Critical Analysis of the Representation of Women in British Newspapers.*
- Taustila Heidi 2007. *Keeping up Appearances: An Analysis of the Textual Construction of Expertise in the Debate on Global Warming.*
- Tuupanen Henna 2008. *Interrupting Sex?: Overlapping Segments and Gender in the Dialogue of Sex and the City.*
- Vähäkangas Anna 2005. *Portrait of a Killer: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh in TIME.*

(b) Other references

- de Beaugrande Robert 1997. *New Foundations for a Science of Text and Discourse.* Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Blommaert Jan 2005. *Discourse: A Critical Introduction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Brown Gillian & Yule George 1983. *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cameron Deborah 2001. *Working with Spoken Discourse*. London: Sage.
- Cutting Joan. 2008. *Pragmatics and Discourse*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge.
- Fairclough Norman 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Renkema Jan 2004. *Introduction to Discourse Studies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Schiffrin Deborah 1994. *Approaches to Discourse*. London: Blackwell.
- Wodak Ruth & Chilton Paul 2005. *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis: Theory, Methodology and Interdisciplinarity*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Metatext and the Company's Future Outlook: The use of hedging and emphatics in the letter to shareholders sections of annual reports

Maria Heiniluoma

Abstract

This article is based on a Master's thesis (Heiniluoma 2008) which concentrates on the phenomenon of interpersonal metadiscourse used in company annual reports to reflect the top management's confidence in the company's future outlook and success. The CEO's Letter to Shareholders sections in the annual reports of eleven American companies were studied, with a special emphasis on comparing the use of metatext in financially good and bad years. The main purpose of the study was to determine whether a company's recent financial performance influences the degree of certainty with which the company's future outlook is described in the Letter to Shareholders and, if so, in what metatextual ways this tendency manifests itself. The research focused on observing two types of interpersonal metadiscourse in more detail: hedging and emphatics. Although the analysis at the individual company level revealed differences in the use of metatext in good and bad years, the results for the corpus as a whole suggest a more uniform trend: irrespective of the company's recent financial performance, the Letter to Shareholders seems to be inclined to emphasize the company's opportunities and the likelihood of its future success, and play down the chance of upcoming challenges and uncertainties.

1. Introduction

All publicly-listed companies in the United States are required by law to periodically file reports with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), in which they disclose carefully specified information regarding the company's operations and financial performance. A typical example of these documents is the annual report, which is sent to the company's stockholders within 90 days of the end of the company's fiscal year (Shimpock-Vieweg 1996). In addition to distributing information regarding the company's current financial state, annual reports also have a secondary role to play – namely, promoting the company and its future potential among the investors. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the CEO's Letter to Shareholders, the most prose-like section of the annual report. This part of the report is usually laid out in the format of a personal letter signed by the CEO, or another member of the company's top management, and addressed to the shareholders. The CEO's Letter to Shareholders can be regarded as representing the company's common voice, or the general style in which the corporation wishes to address its investors (Thomas 1997, Martin 1989, Lampi 1992, Kohut & Segars 1992, Hyland 1998a).

A typical CEO's Letter comments on the financial information presented in the rest of the annual report, analyzes recent past events, and lays out the company's plans for future. The Letter to Shareholders offers the top management a chance to address the investors directly and influence their perceptions of the company, as well as attempting to convince them of its future potential. The Letter to Shareholders is essentially a document of record, and therefore it is usually written with the belief that it will be analyzed and referred to in the future (Martin 1989). Although there are differing opinions among researchers (e.g. Hawkins & Hawkins 1986, Frownfelter-Lohrke & Fulkerson 2001, Martin 1989) on the usefulness and importance of annual reports in general – especially to the individual investor – it can also be argued that the Letter to Shareholders is perhaps the report's most widely read part, and therefore of particular importance (Kohut & Segars 1992, Hyland 1998a). As Hyland suggests, the CEO's Letter "has enormous rhetorical importance in building credibility and imparting confidence, convincing investors that the company is pursuing sound and effective strategies" (Hyland 1998a: 224). It can thus be argued that the textual means employed to attain such goals in the Letter to Shareholders form an interesting research topic for text linguistics, especially a study focusing on the use of interpersonal metadiscourse in a business writing setting.

Annual reports and their rhetorical features have indeed been studied by many linguists (e.g. Jameson 2000, Frownfelter-Lohrke & Fulkerson 2001, Lampi 1992, Kohut & Segars 1992, Thomas 1997, Kendall 1993, Swales 1988). Nevertheless, existing studies have not concentrated on the future-oriented parts of the CEO's Letter – in other words, the sections that deal with the company's future outlook. The present study sets out to investigate the language, more specifically interpersonal metadiscourse, employed to this end (Heiniluoma 2008). Of particular interest are the metatextual means in which the top management tries to strengthen the investors' trust in the company's future prospects (through the use of emphatics), or to mitigate the possible times of trouble ahead (through the use of hedging).

This article aims to first introduce some linguistic concepts underlying the present research. After that, the object of study is outlined, along with the theoretical background and methodology adopted for the present purposes. Finally, the main findings are summarized and discussed.

2. Key theoretical concepts

This section provides some theoretical background to the linguistic phenomena at the core of the present study: metadiscourse, hedging and emphatics.

2.1. Metadiscourse

The terms metadiscourse, metatext and metalanguage are often used interchangeably in linguistics, and described as text about text, or discourse about discourse (e.g. Mauranen

1993, Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen 1993). Many researchers agree that the role of metatext extends beyond that of merely communicating the proposition content, or the subject matter, of the discourse (e.g. Mauranen 1993, Hyland 1998a, Beauvais 1989). Rather, metadiscourse comprises of the writer's/speaker's explicit clues to the reader/hearer as to how their text should be understood and interpreted (Hyland 1998a, Lampi 1992, Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen 1993). In other words, metadiscourse can be regarded as playing a critical role in establishing a rapport between the reader and the writer (Dafouz-Milne 2008, Fuertes-Olivera et al 2001, Hyland 1998a).

Categorizing metadiscoursal features has proved to be a challenging task. As Beauvais (1989) and Dahl (2004) point out, this is partly due to the fact that metadiscourse can take the form of various linguistic constructions and adopt the role of several pragmatic functions. The various classifications of metadiscourse have ranged from considering text-organisational features only (e.g. Mauranen 1993) to including both interpersonal (or interactive) and text-organisation linguistic structures in the definition (e.g. Hyland 1998a, Hyland 1998b, Hyland 1999, Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen 1993, Crismore & Farnsworth 1990, Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001).

The present study adopts an interactional, or interpersonal, viewpoint on metadiscourse, following the example of Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen (1993) and Hyland (1998a). Metatext is thus seen as the writer's way of conveying his or her attitude, for example certainty and confidence, towards the proposition of their message to the reader. The writer's attempt to persuade the reader through the use of metadiscourse can be seen clearly in the following example used by Heiniluoma (2008: 53):

- (1) "I am confident these changes will deliver the results we expect."
(Procter & Gamble 1999 – good year)

This study mainly deals with two types of metadiscourse – hedging and emphatics. The following discussion sheds some light on how these metadiscoursal features were defined in the present study, as well as how they were identified in the corpus.

2.2. Hedging and emphatics

The present research focuses on two types of metadiscourse in particular: hedges and emphatics. Like the notion of metadiscourse, the concepts of hedging (sometimes called downtoners) and emphatics (also referred to as boosters, intensifiers, or certainty markers) have been defined and categorized in a variety of ways by different researchers. It can be argued that one of the few aspects of hedges and emphatics that linguists agree upon is indeed the fact that they are difficult to define (e.g. Salager-Meyer 1994, Grabe & Kaplan 1997, Clemen 1997, Namsaraev 1997, Skelton 1988, Crompton 1997). For a more in-depth study of the various definitions and their differences, please see Heiniluoma (2008: 18-37).

The choice of hedging and emphatics as the focus of the present study has been greatly influenced by the work of Hyland (e.g. 1994, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d, 1999), who has studied the phenomenon of hedging extensively. His research on the topic has covered a wide array of text types, ranging from academic research papers to annual reports. According to Hyland (1998a), the rhetorical purpose of the CEO's Letter is essentially persuasive; it seeks to convince the reader to adopt the writer's definition of reality. He argues that the Letter to Shareholders often attempts to create credibility, confidence and trust with the means of emphatics and hedges (Hyland 1998a: 236). According to him, emphatics (e.g. *definitely...*, *I am sure that...*, *We firmly believe...*) create the impression of certainty, conviction and assurance, and they can be used to instill trust and confidence in the existing stockholders and new investors interested in the company. Hedges (e.g. *it would appear that...*, *there is a good reason to believe that...*, *may be possible...*), on the other hand, are used to withhold the writer's commitment in order to protect him or her from making too strong assertions, which may later prove to have been erroneous (Hyland 1998a: 236-238).

For the present purposes, hedging is defined as the writer's way of making careful statements without committing him or herself totally to the truth value of the proposition. Emphatics, on the other hand, are treated as the opposite of hedging. They emphasize the writer's certainty and confidence in the truthfulness of their message. Hyland (1998a) argues that for the optimal persuasive effect, there needs to be an equilibrium between the use of these two metadiscourse markers of credibility. The present study aims to investigate whether this balance is in fact attained in the Letters to Shareholders despite the annual reports' general tendency to portray the company in the best light possible in the eyes of the investors at all times – both in the years when the company makes a substantial profit (referred to as 'good years' in this article) and in those when it does not ('bad years') (Thomas 1997, Lampi 1992).

The study began by identifying the future-oriented sections of the corpus examined: twenty-three Letters to Shareholders from the annual reports of eleven American companies (see section 3 below for a more in-depth discussion of how these companies and annual reports were selected). After that, all the metatextual phenomena in these sections of the annual reports were analyzed and labelled. These metatextual features were then re-examined paying close attention to how the letters differed in accordance with the financial success of the company during the fiscal year in question. The main hypothesis was that hedging would be more dominant in times of fiscal insecurity, whereas prosperous years would result in the greater use of emphatics. However, it was also acknowledged that a company's recent poor performance might make the CEO use bolder rhetorical means (i.e. more emphatics) in order to convince the shareholders of the company's future prospects. In other words, the objective of the study was to find out whether the use of interpersonal metadiscourse in annual reports differed between good and bad financial years, and if so, how.

3. Object of study

The present study focused on the Letter to Shareholders sections of twenty-three annual reports of a total of eleven American companies. The companies were selected from the top of the Fortune 500 list as of February 2001. From the total pool of annual reports, those belonging to the companies with most volatility in their share price were selected. It was thus easy to find examples of annual reports from both good and bad financial years (please see below for how these features were defined). In the end, the annual reports of eleven American companies were chosen: Albertson's, Altria (Altria/Philip Morris), AT&T, Boeing, ChevronTexaco, General Electric, General Motors, The Home Depot, IBM, Kmart and Procter & Gamble.

Two annual reports per company were selected, to represent one financially good and one financially bad year of each company. In the case of Kmart, a total of three annual reports were chosen, as one of its bad year reports described the company's bankruptcy year of 2001 and was written rather differently. The list of annual reports studied and abbreviations used for the companies' names can be seen in Table One below.

Company name	<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Good year</i>	<i>Bad Year</i>
General Motors	GM	1999	2004
Kmart	KM	2000	1995, 2001
Boeing	BO	2000	2001
IBM (International Business Machines)	IBM	1998	2002
General Electric	GE	1999	2002
Albertson's	ABS	1998	1999
Procter & Gamble	P&G	1999	2000
AT&T (American Telephone & Telegraph)	AT&T	1999	2002
Altria (formerly Philip Morris)	ALT	2005	1999
ChevronTexaco	CHTX	2004	2002
The Home Depot	HD	1999	2002

Table One. *Companies and annual reports studied.*

The distinction between good and bad years was based on the company's overall performance during the fiscal year covered in the annual report. The company's stock price at the end of the year as compared to that of the previous year served as a reference point for this. Preference was given to those years that saw the year-end share price increase or decrease the most as compared to the previous year.

4. Theoretical background

The methods for identifying and categorizing metadiscourse in the present study owe much to the prior research of Crismore & Farnsworth (1990) and Grabe & Kaplan (1997). The following discussion outlines some of their research pertinent to the present study.

Crismore & Farnsworth (1990) were some of the first linguists to study metadiscourse in scientific writing. They compared metadiscourse use in popular and professional scientific writing, focusing on four main metadiscourse categories: modality markers (including hedges and emphatics as a subcategory), attitude/evaluative markers (also called evaluatives), code glosses and commentary. Crismore & Farnsworth (1990) used the notion of evaluatives (or attitude markers) to refer to expressions of the writer's attitude towards the subject matter. Examples of this metadiscourse type are *fortunately*, *notable*, *it is regrettable that*, *most importantly*, *with little justification*, etc.

A summary of some of Crismore & Farnsworth's (1990: 133) findings can be seen in Table Two below. Overall, Crismore & Farnsworth found that metadiscourse was used more in articles written for the scientific community (35.0 words per 1000) as compared to the popular-science article (25.8 words per 1000). Hedges, on the other hand, were used to a great extent in both types of article, although slightly more in the professional one. Evaluatives were somewhat more common in the popular article, and emphatics could be found a little more often in the professional text.

	Popular article (words per 1000)	Professional article (words per 1000)
Hedges	7.3	7.8
Emphatics	2.1	2.9
Evaluatives	3.1	2.3

Table Two. *Select metadiscourse in a professional and popular science article.*
(modified from Crismore & Farnsworth 1990: 133)

Although Crismore & Farnsworth's (1990) study only concentrates on two articles, their corpus is still of considerable size: the scientific text they examined was approximately 140 000 words and the popular one about 4800 words. Their work also affected other studies on the subject – for instance that of Grabe & Kaplan (1997) – which served as a further reason to include Crismore & Farnsworth's (1990) study in the present research.

Influenced by Crismore & Farnsworth's (1990) research, Grabe & Kaplan (1997) studied hedging in five different genres: academic and popular science writing, news editorials, fictional narratives, and annual business reports. When analyzing their corpus, Grabe & Kaplan (1997) coded four categories of lexical items: 1) modal verbs, 2) verbal hedging (i.e. main verbs, such as *claim*, *seem*, *believe*, *are convinced*), 3) non-verbal hedging (i.e. other forms of hedging, such as *sometimes*, *is capable of*, *possibility*, *the hope that*), and 4) emphatics (such as *of course*, *clearly*, *the best*, *in fact*). They did not, however, include a

category of evaluatives in their study of hedging, and therefore the present study borrows that particular idea from Crismore & Farnsworth (1990).

Grabe & Kaplan (1997) point out the difficulty of identifying hedges in their corpus and in creating the categories mentioned above. They admit that sometimes the selection was based on subjective decisions. They also found that lexical items identifiable as hedges or emphatics varied among the different text types. Certain words or expressions in one genre were not necessarily considered as hedges in another. In other words, Grabe & Kaplan (1997) emphasize that the categorization of hedging and emphatics is dependent on the context and the subjective selection criteria. They also conclude that in different types of text, hedges and emphatics can have different frequencies and configurations. Automated counts of these items are therefore likely to fail, as the context plays such an important role in their identification.

As for Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) quantitative results, after categorizing and counting the modal verbs, hedges and emphatics in the data, the researchers normed them to obtain frequency counts per 1000 words in each text type studied. In the case of business reports, the ratio was about one hedge per 33 words (i.e. approximately 30 words per 1000; see Table Four below). This was more than professional science (one hedge per 40 words, i.e. about 25 hedges per 1000) or narratives (one hedge every 50 words, i.e. almost 21 occurrences per 1000), but fewer than editorials (one hedge per 17 words, i.e. about 58 words per 1000) or popular science (one hedge per 25 words, i.e. about 40 words per 1000). When Grabe & Kaplan combined hedges and emphatics (they called this category *evidentials*), they obtained higher ratios: business reports had one evidential every 19 words (i.e. a frequency count of about 52 per 1000 words) (see Table Four below), which placed them as a category in the middle of the five text types in Grabe & Kaplan's corpus. Table Three and Table Four below show Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) findings regarding one of the genres they studied, annual business reports.

As can be seen in Table Three, the most frequently encountered modal verb in Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) corpus of annual reports was *will*, with the frequency count of 3.96 per 1000 words. It was followed by *can* (1.3 words per 1000), *should* (0.42 words per 1000), *could* (0.24 words per 1000), *might* and *would* (both with 0.23 words per 1000) and *be able to* and *be to* (both with 0.20 words per 1000). The overall frequency count of modal verbs in Grabe & Kaplan's data for annual reports was 6.78 words per 1000.

Table Four illustrates Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) overall results regarding the metadiscourse markers they identified in the genre of annual business reports. The most frequently encountered individual category in the corpus appears to be emphatics (22.81 words per 1000), although when Grabe & Kaplan combine the categories of non-verbal hedges (14.20 words per 1000), verbal hedges (9.13 words per 1000) and modal verbs (6.78 words per 1000) to form a single category called 'total hedges' (30.11 words per 1000), hedging becomes a more frequently used category than emphatics.

<i>Modal</i>	<i>Frequency in business reports (per 1000 words)</i>
May	00.00
Might	00.23
Can	01.30
Could	00.24
Will	03.96
Would	00.23
Shall	00.00
Should	00.42
Must	00.00
Need	00.00
Ought	00.00
Won't	00.00
Have to	00.00
Be able to	00.20
Be to	00.20
TOTAL	06.78

Table Three. *Modal verbs in annual business reports.* (Modified after Grabe & Kaplan 1997: 163)

	<i>Frequency in business reports (per 1000 words)</i>
Modals	06.78
Verbal hedges	09.13
Non-verbal hedges	14.20
TOTAL HEDGES	30.11
Emphatics	22.81

Table Four. *Modals, hedges, and emphatics in annual business reports.* (Modified after Grabe & Kaplan 1997: 164)

4.1. Hedging and emphatics in the present study

Adapting the criteria used by Grabe & Kaplan (1997: 160), the present study adopted the following guidelines to determine what linguistic phenomena count as hedges and emphatics in the corpus:

- (I) hedges/emphatics qualify the writer's degree of confidence and commitment to the truth-value of a statement;
- (II) hedges/emphatics indicate how committed the author is to a plan or future outcome
- (III) hedges/emphatics qualify how likely or predictable a certain outcome is, and
- (IV) hedges/emphatics modify the exactness or commitment expressed in the text.

Modal verbs and modal-like expressions (such as *be able to*, *have to*, *be to*) in future-oriented sentences were also counted in the corpus. The hedges, emphatics and modals found were categorized according to Grabe & Kaplan's (1997: 162) taxonomy: (a) modal verbs, (b) verbal hedging, (c) non-verbal hedging, and (d) emphatics. In addition, attitude/evaluative markers were noted in the corpus when they referred to forthcoming plans and other future events. These items, as defined by Crismore & Farnsworth (1990), were seen as marking the author's attitude and comments regarding the propositional content of forward-looking sentences.

It should be pointed out that due to the difficulty of objectively defining hedging, emphatics and other related metadiscoursal features, the present study was conducted knowing that the context and the examiner's subjective assessment would have an impact on the results. However, it was still believed that the findings could be somewhat comparable to, for example, Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) results. It is clear that further research with multiple evaluators, a clearer taxonomy of items to be examined and a more extensive corpus is needed to obtain less subjective and more reliable results. See Heiniluoma (2008: 10–38, 44–48) for a more detailed discussion of the classification process.

5. *Methods of study*

The annual reports selected for the study were either retrieved from online sources, or their hard copies were scanned and converted into electronic format so as to allow for easy viewing and processing. Hard copies of all the CEO's Letters were also utilized throughout the study, as they helped especially in the manual processing of the data, a procedure which was deemed necessary in order to conduct a proper analysis of each metadiscourse item within its context.

Once both soft and hard copies of all the files were available, the Letter to Shareholders sections of the selected annual reports were studied in more detail, with special attention paid to the parts referring to the future. The various modal verbs, hedging devices, emphatics, comments and attitude markers in the forward-looking sections were identified, labelled and counted (see Table Five). Care was taken to identify similar expressions in identical contexts in the same way across the corpus. However, subjective views and judgements undoubtedly affected the decisions as to what was considered as metadiscourse in each context and how the identified items were labelled and placed into various categories. As mentioned above, this shortcoming was acknowledged at the onset of the present study. Finally, the results were normalized in order to get frequency counts for their occurrence per 1000 words. The counts and frequencies were then tabulated so that the results could be more easily compared and analyzed. Figures were also created to better illustrate and compare the various findings (see Heiniluoma 2008: 49–51).

	Definition in present study	Examples
Modal verbs	Verbs ¹³ expressing modality	<i>will, can, must, may, need to, should, have to</i>
Verbal hedging	Verbs expressing vagueness or tentativeness	<i>believe, suggest, seem, plan, aim, intend, head toward</i>
Non-verbal hedging	Words other than verbs and longer phrases showing vagueness or tentativeness	<i>ability, possible, perhaps, goal, merely, to the extent we can, in a position to, some</i>
Emphatics	Expressions showing certainty or emphasis	<i>far more, truly, only the best, entirely, maximize, certainly</i>
Evaluatives (attitude markers & commentary)	Words and phrases indicating the author's attitude or comments	<i>I am pleased to, we look forward to, a critical role, a key to, is poised to, we want</i>

Table Five. *Definitions and examples of metadiscourse markers studied.*

Perhaps one of the hardest distinctions was that between emphatics and evaluatives. In other words, depending on the context, it was sometimes difficult to decide whether an expression, such as an adjective or an adverb for example, should be considered as primarily conveying the writer's emphasis or his/her opinion since there was undoubtedly some overlap. In some cases the word *important*, for example, was interpreted as an intensifying expression (i.e. as an emphatic, marked in bold in example two) rather than as an evaluation of importance on the writer's part (i.e. as an evaluative, marked with underlining in example three).

- (2) "But the most important key to the long-range success of our services initiative is the understanding that leading-edge technology can only be derived from creating great products." (GE 1999 – good year)

¹³ Unlike in some existing research, where only epistemic modals are considered as hedging, all modal verbs that conveyed the writer's degree of certainty (e.g. some expressing ability) were included in the present study.

- (3) "China is the headliner here, but we're also growing in important markets such as India, South Korea and Russia – a trend that will continue in the years ahead." (GM 2004 – bad year)

Thus the precise terms used were considered of less importance than the author's presumed intention when using them.

Another important factor in processing the corpus was whether a particular text was deemed as representing a good or a bad financial year. In addition, only the sections of text referring to the future were selected for study. How these two factors were related to each other in the corpus is discussed in more detail below.

5.1. *Good vs. bad years and future-orientedness in the corpus*

The CEO's Letters to Shareholders selected for the present study comprised a total of 51 176 words. The average word count for these sections of annual reports was 2 225 words. When comparing the good and bad years within the data set, it can be seen that the CEO's Letters were somewhat longer in the bad years (total average word count: 2 303) than in the good years (about 2 140 words on average). On the whole, the Letter to Shareholders sections for the bad years studied totalled 27 637 words, which was slightly more than the total word count for the good years (23 539 words).

The future-oriented parts of the Letters to Shareholders chosen for the present study ranged in length from 234 to 2370 words, the average being about 855 words. In total, the forward-looking sections encompassed altogether 19 673 words, contributing to about 38% of the entire data set (51 176 words). The following excerpts are examples of the passages that were regarded as forward-looking, or future-oriented, sections in the corpus.

- (4) "We see many opportunities here going forward." (GM 2004 – bad year)
- (5) "An environment like this, for all its challenges, is the ideal time to make moves for future growth." (IBM 2002 – bad year)
- (6) "I expect great things from this Company in the years ahead. And you should, too." (Procter & Gamble 1999 – good year)

As can be seen from these excerpts, future-orientedness was understood quite broadly in the present study. Sometimes it meant a sentence with an actual verb denoting the future tense, or a verb expressing a reference forward (e.g. *expect, intend, anticipate, is scheduled to, is headed, plan, predict*). At other times, a reference to the future was seen in other word classes, such as nouns, adjectives or adverbs (e.g. *vision, plan, forecast, future, prospect, opportunity, long-term,*

potential, increasingly, ahead). In yet other cases, the reference to the future was expressed via special forward-looking expressions, such as *down the road, going forward, well positioned to, poised to, on the road ahead, for the long term, looking ahead, and in the years ahead*.

Overall, there were more references to the future in the reports for the bad years than in those for the good. Proportionally speaking, however, forward-looking sections in the good years accounted for a slightly larger portion of the total text. On average 881 words (38.25% of the total) were used to refer to the future in the bad years as compared to an average of 827 words (38.64% of the total) in the good. The difference, however, is so small that it is irrelevant for the present purposes.

As for the actual methods for identifying and counting metadiscoursal features in the corpus, a few points should be borne in mind. These factors are discussed below.

5.2. Remarks on methodology: Counting procedure and subjectivity

When studying the figures for metadiscourse markers presented in the results section below, it is important to notice that not all of the instances counted were single words. Whenever separate functions were clearly discernible among clusters of metadiscourse markers (e.g. *firmly believe, huge potential, perhaps even more remarkably, probably never WILL, strong opportunities, a focused plan, ambitious goals*), they were identified as such and counted separately (in the above examples the ones marked in bold were labelled as emphatics, the ones in italics as hedges, and the one case written in small caps as a modal verb). On the other hand, longer phrases acting as a single unit marking one of the metadiscourse functions studied were counted as one instance. In such cases, it seemed unnatural to separate the elements as it was the whole, not the elements alone, that acted as a marker of metadiscourse. The following are some examples of this (emphatics have been marked in bold face hedges have been italicized): *to the extent we can, I have no doubt whatsoever that..., let me assure you that..., for the long term, ...than at any other time*. Therefore, the counts and frequencies presented in this study are to be taken as merely suggestive. In other words, they show an approximate frequency of metadiscourse markers in relation to the rest of the text, but do not provide true word-for-word frequencies or exact numbers of their occurrence.

Moreover, when comparing the frequency counts for the present study to the findings of, for example, Grabe & Kaplan (1997), two important points should be borne in mind. First, the present study does not concentrate on the entire text of the Letter to Shareholders, only on its future-oriented sections. In contrast, the corpus of Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) study seems to have included entire annual reports. Therefore, the results of the present study are not directly comparable to those of Grabe & Kaplan (1997). Second, unlike much of the existing hedging research (e.g. Crismore & Farnsworth 1990, Grabe & Kaplan 1997, Crismore & Vande Kopple 1997), the study at hand was carried out by a single researcher, and the

help (and second opinions) of informants or assistants was not available (as in Hyland 1998b and Hyland 1998c, for example).

5.3. Results regarding individual companies

In terms of individual companies, the results showed considerable variation between the frequencies of different metadiscourse types, as well as between their distribution in annual reports of good and bad years. However, the present study focused on observing the entire data set rather than individual companies. This should be taken into account when observing the results below.

6. Results

The interpersonal metadiscourse features identified in the data were observed from various angles. Firstly, their occurrence was measured in terms of total counts, as well as in frequency numbers proportional to the rest of the text where they occurred. Secondly, the absolute counts and frequency numbers for metadiscourse used in the good and bad years were compared, both at the individual company level and at the level of the entire corpus.

6.1. Metadiscourse markers found in the corpus: General view

The overall findings regarding the individual metadiscourse markers identified in the data are illustrated in Table Six below. On the whole, a total of 2584 occurrences of metadiscourse markers were identified in the texts studied. Occurrences in the CEO's Letters for all the good years accounted for 1200 of these, while a total of 1384 instances (i.e. 15% more) were found in those for the bad years.

	modal verbs	% of total	verbal hedging	% of total	non-verbal hedging	% of total	emphatics	% of total	evaluatives (attitude & commentary)	% of total	TOTAL
Good years	169	14.08%	72	6.00%	237	19.75%	573	47.75%	149	12.42%	1 200
Bad years	245	17.70%	88	6.36%	194	14.02%	652	47.11%	205	14.81%	1 384
Good + bad years	414	16.02%	160	6.19%	431	16.68%	1225	47.41%	354	13.70%	2 584

Table Six. Total counts of metadiscourse in good and bad years.
(in entire corpus) (with % of total)

When looking at the actual counts, there were both similarities and differences between the numbers of metadiscourse marker types represented in the forward-looking sentences in

CEO's Letters for good and bad years (see Table Six). The following discussion concentrates on this comparison and gives examples of the various metadiscourse types encountered in the corpus.

6.2. Metadiscourse categories: Absolute counts in good vs. bad years

Regardless of the company's recent financial performance, the highest yield seemed to come from the category of emphatics: they accounted for about 48% of the metadiscourse markers in good years and approximately 47% of those in bad years (see Table Six above). The following excerpts show typical examples of text identified as emphatics (marked in bold) in the data.

- (7) "They will take us into the new century with the greatest vitality in our history. Of this, I am very sure." (Procter & Gamble 1999 – good year)
- (8) "Excise tax increases undoubtedly present PMI with a significant challenge." (Altria 2005 – good year)

Similarly, albeit at the other end of the spectrum, verbal hedging received the lowest numbers in both good and bad years: about 6% in both categories (see Table Six). Below are some examples of verbal hedging (marked in italics) encountered in the corpus.

- (9) "I genuinely *believe* that excellence – and execution – will be the keys to Kmart's success." (Kmart 1995 – bad year)
- (10) Those results confirm that we are headed in the right direction, and we see tremendous potential for our new Company." (Albertson's 1999 – bad year)

The rest of the metadiscourse types seemed to be represented differently when their use in Letters to Shareholders was compared between good and bad years (see Table Six above). The results for the good years indicated that emphatics were followed by non-verbal hedging (20% of all metadiscourse markers), modal verbs (14%), and evaluatives (12%). As for the bad years studied, the second largest group of metadiscourse markers was modal verbs (18%), with evaluatives (15%), and non-verbal hedging (14%) following closely in tow. Examples of these metadiscourse categories, as they were regarded in the present study, can be found in the following excerpts.

Modal verbs (written in bold and small caps):

- (11) "Fiscal year 1998-99 was a good year for our shareholders, but not a great year. We know we **CAN** do better, and we **MUST**." (Procter & Gamble 1999 – good year)

- (12) One thing that WON'T change in the years ahead is our determination to connect and protect people. We WILL go on doing those two things. We do HAVE TO deal with repercussions in the marketplace."
(Boeing 2001 – bad year)

Evaluatives (underlined):

- (13) "That's why, despite the challenges, I feel so proud and privileged to be leading this company. While our competitors are still getting organized, we've already assembled all the ingredients for success – solid financials, a worldclass global network, an intense customer focus and unshakable values."
(AT&T 2002 – bad year)

Non-verbal hedging (written in italics):

- (14) "These are *just some of* the major steps that need to be taken to resolve this crisis".
(GM 2004 – bad year)
- (15) "This represents a substantial *potential* savings for the industry and *approximately* \$350 million in revenues for our Transportation business."
(GE 2002 – bad year)

In short, the absolute counts of metadiscoursal features in the corpus show that emphatics formed the most common metadiscourse type throughout the data, whereas verbal hedging was the least common one. Whether this was also the case in terms of the frequency counts is discussed below.

6.3. Metadiscourse categories: Frequency counts in good vs. bad years

In terms of frequency (as shown in Table Seven below), the distribution of metadiscourse markers over various categories is fairly similar to the situation with absolute counts described above (see Table Six above).

In the case of the good years, for example, emphatics took the lead with an average frequency count of 64.17 per 1000 words, followed by non-verbal hedging (29.38 words), modal verbs (17.43 words) and evaluatives (15.09 words per 1000) (see Table Seven). The frequency counts for the bad years, however, display a slightly different picture from that based on the absolute counts (in Table Six) of metadiscourse markers encountered in these texts. Like the proportions mentioned above, the category of emphatics contributes to the highest frequency count (64.97 per 1000 words) in the bad years, and it is followed by modal verbs (21.22 words). In addition, the least frequent category proportionally was that of verbal hedging (on average 8.75 words per 1000), which was similar to the actual counts of metadiscourse markers in the data. Nevertheless, the frequency counts for bad years

regarding the two remaining categories differ from the trend seen in the total counts of metadiscourse: non-verbal hedging accounts for 19.79 words in 1000, whereas evaluatives appear only slightly less frequently (19.49 words per 1000).

A closer look at the average frequency counts of metadiscourse markers in the good years compared to the bad, as illustrated in Table Seven leads to an interesting observation. Although a higher number of metadiscourse markers were identified in the bad years (as indicated by Table Six), the future-oriented sections of the bad years were also longer than those in the good years. Thus, it was found that the proportional frequency of metadiscourse was almost exactly the same in both good and bad years, with the average actually being slightly higher in the good years (134.50 vs. 134.22 words per 1000) (see Table Seven).

	modal verbs	% of total	verbal hedging	% of total	non-verbal hedging	% of total	emphatics	% of total	evaluatives (attitude & commentary)	% of total	av. freq. total
Good years	17.43	12.96%	8.43	6.27%	29.38	21.84%	64.17	47.71%	15.09	11.22%	134.50
Bad years	21.22	15.81%	8.75	6.52%	19.79	14.74%	64.97	48.41%	19.49	14.52%	134.22
Good +bad years	38.65	14.38%	17.18	6.39%	49.17	18.30%	129.14	48.06%	34.58	12.87%	268.72

Table Seven. *Average frequencies (per 1000 words) of metadiscourse markers (in entire corpus).*

As for the overall frequencies of individual metadiscourse categories, there is a tendency for their being higher in the bad years (see Table Seven). Nevertheless, one category represents an exception to the rule: non-verbal hedging was used on average substantially more in the good years (29.38 words per 1000) than in the bad (19.79 words per 1000). The other distinct difference between the frequency counts for good and bad years could be seen in the use of evaluatives and modal verbs. The former (at 19.49 words per 1000) were approximately 22% and the latter (at 21.22 words per 1000) about 29% more frequently represented in the bad years than in the good. Much smaller variation was detected in the use of verbal hedging (on average 4% more frequently used in the bad years) and emphatics (only a little over 1% more often encountered in the bad years).

6.4. Modal verbs

In order to compare the results of the present study to those of Grabe & Kaplan (1997), special attention was paid to modal verbs. Table Eight shows the distribution of individual modal verb types across the entire corpus, as well as their occurrence in good and bad years.

Modal	ENTIRE CORPUS			GOOD YEARS			BAD YEARS		
	Total count	% of all modals	Total frequency (per 1000 words) ¹⁴	Total count	% of all modals	Total frequency (per 1000 words)	Total count	% of all modals	Total frequency (per 1000 words)
May	8	1.93%	9.05	6	3.55%	5.60	2	0.82%	3.45
Might	1	0.24%	0.58	1	0.59%	0.58	0	0%	0.00
Can	80	19.32%	70.60	22	13.02%	21.70	58	23.67%	48.90
Could	7	1.69%	9.20	3	1.78%	2.52	4	1.63%	6.68
Will (won't)	240	57.97%	277.99	108	63.91%	132.45	132	53.88%	145.54
Would	5	1.21%	3.29	2	1.18%	1.40	3	1.22%	1.89
Shall	0	0%	0.00	0	0%	0.00	0	0%	0.00
Should	20	4.83%	14.97	4	2.37%	3.83	16	6.53%	11.14
Must	20	4.83%	20.61	11	6.51%	12.82	9	3.67%	7.79
Have (got) to	8	1.93%	6.80	5	2.96%	4.21	3	1.22%	2.59
Need	14	3.38%	19.30	1	0.59%	0.58	13	5.31%	18.72
Ought	0	0%	0.00	0	0%	0.00	0	0%	0.00
Be able to	9	2.17%	10.98	4	2.37%	3.76	5	2.04%	7.22
Be to	2	0.48%	2.35	2	1.18%	2.35	0	0%	0.00
TOTAL	414	100%	445.72	169	100.01%	191.80	245	99.99%	253.92

Table Eight. Modal verbs: in the entire corpus, in good years only, and in bad years only.

As Table Eight illustrates, by far the most common modal verb in the corpus was *will*. With altogether 240 occurrences, it accounted for almost 58% of all modals used in the entire dataset. In the good years, *will* represented an even higher percentage (64%, n=108) of the modal verbs, whereas in the bad years, it made up about 54% (n=132) of the total. The next most common modal verb in the entire corpus was *can* (19% of all modals, n=80), which was

¹⁴ These figures are based on actual frequencies in the various sources, i.e. they are not directly proportional to the corresponding total count in the first column. The same is true for the other total frequency counts listed in the Table.

followed by *should* (5%, n=20), *must* (5%, n=20) and *need* (3%, n=14). *Can* was the second most common modal auxiliary verb type in the good (13%, n=22) and bad years (24%, n=58) alike. As for the rest of the modal verbs encountered in the corpus, the following differences between the good and bad years attract special attention: *should*, which constituted a mere 2% (n=4) of all the modals in the good years but as much as 7% (n=16) in the bad; *must*, which covered 7% (n=11) of all the modals in the good years but only 4% (n=9) in the bad; and *need*, which was much more common in the bad years (over 5%, n=13, of all the modals) than in the good (less than 1%, n=1, of all the modals encountered).

7. Discussion

The findings regarding the overall distribution of interpersonal metadiscourse across the entire corpus revealed no significant differences between the good and bad years, although individual companies' annual reports displayed variation in metadiscourse use. On the whole, the total counts of all metadiscourse occurrences were slightly higher in the bad years, but so, too, were the word counts for the forward-looking sections in those reports. Therefore, proportionally speaking, no clear correlation was found between the companies' financial state and the future-oriented metadiscourse used in the corpus.

As for the individual metadiscourse types studied – i.e. modal verbs, verbal hedging, non-verbal hedging, emphatics and evaluatives – the results indicated, on average, similar patterns of use irrespective of whether the company had faced a good or bad year. In regard to the total count of actual occurrences, emphatics were by far the most common type of metadiscourse. This is in line with previous research (e.g. Hyland 1998a, Thomas 1997) which has concluded that regardless of the success of the company, the annual report tends to emphasize the positive and certain over the negative and uncertain, and emphatics are often used to this end. The category of emphatics was followed in terms of actual counts by non-verbal hedging, modal verbs and evaluatives, which had only small differences in numbers between good and bad years.

The metadiscourse type encountered least often was verbal hedging, a category that has been found to be rather common in academic scientific writing, for example. This is not very surprising, as annual reports as a genre seem to be very different from professional scientific writing. Unlike academic texts, where writers have been observed to make claims in a tentative and cautious manner (Myers 1989, Meyer 1997, and Hyland 1994, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d), the authors of annual reports have been associated with a style that tries to inspire investors' confidence by emphasizing the positive aspects of the company's past and present, and playing down the negative ones while speaking about its future potential with certainty and determination (see e.g. Hyland 1998a, Thomas 1997).

When comparing the proportional use of different interpersonal metadiscourse types in the good and bad years, it was observed that metadiscourse was somewhat more common in the bad years, with a more substantial difference in the frequency counts of evaluatives and modal verbs. Nevertheless, the good years gained a slightly higher overall frequency count for metadiscourse. This was due to one category: non-verbal hedging. It was used almost one and a half times more in the good years than in the bad. One reason for this finding might be that the writers of a CEO's Letter reporting on a successful year may use non-verbal hedging in order to rein in their language so that their statements suggesting that the company's success will continue would appear more cautious, credible and realistic. Another plausible explanation would be that, in the good years, when there are especially many reasons to be content with the company's performance, the authors strive to establish a rapport of trust and openness with their readers. Such modesty and caution might be especially effective when presented next to laudable financial results.

As for the modal verb results, the predominance of *will* throughout the corpus is not very surprising. First of all, *will* is a common way of expressing the future tense in English, and thus its appearance in large numbers in future-related sentences is rather natural. The use of *will* often also conveys the writer's strong intention or assertion regarding the future. Therefore, the verb is an ideal candidate for use in a genre, such as the Letter to Shareholders, that strives to convince and persuade its readers.

With regard to the other modal verbs, interesting comparisons can be made between the figures for the good and bad years. One of them has to do with *can*, which was used much more extensively in the bad years than in the good. This finding could be interpreted as reflecting the writers' tendencies in the bad years to emphasize future potential and possibility even more than in the good years. In good years, the need to convince the shareholders of the company's abilities to do well in the future might not be as great since the company's recent success may suffice.

It is also worth considering why the modals *need* and *should* appeared considerably more often in the bad years than in the good, but *must*, on the other hand, was encountered somewhat more frequently in the good years. The larger numbers of *need* and *should* in the bad years seem understandable, as they convey necessity, obligation and probability – all of which can be considered important concepts when discussing a company's plan for future improvement after a disappointing fiscal year. On the other hand, the prevalence of *must* in the good years seems harder to explain. The results involving *must*, however, are rather small in scale, so the difference between the good and bad years in this respect could be interpreted as variation resulting from different writers and company writing styles.

When comparing the results of the present study to Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) findings, a few interesting observations can be made. However, it needs to be borne in mind that Grabe

& Kaplan based their counts on the text of entire annual reports, whereas the present study only focused on the forward-looking parts of the CEO's Letter to Shareholders. As mentioned above, comparisons between these results must therefore be treated as loose approximations at best. When compared to Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) results, the frequency counts of the present study seem much higher overall. That can be partly explained by the shorter length of the future-oriented parts of the CEO's Letter as compared to the entire annual report, which may lead to higher frequency counts for individual occurrences of metadiscourse in shorter texts. For example, the modal verb *will* is unlikely to be found in parts of the text other than those referring to the future, but when its frequency is counted against the entire CEO's Letter to Shareholders or the whole annual report, the result is bound to be lower than when only measuring how frequently it appears in the forward-looking sections. Hence the finding that the average frequency count for *will* in the present study (as shown in Table Eight) is much higher than in Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) study (as displayed in Table Three) is not surprising. Despite the differences of scale between the two studies, similar trends can still be seen in their results. Perhaps the most striking of such similarities is the observation that the three most common modal verbs encountered in these studies are the same – *will*, *can* and *should* – and they appear in the same order of importance in both corpora.

In terms of the other categories of metadiscourse, the overall frequency counts in the present study were considerably higher than those in Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) results, especially in the category of emphatics. Nevertheless, verbal hedges appeared to be more abundant in Grabe & Kaplan's (1997) corpus. A plausible explanation for both of these findings could lie in the differences in the context where these metadiscourse markers were observed and on the basis of which their frequency counts were calculated. Verbal hedges, for example, can probably be encountered throughout the entire annual report, also when the text refers to past events. The writers might, however, concentrate their use of emphatics mainly in the forward-looking sections in order to convince the readers of the writers' claims regarding the company's future prospects.

As for the category of evaluatives, a significant difference emerges between the results of this study and the findings of Crismore & Farnsworth (1990), from whom the idea of the evaluatives category was adapted for this study. Crismore & Farnsworth's (1990) frequency counts for this metadiscourse category (as seen in Table Two) were significantly lower than the frequency counts for evaluatives in the present study (as illustrated in Table Seven). The difference in the frequencies can be explained, at least in part, by the dissimilarity between the genres and their communicative goals. Scientific articles, both popular and professional, are probably more informative or factual and less affective or persuasive in nature than the CEO's Letter to Shareholders. However, it should be noted that in addition to evaluatives,

Crismore & Farnsworth's (1990) study had a separate category for commentary, whereas the present study did not analyze such metadiscourse on its own. Thus, some textual phenomena that were included in Crismore & Farnsworth's (1990) frequency counts for commentary – especially those that conveyed the writer's personal values and direct address to the readers – might have been included in the present study's results concerning the category of evaluatives. Therefore, the frequency counts in the two studies cannot really be compared effectively.

The results of the present study indicate that the future-related portions of the CEO's Letter to Shareholders tend to be predominantly assertive in tone, trying to convince the reader of the positive future outlook they depict for the company. Although differences can be seen within individual companies' annual reports from good and bad years, a comparison of a larger corpus reveals that a company's recent financial success or hardships do not seem to have a very strong impact on the use of hedging, emphatics and other related metadiscourse when discussing the company's future in the Letter to Shareholders.

8. Conclusion

The goal of the present study was to observe the use of hedging, emphatics and other forms of interpersonal metadiscourse in forward-looking sections of the CEO's Letter to Shareholders in company annual reports, and to find out whether their use was related to the company's recent financial performance. The main findings suggest that although evidence was found in individual companies' cases showing that metatext was used differently in their good and bad years, the overall use of hedging, emphatics and other related metadiscourse in the CEO's Letter was not significantly affected by the company's performance during the fiscal year in question. Due to the limits set by the present study methods, it remains the task of further studies to validate or challenge these results. This may be especially fruitful if multiple persons can be involved in analyzing the text corpus, and identifying and categorizing the various metadiscourse types in their context. Several other topics, such as persuasiveness, impersonalization and the use of personal pronouns, can also be considered potential subjects of future research related to interpersonal metadiscourse in the CEO's Letter to Shareholders.

References

- Beauvais Paul J. 1989. A speech act theory of metadiscourse. *Written Communication* 6: 11-30.
- Clemen Gudrun 1997. The concept of hedging: Origins, approaches and definitions. In Markkanen & Schröder (eds.): 235-248.
- Crismore Avon & Farnsworth Rodney 1990. Metadiscourse in popular and professional science discourse. In Nash (ed.): 118-136.
- Crismore Avon, Markkanen Raija & Steffensen Margaret S. 1993. Metadiscourse in persuasive writing: A study of texts written by American and Finnish university students. *Written Communication* 10: 39-71.
- Crismore Avon & Vande Kopple William J. 1997. Hedges and readers: Effects on attitudes and learning. In Markkanen & Schröder (eds.): 83-114.
- Crompton Peter 1997. Hedging in academic writing: Some theoretical problems. *English for Specific Purposes* 16: 271-287.
- Dafouz-Milne Emma 2008. The pragmatic role of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers in the construction and attainment of persuasion: A cross-linguistic study of newspaper discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics* 40: 95-113.
- Dahl Trine 2004. Textual metadiscourse in research articles: A marker of national culture or of academic discipline? *Journal of Pragmatics* 36: 1807-1825.
- Frownfelter-Lohrke Cynthia & Fulkerson Cheryl L. 2001. The incidence and quality of graphics in annual reports: An international comparison. *The Journal of Business Communication* 28: 337-358.
- Fuertes-Olivera Pedro A., Velasco-Sacristán Marisol, Arribas-Baño Ascensión & Samaniego-Fernández Eva 2001. Persuasion and advertising English: Metadiscourse in slogans and headlines. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33: 1291-1307.
- Grabe William & Kaplan Robert B. 1997. On the writing of science and the science of writing: Hedging in science text and elsewhere. In Markkanen & Schröder (eds.): 151-167.
- Hawkins David F. & Hawkins Barbara A. 1986. *The Effectiveness of the Annual Report as a Communication Vehicle: A Digest of Relevant Literature*. Morristown, NJ: Financial Executives Research Foundation.
- Heiniluoma Maria 2008. *Boosting Future Prospects or Softening Promises of Success? The Use of Emphatics and Hedging in the Letter to Shareholders Sections of Annual Reports*. University of Turku: Master's thesis.
- Hyland Ken 1994. Hedging in academic writing and EAP textbooks. *English for Specific Purposes* 13: 239-256.
- Hyland Ken 1996. Talking to the academy: Forms of hedging in science research articles. *Written Communication* 3: 251-281.

- Hyland Ken 1998a. Exploring corporate rhetoric: Metadiscourse in the CEO's letter. *The Journal of Business Communication* 35: 224-245.
- Hyland Ken 1998b. Persuasion and context: The pragmatics of academic metadiscourse. *Journal of Pragmatics* 30: 437-455.
- Hyland Ken 1998c. Boosting, hedging and the negotiation of academic knowledge. *Text* 18: 349-382.
- Hyland Ken 1998d. *Hedging in Scientific Research Articles*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Hyland Ken 1999. Talking to students: Metadiscourse in introductory coursebooks. *English for Specific Purposes* 18: 3-26.
- Jameson Daphne A. 2000. Telling the investment story: A narrative analysis of shareholder reports. *The Journal of Business Communication* 37: 7-38.
- Kendall Julie E. 1993. Good and evil in the chairmen's 'boiler plate': An analysis of corporate visions of the 1970s. *Organization Studies* 14: 571-592.
- Kohut Gary F. & Segars Albert H. 1992. The president's letter to stockholders: An examination of corporate communication strategy. *The Journal of Business Communication* 29: 7-21.
- Lampi Mirjaliisa 1992. Rhetorical strategies in 'Chairman's Statement' sections in the annual reports of Finnish and British companies: Report on a pilot study. In Nuolijärvi & Tiitula (eds.): 127-143.
- Markkanen Raija & Schröder Hartmut (eds.) 1997. *Hedging and Discourse: Approaches to the Analysis of a Pragmatic Phenomenon in Academic Texts*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Martin David 1989. *How to Prepare the Annual Report: A Guide to Writing, Designing & Presenting Company Reports*. Cambridge: Director Books.
- Mauranen Anna 1993. Contrastive ESP rhetoric: Metatext in Finnish-English economics texts. *English for Specific Purposes* 12: 3-22.
- Meyer Paul Georg 1997. Hedging strategies in written academic discourse: Strengthening the argument by weakening the claim. In Markkanen & Schröder (eds.): 21-41.
- Myers Greg 1989. The pragmatics of politeness in scientific articles. *Applied Linguistics* 10: 1-35.
- Namsaraev Vasili 1997. Hedging in Russian academic writing in sociological texts. In Markkanen & Schröder (eds.): 64-79.
- Nash Walter (ed.) 1990. *The Writing Scholar: Studies in Academic Discourse*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Nuolijärvi Pirkko & Tiitula Liisa (eds.) 1992. *Talous ja kieli 1: Seminaari 24.-25.4.1992 Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulu*. Helsinki: Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulun kuvalaitos.

- Salager-Meyer Françoise 1994. Hedges and textual communication function in medical English written discourse. *English for Specific Purposes* 13: 149-170.
- Shimpock-Vieweg Kathy 1996. *Business Research Handbook: Methods and Sources for Lawyers and Business Professionals*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Skelton John R. 1988. The care and maintenance of hedges. *ELT Journal* 42: 37-43.
- Swales George S., Jr. 1988. Another look at the president's letter to stockholders. *Financial Analysts Journal* 4 (2): 71-73.
- Thomas Jane 1997. Discourse in the marketplace: The making of meaning in annual reports. *The Journal of Business Communication* 34: 47-66.

Generic Features of Runaway Slave Advertisements from Eighteenth-Century America

Susanna Mäkinen

Abstract

The article deals with a specific type of newspaper texts from 18th century colonial America: runaway slave advertisements. These notices, in which slave owners give a description of and offer a reward for their fugitive slaves, can be seen as forming a particular genre. This article aims to examine the regularities in the form and features that this genre presents. This is done by analysing a corpus of 190 advertisements from three North American colonies. The runaway slave advertisement is divided into various parts (or *moves*), each with their own functions, some of which are always present, while others are optional. Studying the advertisements also uncovers fixed phrases that often reoccur word for word in the vast majority of the advertisements. As the circumstances of the slaves' escape could differ widely from one another, the advertisements are naturally not identical in the information they contain nor in the way they present it, but, looking at a larger number of these advertisements, one can glean a picture of the prototypical features of the genre. Furthermore, an analysis of advertisements from different colonies also reveals evidence of local norms in neighbouring colonies, i.e. subtle differences in word choice or the structure of the advertisement.

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the generic features of 18th century American runaway advertisements, and it is based on a wider MA thesis (Mäkinen 2008) on the subject. The corpus was drawn from newspapers published in three North American colonies (Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York), and the time span covered stretches from the 1730s to the 1770s. The typical structure of the advertisements, as well as various features of vocabulary and syntax, formed the foci of the study. As the source material originates from three colonies and spans five decades, differences in time as well as geographical location were also examined. The following article will present a condensed account of the findings of the study.

I shall begin by briefly introducing the cultural context of these texts, after which the corpus will be described in more detail. The bulk of the analysis follows in the presentation and discussion of the features that make the runaway slave advertisements a genre with its own particular conventions. Finally, I examine evidence that would suggest that local norms further defined the genre of these texts in the different colonies.

2. Slaves and newspapers in the North American colonies: The cultural context

By the 18th century, slavery had become rooted in most of the British colonies in North America. However, there were great geographical differences in the importance slave labour to the economies of the various colonies, as well as in the slaves' roles in the society. The greatest divide was between the northern and the southern colonies: in the South, the number of slaves as well as their role in the economy was much greater than it was in the colonies further north. In the southern colonies, the agricultural economy was mostly dependent on the extensive use of slave labour as field hands, whereas in the North they were more likely to be household servants or practise various trades, and were often considered "luxury items" for white families (Kolchin 1993: 24-27).

Of the three colonies examined in this study, the number of slaves was the greatest in the southern colony of Virginia, where their numbers at their highest reached 43.9 % of the colony's total population (Kolchin 1993: 240). In the more northern colonies, the numbers were more moderate: for New York during the period under study here the percentage of slaves was slightly over 11%, and in Pennsylvania it varied between 2.4 and 6.5 percent of the total population (*ibid*). Though the difference between Virginia and Pennsylvania is considerable, these colonies do not represent the extreme ends of the situation in the British colonies in North America.

Although the situations of individual slaves varied greatly, they still lived in a society where skin colour marked the primary distinction between free men and men bound to lifelong servitude. A common way for slaves to show their resistance was to run away, either for short periods of time or by attempting a more permanent bid for freedom. This also meant that recapturing runaway slaves was a constant issue for colonial slave owners. One solution to the slave owners' persistent problem came with the introduction of the relatively new media of newspapers in the North American colonies in the early decades of the 18th century. Colonial newspapers always had a section for advertisements. These advertisements were of various different kinds, not only commercial ones (the type that most often comes to mind as an advertisement today). Significantly for slave owners, the newspapers offered the possibility to post advertisements regarding fugitive slaves. In fact, these kinds of advertisements became a recurring feature, alongside advertisements concerning escaped, white, indentured servants or strayed horses.

The chance to pursue fugitives via advertisements was given to Pennsylvanians in 1719 with the publication of the first newspaper in Philadelphia, the *American Weekly Mercury*. In New York, the newspaper business kicked off in 1725, and in 1736 Virginia joined the ranks of colonies with their own newspapers (Mott 1962: 24-41). Seeking a runaway via advertisement was not particularly cheap (see e.g. Meaders 1975: 291), but when the cost of

advertising could be justified, advertisements were placed not only in the local paper but sometimes also in the papers of neighbouring colonies, if it was suspected that the runaways had managed to make their way that far. By describing the runaways and by offering a reward for their capture, the colonists could hope for the aid of other readers of the newspapers in their search, thus reducing the chances of a successful escape.

3. *The corpus of the study*

For the study, 190 advertisements from newspapers from the 18th century colonies of Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York were subjected to analysis. The majority of these (i.e. 100 advertisements) were from Virginia, whereas 45 advertisements were taken from both Pennsylvanian and New York newspapers. The Virginian advertisements came from *The Virginian Runaways Project*, an Internet database where such advertisements from Virginian newspapers have been collected and transcribed. The advertisements for the other two colonies were taken from the following books: *"Pretends to Be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* by Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown (1994) and *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790* compiled by Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz (1989). Whereas the Internet database usually offered the original images for comparison, for the advertisements taken from the books the accuracy of the transcribers had to be relied on. The earliest advertisements used in this study were published in the 1730s – the earliest decade from which advertisements are available from all three colonies. The latest advertisements come from the 1770s, a period which saw the end of the colonial period and the start of the Revolutionary war. It should be noted that this decade, however, did not mark the end of such advertisements, which persisted until the emancipation of slaves in the 19th century.

Particularly in the later years, several competing newspapers were operating and publishing runaway advertisements in all the colonies. Furthermore, the turmoil of the Revolutionary War in the 1770s offered more possibilities for slaves to escape. As a result, the numbers the advertisements available for analysis grows vastly from the early years to the later ones. In fact, in the original databases, there are more advertisements available from the 1770s than there are from all the earlier decades combined. However, to balance this out somewhat, and to make it possible to statistically compare older advertisements with newer ones, equal-sized samples were collected from each decade. In the case of Virginia, this meant randomly choosing 20 advertisements per decade from the 1730s to the 1770s. In the two other colonies, 15 advertisements from the time periods 1730-49, 1750-69 and 1770s were selected at random.

The creation of the corpus was restricted by the limitations of the data available. In the case of Pennsylvania, the advertisements all originate from a single newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. The Virginian ones include advertisements from several different newspapers, which, however, all went by the name of *Virginia Gazette*, whereas the New York advertisements come from a wider variety of newspapers published at the time in the colony (most of them from the newspaper *The New York Gazette or the Weekly Post-Boy*). In this study the distinction between Virginian, Pennsylvanian and New York advertisements was made on the basis of the place of publication of the newspaper. As noted above, some people placed advertisements in the papers of neighbouring colonies as well, but in my analysis an advertisement concerning a Virginian runaway but published in a Pennsylvanian paper, is considered Pennsylvanian. The study also focuses on runaway slave advertisements, ignoring neighbouring genres like advertisements on white runaway servants or advertisements announcing the capture of a runaway. However, the corpus does contain some advertisements where the advertiser is seeking both runaway slaves as well as indentured servants of European origin.

Runaway advertisements offer a wealth of information for people researching colonial society and the slaves' position within it. The advertisements can shed light on the age, sex, origin, skills and clothing of runaways as well as on the situations of their escape. Furthermore, the descriptions of character traits and behaviour found in the advertisements reveals much about how the slave owners viewed their black bondsmen. Many researchers have indeed approached the advertisement from this point of view (e.g. Meaders 1975, Prude 1991, Waldstreicher 1999). Although these matters cannot be ignored even in a genre-based study of the texts, they are not central to this study.

4. *The genre of runaway slave advertisements*

The idea in this study is to consider the runaway slave advertisement as a specific genre¹⁵. The study uses the concept of genre as defined by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993, 2004), which considers the communicative purpose to be the unifying aspect of a particular genre. Both Swales and Bhatia note that the similar communicative purpose often also leads to similarities in the form and structure of the members of a particular genre. How strongly the texts adhere to this kind of a model can vary, and some examples are more *prototypical* than others (Swales 1990: 58). In the case of runaway advertisements, the unifying communicative purpose can be seen as the slave owner informing the general populace of the escape of a slave and requesting their assistance in the recapture. In the study, my aim was to identify the structural and formal features of a prototypical runaway advertisement. But before

¹⁵ Alternatively, they can be defined as a subgenre in the wider genre of runaway advertisements, which would also include advertisements for fugitive indentured servants, military deserters, etc.

features like structuring or vocabulary and fixed phrases can be examined in any depth, the following section deals with some more general properties of the advertisements in question.

4.1. *Some general features of the advertisements*

It is not particularly difficult to distinguish a runaway slave advertisement from other kinds of advertisements. The typical advertisement announces the escape of a slave or several slaves, describes the slave and defines a reward for capturing the fugitive and returning him or her to the owner. Example (1) is a typical example.

- (1) RAN away from the Subscriber, living in Hanover County, near Newcastle Town, about the End of September last, a new Negroe Man; he understands no English; is about 5 Feet 11 Inches high, a right Black Fellow; with a Scar over his Right Eye-brow; had on, a new Cotton Jacket and Breeches, without either Button or Button-holes, a new Felt Hat, and an Oznabrig Shirt. Whoever takes up the said Negroe and brings him to me, or to Mr. Robert Brown, Merchant, in Newcastle, shall have a good Reward, besides what the Law allows. Margaret Arbuthnott. N.B. It's desired that he may receive sufficient Correction in his Way home. *(Virginia Gazette (Parks) Nov 14-21, 1745)*

However, since the circumstances under which slaves ran away vary considerably, the advertisements are far from identical. Some owners place advertisements almost immediately after the escape of the slave, whereas other advertisements concern runaways that have been avoiding their masters for many months, sometimes even years. This naturally has an effect on the information presented (e.g. whether information is given on clothing the runaway had on when escaping or places where he/she has since been sighted). The advertisements can also either concern only a single runaway, the most typical case, but some advertise for multiple runaways. Of the 190 advertisements analyzed in this study, 154 described a single fugitive, whereas the rest typically dealt with two or three runaways (some of whom could also be white servants). In the corpus analysed, the most runaways mentioned in a single advertisement was six.

The length of the advertisements can also vary considerably. In the corpus, the longest advertisement has 392 words, the shortest one only 45 words. On average, the length of an advertisement is 137 words. Naturally, multiple runaway advertisements have a tendency to be longer, but also advertisements on single runaways are sometimes lengthened by detailed descriptions of e.g. the clothes and other possessions the slave took with

them.¹⁶ Some advertisers only offer very rudimentary information, whereas others describe their slave's physical appearance and perceived personality characteristics in detail – a variance again easily explainable by various situations: a slave owner with several recently purchased field hands probably does not know his slaves well enough to provide as detailed an account of their characteristics as a person whose only household servant has escaped.

The advertisers are both men and women, as are the runaways, even though males are more prominent in both categories. For the most part, the advertisements address the general public (i.e. anyone who could possibly apprehend the slave). However, sometimes specific groups are addressed within the advertisements. The most commonly singled out group is "Masters of Vessels", who are often particularly warned not to transport the runaways by water (see section 4.3. below). In addition to the typical audience, one advertiser in the corpus even addresses the runaway, promising not to punish him if he returns of his own accord.

Linguistically, the advertisements do not offer many difficulties to the modern reader as the texts are written in Modern English. Although the spelling variety of Early Modern English had already narrowed down by the 18th century, there are still a number of words where the spelling deviates from the present day standard. For example, "waistcoat" is often spelled "wastecoat". Similarly, all three spellings "jail", "gaol" and "goal" are found in the advertisements. Sometimes the preference for a particular spelling seems to be linked with a particular colony, e.g. Pennsylvania uses "goal" at all times. Colons and semicolons are also sometimes used in places the modern reader would not expect. The texts also illustrate the wavering conventions of using capital letters in the 18th century; Sometimes capital letters are used for proper nouns and the beginning of sentences, at other times all nouns are capitalized (as can be seen from example (1)).

Unlike modern day classified ads (which might be the best present-day comparison point), the runaway slave advertisements make little use of word abbreviations. Only words that would most likely be abbreviated in any text receive abbreviated forms. These include e.g. Latin abbreviations (*N.B.*, *viz.*, *&c.*), titles (*Dr.*, *Mr.*, *Capt.*) and money (*sh.*, *£*) In fact, the advertisers do not seem too concerned to shorten their advertisements: numbers are often written out in full, which certainly lengthens some of the texts.

In terms of syntax, however, there are elliptical constructions. In particular, the subject of the sentence (most often the slave) is sometimes omitted. The complexity of the syntax

¹⁶ The clothing vocabulary is interesting in its own right, as it is very rich and highly detailed, giving the colour, condition, material and style of various items of clothing (e.g. "an old homespun blue and white striped linen jacket with sleeves"). The terminology used in it is often unfamiliar to the modern reader, e.g. "Newmarket coat", "Monmouth cap", "a pair of old shoes, with a pair of neat Pinchbeck buckles", etc., but from the frequent use of such terms, it can be assumed that the terminology was familiar to 18th century colonists and of use in identifying the runaway.

varies considerably, but particularly in the description, there is a tendency for extremely long, list-like sentences where the subject is not always repeated, as can be seen in example (2).

- (2) [ran away] a light-complexion'd Mulatto Man , aged about 25 Years, nam'd Ben; he is about 5 Feet 8 Inches high, has a down Look, a low Forehead, talks good English, and has been well whipp'd.

(*Virginia Gazette (Parks)* Nov 14-21, 1745)

In other parts of the advertisement (e.g. the sentence announcing the reward), the syntax is typically no longer quite so elliptical, and generally adopts a somewhat more formal register.

4.2. *The structure of the runaway advertisement using the notion of "moves"*

Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) use the notion of *moves* to examine regularities in the structure of genres. As was previously noted, genres are united by one common communicative purpose. Moves, on the other hand, represent smaller, distinct communicative acts within the main one. Bhatia notes that "each move ... serves a typical communicative intention which is always subservient to the overall communicative purpose of the genre" (Bhatia 1993: 31). These moves often also have the tendency to appear in a fixed order. I adopted this notion of a move to analyze the regularities in the runaway advertisements. This makes dividing the runaway advertisement into different sections and determining which of them are crucial and which more optional to members of this genre possible. Furthermore, observations on their respective order can also be made.

In the study, the runaway advertisement was divided into nine possible moves, which are listed below. These moves perform various tasks in the whole of the advertisement.

- 1) Place and date (when and where the advertisement was written).
- 2) Identifying the type of advertisement (the initial phrase "RUN away", that informs the reader that they are reading a runaway advertisement).
- 3) When, where, from whom (circumstances of the escape).
- 4) A description of the runaway.
- 5) Reward (defining the sum and the conditions that should be met for claiming it).
- 6) Signature (the advertiser's name mentioned at the end of the advertisement).
- 7) Ensuring the runaway will not receive additional help (typically warnings to people not to aid the runaway in any way).

- 8) Directions on how to treat the runaway upon capture (instructions on whipping, etc.).
- 9) Other (unexpected) moves (anything from requests to place the advertisement in a public place, to more unexpected actions like a commercial advertisement for chocolate added to the end of an notice¹⁷).

A runaway advertisement can be divided into these moves in the manner depicted in the following example.

(3) NEW MILL Creek, Aug. 10, 1775.	Move 1
RUN away	Move 2
from the subscriber on Wednesday night, the ninth instant,	Move 3
a negro fellow named PETER, about 5 feet 11 inches high, of a yellow complexion; he hath a long swanking walk, is a little knock kneed and looks vile when attacked; had on when he went away a checque shirt and oznabrig trowsers.	Move 4
Whoever apprehends the said fellow and secures him so that I may get him, shall receive FIVE POUNDS reward if taken in this colony, and TEN POUNDS if taken out of it.	Move 5
I hereby forewarn all masters of vessels from harboring or carrying the said fellow out of the colony.	Move 7
SOLOMON HODGES.	Move 6
<i>(Virginia Gazette, or Norfolk Intelligencer Aug 15, 1775)</i>	

Not all moves are necessarily mentioned in an advertisement. For instance, the example above lacks Moves 8 (that move can be found, for instance, in the post-script of example (1)) and Move 9. All these moves have their own reason for existence – some help the reader to identify the runaway, others the information on where to return him, some encourage readers to capture him, and others deter people from aiding him.

Moves 4 (the description) and 5 (the reward) can be considered the most integral of all the nine moves. These two moves are also present in every single runaway advertisement. In the case of some moves, there is a certain amount of overlap, and mentioning the necessary information in one move may render others unnecessary. This is the case with Moves 1 and 3, and also Moves 3, 5 and 6 (e.g. if the name of the advertiser is already mentioned at the early part of the advertisement, Move 6 (the signature) is not necessarily needed). The rest of the moves, i.e. the warnings and further instructions, occur only occasionally in a minority of the advertisements, although they are more common in certain eras and/or in certain colonies.

¹⁷ "N.B. The said Peter Low, continues to make and sell, CHOCOLATTE at his House the upper end of Maiden-Lane" (*New York Gazette or the Weekly Post-Boy*, March 18th, 1771).

My analysis of the corpus showed that the moves generally occurred in the order shown in the previous example, although the rarer moves tend to occur in a post script after the signature. In particular the two main moves seemed quite fixed in respect to each other - only two New York advertisements reversed their order. Example (4) is one of the two deviant cases.

- (4) Forty Dollars reward and all reasonable charges shall be paid to any person that secures and brings to William Kelly of the City of New York, merchant, a negro man named Norton Minors who ran away from his masters, Messrs. Bodkun and Farrall on the Island of St. Croix, on the first Day of July last; is by trade a Caulker and Ship Carpenter, has lived at Newbury in New England, was the property of Mr. Mark Quayne, who sold him to Mr. Craddock at Nevis, from whom the above gentlemen bought him about three years ago, is about five feet eight inches high, aged about 37, speaks English, reads and writes, and is a very sensible fellow.
(*Parker's New York Gazette; or, the Weekly Post-Boy* Nov 20, 1760, emphasis mine)

This reversal of the usual order can be explained by the desire to have the reward sum mentioned first as an eye-catching device. However, the same effect is in many other advertisements achieved by mentioning the reward sum in a separate headline, but after that proceeding in the expected order, referring to the reward again in Move 5. That kind of a tactic becomes more popular in the later decades, possibly in response to the growing number of advertisements.

4.3. *Different speech acts attested in the moves*

As the moves demonstrate, there are several kinds of speech acts present in the advertisements. First of all, the advertiser needs to provide information regarding the runaway and the circumstances surrounding his/her escape. This is the main function of Move 4 and, to a lesser extent, also Moves 1, 3 and 6. Giving the information is necessary so that others can be expected to identify the escapee and then to capture and return him.

However, the advertisers do not expect their fellow colonists to be inclined to capture runaways without additional motivation. Thus, a promise of reward (i.e. Move 5) is found in every advertisement. This act of promising is usually phrased in the form "Whoever captures and brings to me the said slave, shall receive X sum of money, paid by me". Since promising a reward for the capture of a runaway is a regular part of the runaway advertisement, there seems to be no particular need to stress it. However, the analysis of the corpus seems to suggest that when rewards are being offered for things *other* than the

capture, the act of promising is highlighted, often by using “hereby”. For example, when promising a reward for the capture of a thief who has stolen the slave as well as the slave himself, one advertiser starts: “I hereby promise to pay” (*Virginia Gazette (Hunter)* Aug 14, 1752).

Move 7 (ensuring that the runaway does not receive help), on the other hand, often offers examples of yet another speech act, that of warning or even threatening. In an attempt to make sure that the fugitives do not receive help whilst on the run, some advertisers find it necessary to specifically warn others not to help them in any way. In particular “Masters of Vessels”, but also “others” are “forewarned” not to take the runaway on board their ship and carry them off, or to “harbour” or “entertain” runaways. These speech acts, too, are sometimes stressed by the use of *hereby*, which can be seen as adding a more official tone to the advertisements. These warnings can often be construed as barely veiled threats, as the phrase “at their Peril” is often pinned to the end of the warning. Some even make their threat of legal action as clear as possible, e.g. “All Masters of Vessels are forbid to carry off said Servant, as they would not escape the utmost Rigour of the Law in that case made and provided” (*New York Gazette or the Weekly Post-Boy* Oct 15, 1753).

On the whole, the simple promise of a reward seems to be deemed sufficient to prompt fellow colonials into action. Similarly, the threat of legal action is the remedy against people aiding the fugitive. Only a few advertisers resort to finer persuasive tactics, as does one who feels the need to add that “It is earnestly requested and presumed no gentlemen will harbour the said run away negro (*New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury* Sept 22, 1777; emphasis mine)”. Another implores that “it is hoped every lover of his country will endeavour to apprehend so daring a villain” (*Pennsylvania Gazette* Sept 25, 1776; emphasis mine). In a similar kind of move, some advertisers use unflattering terms like “ill-minded” or “malicious” when referring to people who have aided the runaways by removing their irons, etc.

Also, when extra favours (i.e. ones that do not fall into the most typical scope of a runaway advertisement) are asked, these additional requests for action need to be stated explicitly. Often this is done by using the verb *desire* (either in the passive or active form). It comes across in the instructions for punishment and other treatment upon capture. Other additional actions can sometimes also be requested, as is seen in example (5)

- (5) if any Gentleman will be so kind ... to cut out the Advertisement, and set it up in the most publick Place, it will be esteemed a favour
(*Pennsylvania Gazette* Oct 22, 1761, emphasis mine)

The need for politeness in cases like these is more evident, probably at least partly due to the fact that they are actions for which the person will not receive a reward. This person is also not breaking the law if he chooses to ignore these wishes of the advertiser.

4.4. Recurring vocabulary and fixed phrases

Not only is the information in runaway advertisements presented in roughly the same order, it is also presented in a surprisingly formulaic manner. To start with, 178 of the advertisements begin with the phrases "RUN away" or "RAN away" – which of course immediately identifies the type of advertisement to the reader. This means that only 6% of the advertisements do not adhere to this model. Sometimes this is explained by slightly special circumstances (e.g. starting with "Stolen away" when it is suspected the runaway has not escaped of his or her own volition), other opening phrases (such as starting with "Whereas..." or "LATELY absented from his master's service..." or "My Negro Man Slave...") are unusual.

The most varying information, structures and vocabulary is found in the description of the runaway. However, even here we can observe some fixed phrases. Notably, 84% of the advertisements contain some kind of description of the runaways' clothing. And of those, the list of clothing is preceded by the phrase "had on, when (s)he went away" in 81 cases (a further 33 just have the phrase "had on"). In the vocabulary, there are no adjectives that would be present in the majority of the notices, the most popular one being "well-set", occurring in 44 of the 190 advertisements. The lack of uniformity here is hardly unexpected, since the information given in this section is supposed to enable readers to identify the runaway by distinguishing him from others.

In comparison, the move identifying the reward is very formulaic. It characteristically starts with the word "whoever". Other possibilities for this move include starting with the comparable expression "any Person" (used in 6 ads) or using a structure like "I will give X Reward to any Person, who brings me the slave". However, these variants are clearly in the minority, as the word "whoever" begins this move in 167 of the advertisements (i.e. 88% of the corpus). The wording of the rest of the sentence varies somewhat, even though the conditions stated are usually the same – the runaways must be captured, and then either returned to the advertiser or secured somewhere so that the owner can collect them himself. The verbs denoting the action required vary, but popular alternatives are e.g. "takes up", "apprehends", "secures", "brings" and "delivers".

Later on in the same move, when the actual reward sum is defined, there is another recurring phrase – "(all) reasonable charges". This phrase occurs in 72 advertisements. It is used only in six Virginian advertisements, all in the early half of the corpus, in the 1730s and the 1740s; the phrase seems to have dropped out of use in Virginia in the later years altogether. The phrase is far more popular in the New York and Pennsylvanian corpus (34

and 32 ads, i.e. 76% and 71% respectively). Between these two colonies, a rather marked division can be seen in the usage of the two variants. New York advertisements favour “all reasonable charges” to “reasonable charges” (28 ads vs. 6 ads), whereas the tendency in Pennsylvanian advertisements is the reverse (4 ads vs. 28 ads). Additionally, the wording “reasonable expenses” is used in one Virginian and one New York advertisement. The purpose of the phrase is probably to assure people that going to some extra trouble to capture the runaway will be worth their while – although a fixed sum is often mentioned, the advertiser cannot be sure that it is enough to prompt people into action if the runaway is found a considerable distance away.

A phrase that is particularly typical for Virginian advertisements is “besides what the Law allows”. It appears in this form in half the Virginian notices. Moreover, three other advertisers refer to the law-guaranteed sum in different words: “besides the Allowance by Law” (*Virginia Gazette (Parks)* Aug 7-14, 1746), “besides what is allowed by Law” (*Virginia Gazette (Parks)* March 30-Apr 6, 1739) and “handsomely rewarded, over and above what the Law allows” (*Virginia Gazette (Parks)* Feb 2-8, 1738 [1739]). The phrase “besides what the Law allows” also occurs once in the Pennsylvanian corpus, but that is a case of a Virginian slave owner advertising in a neighbouring colony’s paper¹⁸.

4.5. *The advertiser referring to him- or herself*

Another interesting feature of these advertisements is the way in which the advertisers refer to themselves. They tend to do this in one of three different ways: they can refer to themselves by using first person pronouns, or, if they wish to avoid that, they can use passive constructions or refer to themselves in the third person.

The first person pronoun *I* can be found as the subject of many different kinds of sentences, most often is in constructions where the advertiser expresses his or her suspicions concerning, for example, the whereabouts of the slave. This includes phrases like “I believe / suppose / have reason to believe” and others. Apart from *I* being used as the subject of sentences, the possessive pronoun *my* can be found in some advertisements, in expressions like “my House”. *Me* is used particularly in Move 5, where the advertiser instructs that the slave should be brought “to me” (this happens in 64 advertisements).

¹⁸ I have not come across any mention of a guaranteed-by-law sum for capturing runaways in Pennsylvania and New York. In their introductions to the runaway advertisements, Hodges and Brown (1994) and Smith and Wojtovicz (1989) treat the slave codes of the colonies in question, but make no mention of any such sum. Even though I have been unable to locate a mention of such a sum for Pennsylvania and New York, it does not exclude the possibility of its existence, as the sum defined by Virginian law is not often mentioned in discussions of the Virginian slave code either. However, if there was indeed no such legislation in New York and Pennsylvania, this would neatly explain the absence of the phrase in these advertisements.

Instead of the first person pronoun, the passive is used to express suspicions as well: forms like “it is supposed” or “it is thought” are very popular. Passives are also used to replace the first person pronoun in other kinds of sentences (e.g. “it is desired” or “he was bought”). The use of the passive makes it possible to keep the runaway as the subject of the sentence, which is possibly one reason why it is used relatively often in the advertisements.

If the advertiser chooses to refer to himself in the third person, he can choose a variety of ways of doing so. One option for the subscriber is to always refer to himself by name, as happens in example (6).

- (6) RAN away about 3 Weeks ago, from Col. Lewis Burwell's Plantation ...
Whoever brings the said Negro to Col. Burwell, at his House near
Williamsburg, shall be well rewarded, in Proportion to his Trouble,
besides what the Law allows, by Lewis Burwell.
(*Virginia Gazette (Parks)* Apr 14-21, 1738, emphasis mine)

More commonly, however, the advertiser refers to himself as the “Subscriber” early on in the advertisement, giving his or her name only in Move 6 (the signature). Naturally, this option is not available in the advertisements where Move 6 is missing. Most often “the Subscriber” is used in the phrase “ran away from the Subscriber” or, more rarely, “the Subscriber’s [plantation/quarters, etc.]”, sometimes also “[ran away a negro man] belonging to the Subscriber”. In these early positions, ‘subscriber’ is used in 111 of the 190 advertisements. The use of “Subscriber” later on in the advertisement (e.g in Move 5) is rarer.

Furthermore the advertiser can resort to referring to himself or herself as the slave’s “Master” or, more rarely, “Mistress”. Although there are some occurrences of the word in different positions in the advertisements, it is usually found in Move 5: the slave is to be “returned to his Master” or secured “so that his Master may get him again”. In these constructions, ‘Master’/‘Mistress’ is used in 27 New York (i.e. 37%) and 17 Pennsylvanian notices (i.e. 38%), but just 8 Virginia advertisements. In one Virginian and one New York advertisement, the advertiser refer to himself as the “Owner” of the runaway.

The advertiser seldom limits himself to one or two of the methods: he can, in the beginning of the advertisement refer to himself as “the Subscriber”, at the end as “the Master”, as well as employing both passive forms and the first person pronoun somewhere in between. Avoiding the first person pronouns altogether is most typical in the New York advertisements, where 36 of 45 advertisements (i.e. 80%) never use the first person pronoun. This is the case in 27 (i.e. 60%) of the Pennsylvanian advertisements as well. Virginian advertisements use the first person pronoun much more often, only 17% have no *I*, *me* or *my* in them. However, even in the Virginian advertisements where the first person pronoun is

used in some places, it is often not used consistently but rather mixed in with third person references and passive forms.

5. *The differences between the three colonies*

The most surprising finding of this study was perhaps the differences found between the three colonies. Although the advertisements followed the basic model in all the three, and it is certainly not difficult to see that they belong to the same genre, there are striking differences in tendencies when the advertisements are more closely investigated. Collected in Table One are some features where differences between the three colonies were noticeable. I have printed the largest percentages in each case in bold, and underlined the lowest ones to make the comparisons easier. Apart from the differences presented in Table One, many others could also be observed in the corpus.

	Virginia	New York	Pennsylvania
Move 1 present	36 %	<u>6</u> %	49 %
Using "the Subscriber" vs. the name in Move 4	73% / <u>10</u> %	<u>24</u> % / 58%	58% / 29%
The reward as a separate heading	<u>3</u> %	16 %	33 %
The signature syntactically part of Move 5	<u>35</u> %	67 %	89 %
...by using the phrase "paid by X"	<u>21</u> %	58 %	80 %
Move 7 present	<u>8</u> %	22 %	42 %
Post-script present	<u>13</u> %	42 %	24 %
"had on, when (s)he went away"	<u>33</u> %	64 %	42 %
"(all) reasonable charges"	<u>6</u> %	76 %	71 %
no 1st person references	<u>17</u> %	80 %	60 %
In Move 5, the slave owner referred to as "Master"	<u>8</u> %	60 %	38 %

Table One. *Differences in the advertisements of the three colonies.*

In general, the table seems to indicate that sticking to a particular feature is more typical in the New York and Pennsylvania corpora than in the Virginian advertisements, which contain more variation in their wording. The Pennsylvanian and New York advertisements do not always follow the same trends, however. For example, Move 1 (a separate line mentioning the time and sometimes also the place the advertisement was written) is found in 49% of the Pennsylvanian notices, but only in 6 % of the New York advertisements.

The majority (73%) of the Virginian advertisements refer to the advertiser as "the Subscriber" in Move 4, whereas 58 % of New York advertisers favour mentioning the

advertiser by name at this point. Placing the reward sum as a separate heading is most likely in Pennsylvanian advertisements, who are also most likely to syntactically link the signature to the move regarding the reward¹⁹. Warnings are particularly favoured in Pennsylvanian and post-scripts in New York advertisements²⁰.

The more interesting question is *why* these differences appear. Editorial influence does not seem a likely candidate, particularly in the New York corpus which is comprised from several different newspapers. Some differences between the advertisements from the different colonies can be explained by outside factors, especially the different situations the slaves found themselves in the Northern and Southern colonies. This explains, for example, the existence of directions for punishment in Move 8 of some Virginian advertisements and their absence in the other two colonies. It can also be that Pennsylvanian and New York runaways had more opportunities to get onboard vessels, which would explain why Move 7 (warnings to masters of vessels, etc.) is more popular in those advertisements. Similarly, the Virginian fixed phrase "besides what the Law allows" in the reward is presumably linked to the runaway legislation of that particular colony.

However, some other features cannot be explained so easily. Why do New York advertisers favour the phrase "all reasonable charges" when Pennsylvanians more often choose "reasonable charges"? Why do most New Yorkers mention the advertiser's name at the onset, whilst the other two colonies are more likely to use "the Subscriber"? I cannot offer hypotheses as to how the initial tendencies came to be, but it would seem logical that once they had emerged, these models were self-enforcing. If, in the beginning, advertisers in a particular newspaper happen to choose similar phrases to express certain things, the readers, who, after reading these initial advertisements write their own, are more likely to follow the set example. Thus, in turn, they strengthen the emerging tendencies. On the other hand, if, from the onset on, the advertisers use several different ways to express themselves, the "example effect" is not going to have such a strong influence on later advertisements either.

Since the corpus used is not very extensive, especially in the case of New York and Pennsylvania, the findings of this study cannot be taken as absolutely definitive, even though the tendencies revealed are well supported. One more aspect that could be interesting is the spread of particular phrases or other practises from one colony to another.

¹⁹ By this is meant cases like "...all reasonable charges, paid by me, FRANCES HOLLAND." (*New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury* as opposed to cases like "...shall receive TWO POUNDS reward. THOMAS GRAVES." (*Virginia Gazette (Rind)* Sept 29, 1768)

²⁰ Here some caution is necessary due to the source material. As the compilers of the source books for the Pennsylvanian and New York advertisements did not choose their material at random, it is possible that advertisements like this were considered more interesting and varying and could therefore be over-represented in the books.

As the slave owners did regularly advertise for their runaways in the neighbouring colonies' papers, it would be surprising if some interaction of this kind did not take place.

6. Conclusion

I have inspected the runaway slave advertisement as a genre, looking at its structural and formulaic features. Examination of the Virginian, Pennsylvanian and New York corpora revealed that, although the varying circumstances of slave escape unavoidably bring different elements to the advertisements, there is enough regularity in form to make it possible to talk of a prototypical runaway advertisement. Furthermore, subtle preferences in wording in the advertisements in different colonies would indicate that local norms prevailed, as advertisers, perhaps automatically, followed the conventions they saw in their own papers. Changes over the period of about 40 years were not very noticeable. However, for example, the eye-catching practice of placing the reward sum in the heading can perhaps be seen as developing due to the increasing number of advertisements.

The advertisements were analysed in terms of *moves*. The basic moves that are to be found in (nearly) all runaway advertisements, as well as rarer moves that appear only occasionally were identified. The moves are connected to the different acts the advertisers wish to accomplish through the advertisements. Apart from the move structure and its organization, generic tendencies could also be observed on the level of vocabulary and especially in the use of fixed phrases. The presence of exceptions (in the moves as well as word choices) shows that the writers *did* have the possibility to phrase matters differently. However, the idea of a prototypical runaway advertisement seems to have been so effective that this possibility was not seized upon by most writers.

This study was limited to runaway slave advertisements, and other related subgenres, though briefly mentioned, were not subjected to close analysis. Therefore, one future avenue for research could be, for example, a comparison between the runaway slave and runaway white servant advertisements. Another possibility would be to examine the generic qualities of other early "lost and found" advertisements. Furthermore, it could be interesting to see whether examples of runaway advertisements from the extreme northern and southern colonies concur with the tendencies discovered in the present study.

The generic features discovered in these advertisements reveal something about the development of a particular genre of texts in the early days of the newspaper. Nevertheless, the most interesting aspect of these texts is the window they offer to the lives of individual slaves and their owners living in 18th century America.

References

Primary sources

- Hodges Graham Russell and Brown Alan Edward 1994. *"Pretends to Be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Smith Billy G. and Wojtowicz Richard (compilers) 1989. *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Virginia Runaways Homepage, Costa Thomas (compiler) 2003. Runaway slave advertisements from 18th century Virginia newspapers [online]. Available: etext.lib.virginia.edu/subjects/runaways/ (13 Aug 2007).

Secondary sources

- Bhatia Vijay K. 2004. *Worlds of Written Discourse. A Genre-Based View*. London: Continuum.
- Bhatia Vijay K. 1993. *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*. London: Longman.
- Kolchin Peter 1993. *American Slavery 1619-1877*. London: Penguin books.
- Meaders Daniel E. 1975. South Carolina fugitives as viewed through local colonial newspapers with emphasis on runaway notices 1782-1801. *The Journal of Negro History* 60 (2): 288-319.
- Mott Frank Luther 1962. *American Journalism A History: 1690-1960*. Third Edition. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Mäkinen Susanna 2008. *Generic Features of Eighteenth Century American Runaway Slave Advertisements*. University of Turku: Master's thesis.
- Prude Jonathan 1991. To look upon the "Lower Sort": Runaway ads and the appearance of unfree laborers in America, 1750-1800. *The Journal of American History* 78 (1): 124-159.
- Swales John M. 1990. *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Waldstreicher David 1999. Reading the runaways: Self-fashioning, print culture, and confidence in slavery in the eighteenth-century Mid-Atlantic. *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser. 56 (2): 243-272.

The Literature Track

Lydia Kokkola

The study of literature is an exceptionally broad church; Turku University currently distinguishes between study of World Literatures in the Comparative Literature Department, Finnish Literature and the literatures which are taught in foreign language departments. This division is mainly a practical means of arranging resources, but on another level it also implies that studying literature is so linguistically and culturally specific that studying literature through the medium of English as a foreign language is in some way different from studying literature in any other language. This concern with the specifics of language is as old as the academic study of literature itself.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, when literature first became a subject taught in British universities, key critics within the 'New Critical' school sought to divorce the study of literature from its context of production and focus exclusively on the language and form of the written text. This focus on form is something at which Finnish speaking students excel, as their long and successful history as EFL learners enables them to focus on the specifics of language use. In the long term, however, ignoring the ways in which the context of production impacts on literary texts will result in inadequate analyses. As the introduction to the Philological Track included in this volume explains, language itself is in a constant state of flux. And so, students on the Literature Track tend to be as interested in understanding the culture which produced the novels, plays or poetry they analyse, as they are in the language in which they are written.

Although the Department of English does offer courses on the histories and cultures of the English speaking world, it does not have a cultural track in Advanced Studies. This is primarily a result of our mandate to focus on the English language and the methodologies associated with research in that field, but also because it can so successfully be incorporated into the study of literature as well as the use of English. Finnish students interfacing with an English speaking culture through the medium of literature are very aware of gaps in their knowledge, which often makes them more sensitive readers than native English speaking students who can easily over-generalise from personal experience. Studies on the Literature Track often engage in detailed discussions of the sociohistorical era in which the text was written and/or which is portrayed in the work.

When choosing a topic for an MA thesis, students on the Literature Track are as likely to base their selection on their private readings as they are on the courses they have taken. Their research questions and methodology, however, ideally arise from the taught courses. The compulsory courses prior to entering the track offer training in how to form a research question on a literary topic. In Basic Studies, students are offered a structured overview of

some of the central elements of narrative fiction and poetry and an, admittedly very limited, insight into literatures from around the English speaking world spanning a period of some four hundred years. This, rather descriptive, course draws students' attention to features of the text which underlie all analyses of any quality. The main compulsory literature course - *Contemporary Literatures in English* - is taught in Intermediate Studies; it was the brainchild of the late Prof. John Skinner (1945-2007). Prof. Skinner's fascination with the New Literatures in English resulted in a number of publications of which *The Stepmother Tongue* (1998) is the most familiar to students. The Intermediate course provides a similar overview of postcolonial literature for students at the department. Postcolonial literature in English has earned its place at the centre of the compulsory curriculum, mainly because it links so well to other parts of our curriculum: varieties of English, the history of the English language and the English speaking world, as well as pragmatics. Moreover, it is very directly relevant to Finnish students since Finland was also a colonised country less than a century ago.

Since postcolonial literature and theory is a compulsory component in Intermediate Studies, students entering Advanced Studies have already read literature from five continents, and have a reasonable understanding of the theoretical issues underlying research into this area. Many choose to specialise in this area by taking further courses, and so postcolonial topics are always well represented among the students writing their MA theses in the Literature Thesis seminar. Sadly, this area is not adequately represented in the present volume. (Although Anna Orhanen discusses a postcolonial writer, Oscar Wilde, her concerns lie elsewhere.) Those who are interested in reading recent, excellent MA theses on postcolonial topics are strongly advised to examine Roland Buhre's *The 'boys' in the heart of the Empire: Reflections of Imperial Ideology in Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners* (2008) and/or Satu Sempilä's *Ventriloquists and Shape-shifters: Imagining postcolonial identity and space in Pauline Melville's The Ventriloquist's Tale* (2008).

Given both the centrality of postcolonial fiction in the curriculum and the former professor's research interests in this field, it is unsurprising that the majority of postgraduate research conducted in the department falls within this sphere. The last Department publication showcasing recent graduate's work (Skinner 2000) contained articles by Tuomas Huttunen, Janne Korkka and Elina Valovirta. These three scholars were members of an Academy of Finland project, *Fragments of the Past: History, Fiction and Identity in the New English Literatures* (2004-7). Today they are members of the two current literary research projects at the department. Elina Valovirta was a founding member of *Flexible Readers: Mediating Aesthetic Interaction*, and Tuomas Huttunen and Janne Korkka are both funded by a new Academy of Finland project, *Silence as Voice: Reempowering the disempowered in contemporary English literatures* (2008-2011). All three are close to completing their doctoral degrees. Readers who would like to learn more about how these scholars' research topics

have developed are advised to examine the volume they produced with Kaisa Ilmonen, *Seeking the Self: Diasporic Narrative and the Ethics of Representation* (Huttunen et al 2008).

Like the above mentioned researchers, students working within the field of postcolonial literature are deeply concerned with issues of power and the representation of English speaking peoples and their histories. Whilst postcolonial critics have developed a specialist vocabulary, and drawn critical attention to specific problems within their fields of concern, for the most part, they rely on other schools of literary analyses for their methodology. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, uses deconstruction to expose the ways in which subaltern figures are marginalised in both literature and reality. A common tendency amongst students on the Literature Track has been to use New Historical practices to draw attention to issues of marginalisation, the importance of contextualising the time of writing and the time of reading a particular text, as well as considering how the text under examination fits into larger cultural patterns.

New Historical practices inform another area of research which is popular amongst students writing their MA theses within the Literature Track: the study of popular and/or ephemeral literature. At the time of writing, five of the fifteen students in the thesis seminar are working on topics which would not have been considered suitable for study some twenty odd years ago. These include studies of children's literature (including formula fiction), detective fiction, comics and bestsellers of the type generally frowned upon by high brow academics. Like the students writing on postcolonial topics, these students are deeply concerned with connections between culture, society and the fictional works they study. Their critical thinking is every bit as sophisticated as those writing on canonical works. A number of excellent theses are anticipated during 2009, but in the meantime, those wishing to read a thesis that exemplifies this trend within the Literature Track and encouraged to read Arja Rinne's *Possibilities of Children's Fiction: The Implied Child and Adult Reader in Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials* (2005) and/or Milla Karvonen's *Speaking Wounds: Silence, Self-injury and Healing in Patricia McCormick's Cut* (2007).

The third main strand within the Literature Track is the one that perhaps most readers would have anticipated being mentioned first: canonical classics of English Literature. A traditional survey of British and American classics from the Renaissance to the emergence of Modernism constituted a central element of the Department's compulsory literature teaching until very recently. The degree reform known as the Bologna process brought about changes which resulted in such topics becoming optional. So far, this has not reduced the numbers of theses being written on canonical writers. Both the papers included in this volume are based on theses on writers who are highly esteemed by high brow academics, despite the fact that both Wilde and Ashbery set out to challenge the academic values of their day.

Anna Orhanen's MA thesis on Oscar Wilde is unusual in a number of ways. Firstly, Orhanen does not select Wilde's best known works – his plays, novel or poetry – for analyses, but rather focuses on Wilde's contribution to literary criticism. Noting that Wilde's love of paradox and irony has caused him to be dismissed as a serious critic, Orhanen considers how such features may be better evaluated if one considers them as part of the critical method Wilde is promoting. Her article in this volume focuses exclusively on Wilde's essay collection, *Intentions* (1891). Her MA Thesis also makes reference to some of Wilde's other works, *De Profundis* (1905/1962) and, to a lesser extent, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Her forthcoming doctorate will also take into account Wilde's Fairy Tales (see Orhanen: 2009, *forthcoming*).

Elina Siltanen's MA thesis examines some of the poetry of the living, New York based poet, John Ashbery. Like Orhanen, she considers how certain formal features of the text which have typically concerned critics function as a form of literary criticism in their own right. Noting that Ashbery's poetry is often dismissed as 'difficult' because it defies a single, coherent, interpretative reading, Siltanen considers the ways in which this defiance of traditional reading strategies can engage the reader in a meaning making process which is far more egalitarian than traditional approaches to poetry would allow. Rather than regarding the poet in a Romantic light, as having heightened insight into some experience or emotion, Ashbery foregrounds his ordinariness through the use of everyday language and cliché. However, the connections between the ideas in his poetry defy expectations of coherence. The reader cannot simply declare a text 'difficult' and subsequently attempt to 'know' it by creating a single coherent reading, since this would inevitably imply a violent imposition of the reader's will onto the text resulting in, at best, a partial reading of the poem. Instead, Siltanen argues, readers have to develop alternative reading strategies which allow for the permanent deferment of a single meaning.

Siltanen is currently working on her doctoral dissertation which expands her scope of concerns. Whilst Ashbery remains a central concern, Siltanen expands her horizons to consider the ways in which three other experimental American poets also invite readers to engage with their poetry. The poets Siltanen studies - Frank O'Hara, Ron Silliman and Lyn Hejinian – share with Ashbery a reputation for being 'difficult' despite their use of everyday language. Her goal is to illustrate how these poets can teach readers to read in ways that are neither servile to the poet as a visionary nor dismissive of the poem's positionality, but rather which seek to find a middle ground where understanding is perceived as a process not an end goal.

Finally, there have always been, and hopefully always will be, a small number of students on the Literature Track whose topics can only be described as 'maverick'. These independent students have usually gained an interest in their topic outside the department,

and bring unusual working methods into the study of literature; methods in which they have received training in their minor subjects. Practicing teachers have written theses on aspects of teaching English literature to pupils in Finnish schools. Folklorists have brought insights into the creation and transmission of oral stories into the study of literary fairy tales, and so on. The most recent 'maverick' thesis combined a study of music and poetry. In her study of two song cycles, Anne Perämäki (2008) examines the poetry of Robert Louis Stevenson and that of A. E. Housman alongside the music Ralph Vaughn Williams composed for them in her examination of what constitutes 'Englishness'.

The study of Literature in English is both diverse and engaging. Students taking the Literature Track typically bring a history of reading for pleasure, as well as formal literary studies in other departments to the thesis seminar. As a result, the seminar is essentially a collaboration of like minded people who enjoy discussing books and who share a fascination with both the ways in which the English language can be used to express ideas and the cultures in which the texts were produced.

References

(a) The M.A. theses cited (all completed in the Department of English, University of Turku)

Buhre Roland 2008. *The 'Boys' in the Heart of the Empire: Reflections of Imperial Ideology in Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners.*

Karvonen Milla 2007. *Speaking Wounds: Silence, Self-injury and Healing in Patricia McCormick's Cut.*

Orhanen Anna 2008. *Celebrating Creative Consciousness: Insights into Oscar Wilde's Aesthetics.*

Orhanen Anna 2009 (in press). *Beauty as Beastly: Aesthetic-Ethic Duality in Oscar Wilde's The Star-Child.* In Wood Naomi (ed.) *Oscar Wilde's Fairy Tales: A Garden of Delight.* Oscholars (<http://www.oscholars.com/>).

Perämäki Anne 2008. *"Expressions of the soul of a nation": Manifestations of Englishness in Ralph Vaughan Williams's Song Cycles On Wenlock Edge and Songs of Travel.*

Rinne Arja 2005. *Possibilities of Children's Fiction: The Implied Child and Adult Reader in Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials.*

Sempilä Satu 2008. *Ventriloquists and Shape-shifters: Imagining Postcolonial Identity and Space in Pauline Melville's The Ventriloquist's Tale.*

Siltanen Elina 2008. *"That you too were the I": Forms of Polyphonic Communication in John Ashbery's Poetry.*

(b) Other references

- Huttunen Tuomas, Ilmonen Kaisa, Korkka Janne & Valovirta Elina (eds.) 2008. *Seeking the Self: Diasporic Narrative and the Ethics of Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Skinner John 1998. *The Stepmother Tongue: An Introduction to New Anglophone Fiction*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Skinner John (ed.) 2000. *Tales of Two Cities: Essays on New Anglophone Literature* (Anglicana Turkuensia 22). Turku: University of Turku.
- Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty 1985. Can the subaltern speak? Speculations on widow sacrifice. *Wedge* 7 (8): 120-130.

Beautiful Untrue Things: The art of contradiction in Oscar Wilde's 'The Decay of Lying'

Anna Orhanen

Abstract

Oscar Wilde's (1854-1900) art criticism has often been cast aside for being inconsistent and paradoxical. However, in my study of Wilde's works - 'The Decay of Lying' (1889) and *De Profundis* (1905/1962) – I establish that these features comprise an essential element in Wilde's outlook on art (Orhanen 2008). Wilde offers an approach to art which does not play by the traditional rules of theory or logic but illustrates, in fact, his beliefs that Art is not governed by rules. In Wilde's view, attempts to formulate coherently argued theories about art which aim at arriving at firm conclusions dilute the very function of art criticism: to induce continuous conversation about Art.

In this paper, I discuss Wilde's essay 'The Decay of Lying' which illustrates both the methodological and content-based features that characterize Wilde's criticism. The essay is written in the form of a dialogue between fictional characters and touches upon topics such as the autonomy of Art; Art and reality; Art and knowledge; and, Art and the value of truth. The essay is filled with irony, hyperbole and paradoxes. I suggest these elements need not to be considered as a fault, but rather as a means by which the reader can be challenged into engaging in a dialogue with the text.

When the contradiction comes, see the expansion in it
...The eyes of the wise see to the end.
(Jelaluddin Rumi 2000: 43)

Given Oscar Wilde's (1854-1900) notoriety as a playwright, poet and sharp-tongued commentator on the tragic-comic scenes of Victorian society, surprisingly little attention has been paid to his philosophy of art. While there has been a revival in Wilde studies in the fields of gay and queer studies as well as postcolonial criticism in the recent years (e.g. Kiberd 1996; McKenna, 2004; Small 2003; and Bristow 2003), Wilde's legacy to Western aesthetics has been the topic of only a few studies (e.g. Prewitt-Brown, 1997; Danson 1997). This lack of interest in Wilde's criticism is surprising not only because of the number of Wilde's critical texts but moreover because his criticism contributes to the key debates of the aesthetics of the 20th and 21st century; features that became prevalent in modernism and even postmodernism are already distinguishable in Wilde's philosophy of art.

The diversity that characterizes of Wilde's own literary criticism tends to confuse critics. Although the key points and debates in his texts are usually very clearly expressed, his arguments are often paradoxical as well as ironical and thus allow for multiple, often contradictory, readings. Wilde's critical works represent a miscellany of reflections on a wide range of aesthetic dilemmas, giving room to the history of (Western) aesthetics but never fully assenting to any previous theory. This kind of approach can be considered both as a blessing and as a burden: Wilde's eclecticism, on the one hand, makes his criticism highly versatile and wide-ranging. On the other hand, Wilde's fondness for paradox and dislike of categorisation often means that his writings tend to contradict one another, and due to this inconsistency Wilde's contribution to aesthetics has been an easy target for dismissal.

The practical application of a theory becomes problematic if it fails – or, as in Wilde's case, *refuses* – to set coherent guidelines, yet Wilde considered this apparent burden to be a blessing. In Wilde's view, attempts to formulate coherent theories about art, which aim at arriving at definite conclusions, dilute the very function of art criticism: to induce *continuous conversation* about Art. In this article, I will discuss the way Wilde's resistance is illustrated, both through form and content, in his essay 'The Decay of Lying' (first published in 1889 in *The Nineteenth Century*, and subsequently in *Intentions*, Wilde's first collection of essays, in 1891).

The essay takes the form of a conversation in which Vivian, one of the two characters, attempts to convince his friend, Cyril, that Lying is an important art form. He divides his argument into four propositions which I shall also use to structure my discussion below. W.B. Yeats, to whom Wilde presented the essay before its publication, was particularly impressed by the dialogue form Wilde used and remarked how, through this particular form and its dialectical possibilities Wilde was able to sharpen the central paradox of the essay: that Art, in fact, creates Life, and not the other way around (Ellmann 1988: 302). In the essay, Vivian sets out to establish "the doctrines of the new aesthetics" ('The Decay of Lying', 1091). Through his arguments, Wilde delves into topics such as the autonomy of Art; Art and reality; Art and knowledge; and, Art and the value of truth.

To examine 'The Decay of Lying' as a work of literary or philosophical criticism is a somewhat challenging task – and, to some extent, a contradictory one as well, since right at the beginning of the essay Wilde's mouthpiece, Vivian, states:

Who wants to be consistent? The dullard and the doctrinaire, the tedious people who carry out their principles to the bitter end of action... Not I... I write over the door of my library the word 'Whim'.

(The Decay of Lying: 1072)

The fact that Wilde's argumentation is ironic – and thus deliberately and purposefully ambiguous – is also relevant: with respect to Wilde, one simply has to accept 'whims' as a fundamental characteristic of his writing. However, these 'whims' do not need form an objection to examining Wilde's texts as an important milestone in the turn-of-the-century aesthetics since 'The Decay of Lying' explicitly denies consistency as one of its aims. Assessing Wilde's arguments according to traditional criteria for evaluating a theory – that is, according to the coherence of its arguments – would therefore seem inappropriate.

In 'The Decay of Lying', Wilde's radical conceptions of reality also give rise to what seems like a remarkably modern outlook on reality and truth. The essay, in fact, mitigates the whole notion of the normativity of the Truth. Vivian observes:

The aim of the liar is simply to charm, to delight, to give pleasure. He is the very basis of civilized society... He alone is in the possession of the great secret of all [Art's] manifestations, *the secret that Truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style*; while Life – poor, probable, uninteresting human life... will follow meekly after him [the liar] and try to reproduce, in her own simple and untutored way, some of the marvels of which [the liar] talks.

(The Decay of Lying: 1081; my emphasis)

In his essay, Wilde shows how lying actually plays an essential role not only within the sphere of Art but also in our everyday life, in all human communication as well as in social norms. But whereas Art knows how to mingle with the Liar, Life just "meekly" follows him. Therefore, the essay is first and foremost a celebration of lying *in Art*.

As the title of the essay indicates, lying can be evaluated according to criteria other than comparisons with whatever is meant by 'truth': the title suggests that whilst Lying can corrupt, it is not corrupt *in and of itself*. According to Wilde, lying *per se* is neither bad nor immoral. Given the long history of accepting the normativity of Truth, Wilde's view is thus distinctly rebellious. Secondly, Wilde's essay indicates that Lying can, and should be, assessed according to its *motives*, lying in Art – lying for its own sake – being "the only form of lying that is absolutely beyond reproach" (The Decay of Lying: 1090). This line of thought was first properly presented in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) – the observation that, in practice, *truth* is actually assessed according to its *consequences* and that it is not to be taken as a normative value. Nietzsche's critique of truth asserts that the (performative) power of truth "consists in the consequences it can bring about" (Medina and Wood, 2005: 11). Truth, for Nietzsche, thus, is something contingent and arbitrary, rather than something normative or fixed.

Undermining the normativity of Truth is also prevalent in Wilde's use of paradoxes, through which he demonstrates how concepts such as 'Reality', 'History', 'Nature', 'Time', as well as the 'Truth' itself are all human constructions – linguistic constructions. It is in this

very destabilization that Wilde's 'proto-postmodernism' becomes apparent; in his paradoxical way, Wilde manages to demonstrate both language's power over us and, at the same time, deconstruct its capacity to provide us with nothing more than arbitrary concepts. For example, in his aphorisms, Wilde's uses a 'formula' of grammatical unit that, as McCormack suggests, "expresse[s] an opinion as if it were an axiom – a judgement which, posing as a kind of eternal truth, condemn[s] all opposing opinion as untruth" (1997: 98-99).

Thus, Wilde shows how language is capable of *producing* 'truths' but never actually *embodies* any as such. Paradoxes in his criticism serve exactly the same function: they reveal the obscurity of truth-value with respect to language and Art. As McCormack puts it, "Wilde turned the linguistic front into a kind of no man's land. He did not fight by the rules – what he was fighting *were* the rules" (ibid.). Wilde's writings are thus not merely defiant in their contents but also in their linguistic structure. Wilde provokes his readers to pay attention not only to what is being said but also to their own relationship with language and rhetorics; in short, Wilde's text shows that a convincing argument is not necessarily a truthful argument.

In order to examine 'The Decay of Lying', I let the text guide me in so far as I shall dedicate a section to each of the four principal arguments which Vivian presents in the essay. These arguments are:

- (i) "Art never expresses anything but itself";
- (ii) "All bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature";
- (iii) "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life"; and,
- (iv) "Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art".

I shall approach the arguments, all of which deal with the objective–subjective -duality of Art in one way or another, from two perspectives: from the viewpoint of *production* or creation, on one hand, and from that of *reception*, on the other.

The opening scene of the essay is as follows: Vivian has just finished his article for the fictional journal, *Retrospective Review*, and is presenting it to his friend Cyril. The starting point for Vivian is that the cause of the "curiously commonplace character of most of the literature of [Wilde's] age" is "the decay of Lying as an art, a science, and a social pleasure", and how the way "the modern novelist presents us with dull facts under the guise of fiction" is deeply fatal to Art (The Decay of Lying: 1073). He proceeds to note how lying, like poetry, is an art which needs to be cultivated and nurtured.

1. "Art never expresses anything but itself"

Vivian's argument that "art never expresses anything but itself" (The Decay of Lying: 1087), together with his subsequent proposition that it is actually art that shapes our perceptions of

Life and Reality, creates one of the central issues of the essay: which one actually comes first, Life or Art? For example, at one point Vivian states: "The nineteenth century, as we know it, is largely an invention of Balzac... we are merely carrying out ... a whim or fancy or creative vision of a great novelist" (The Decay of Lying: 1084). By this he means that Art affects our perceptions of the world and thus our reality is always affected by Art.

The idea of Art standing on its own seems to clash with Wilde's constant emphasis on individuality and on the role of the subjective input of the artist in the process of production elsewhere in his criticism. Thus one of the central paradoxes in Wilde's aesthetics arises: how can Art be both a highly subjective faculty and simultaneously completely autonomous? If a work of Art makes us perceive things differently, as Wilde suggests, that difference must be attached in one way or another to the perceptions of the *artist* who has displayed his or her vision in their work. Furthermore, when a work of Art is exposed for reception and interpretation, it also affects its recipients as they respond to the aesthetic experience. Thus, Art seems to express something of its *creator* and also its *recipient* also, and not just *itself*. Describing the nineteenth century as an "invention of Balzac" also suggests that the artist has a major role to play in *making* art autonomous – giving birth to a work of art so that it is subsequently able to lead an independent life. This view of Art's role in *both* representing *and* creating what we regard as 'History' foreshadows that of Theodor W. Adorno who describes works of art as "self-unconscious historiography of their epoch" (1997: 182); the function of artworks in the process of depicting the world is expressed by Adorno as "organizing what is not organized" (1997: 184).

Good art, in Wilde's view, is not something that attempts to reflect the world, but rather something upon which life starts to reflect itself (for discussion, see Orhanen 2008: 22-25). Wilde's primary intention is to indicate that "[Art] is not to be judged by any external standard of resemblance" (The Decay of Lying: 1082). The objectivity of a work of art is obtained *neither* through the preclusion of the subjective input of the artist *nor* through the extent to which a work of art manages to produce an impersonal copy of something existing in the world. True objectivity arises from the way a work of art eventually starts to lead a life of its own, beyond its creator's intentions. The independent life of a work of art begins when it is opened to interpretation and evaluation exactly because it becomes a meeting point for diverse subjective experiences.

What, then, is the role of the artist in creating such an independent form of life? In the following, I shall discuss Wilde's perspectives on artistic production. When a work of art is released into the world and exposed to others for interpretation, does its creator's involvement and 'responsibility' end? Wayne Booth has suggested that "to pass a judgement where the author intends neutrality is to misread", but that, in the same way, "to be neutral or objective where the author requires commitment is equally to misread" (1983: 144). Thus,

the responsibility for the interpretation of a work of art would seem to lay as much on the shoulders of the *recipient* as on those of the creator. The aim of any work of art is hardly the simple transmission of straightforward messages; since the recipient's freedom of interpretation is almost unlimited, considering the author to be responsible for all possible reactions a work might give rise to would be unjustified. In the Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde writes: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*: 17). Here again, we can recognize the same argument that Wilde makes in context of his destabilization of normative Truth: a work of art can *produce* moral reverberations in its recipients, but it does not *embody* any 'moral truths' in itself.

Wilde certainly found the idea of the independent life of a work of art enchanting; in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), he successfully explores a fictionalised rendition of such a prospect. In the novel, the artist Basil Hallward paints a fateful portrait of an incredibly beautiful young man, Dorian Gray. Whilst marvelling at the painting, Dorian wishes that he could always stay as young and beautiful as he is at that point in time, and that the picture would age and grow ugly instead. This wish is granted, and the painting turns into a mirror of its sitter's corrupted soul, while the living Dorian retains his innocent appearance. When, at the end of the novel, Basil discovers the hideous reality – that Dorian's wish has come true – he feels utter horror, disbelief and guilt, and cannot help speculating on *his* responsibility for what has happened:

An exclamation of horror broke from the painter's lips as he saw in the dim light the hideous face on the canvas grinning at him... Yes, it was Dorian himself. But who had done it? He seemed to recognize his own brushwork, and the frame was his own design [...] In the left hand corner was his own name. It was some foul parody, some infamous, ignoble satire! He had never done that. Still, it was his own picture!

(*The Picture of Dorian Gray*: 115)

The story of Dorian Gray's portrait illustrates Wilde's anti-intentionalist argument of Art presenting *itself* in two ways. First of all, through this story Wilde depicts how, rather than being a mirror of Dorian Gray's soul, the painting actually *becomes* his soul; thus, reality lies in Art, not in Life. Secondly, the way the painting has transformed *on its own* and yet remained the same painting, the way it has taken on an autonomous existence outside Basil Hallward's brush, paint, or, indeed, his intentions, illustrates Wilde's idea of how Art "develops purely on her own lines" (*The Decay of Lying*: 1087).

In 'The Decay of Lying', Vivian refers to Holbein's 'realist' portraits and points out how the artist has actually "compelled life to accept his [Holbein's] conditions, to restrain itself within his limitations, to reproduce his type and to appear as he wished it to appear" (*The*

Decay of Lying: 1089). Thus, these drawings that “impress us with a sense of their absolute reality” only do so because Life has adopted them as believable and has begun to produce real-life ‘copies’ of these pictures. “It is style that makes us believe a thing – nothing but style”, Vivian declares (The Decay of Lying: 1089). Thus he places Holbein in the same category as Balzac: within an *imaginative reality* as opposed to *unimaginative realism*. Throughout the essay, Vivian attacks late (post-Balzac) nineteenth century realists and naturalists who aim at neutrally objective depictions of the world. By this means, Vivian demonstrates how Lying in Art is essential. The decline in contemporary art, according to him, originates from attempts to describe reality objectively.

2. “All bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature”

In the second phase of his argument, Vivian presents the late nineteenth century French realists and naturalists as being particularly obstinate in their pursuance of objectivity; Émile Zola is singled out for an especially significant share of the criticism. Vivian brings to light the idea according to which a writer trying to represent reality objectively, like a scientist, actually shatters the whole idea of art as a creative process. As Ellmann points out, “the real decadence” for Wilde is “the trespass of life into art” (1988: 302).

In the two decades preceding Wilde’s publication, French writers, such as the Goncourt brothers, Flaubert, Maupassant and Zola, had been experimenting with new techniques that highlighted realism in literature. In ‘The Decay of Lying’, Wilde illustrates his arguments concerning realism mainly by referring to these writers, all of whom aimed at representing reality in a work of art, and doing so as neutrally and objectively as possible. Combining the co-existing demand for certain *je-ne-sais-quoi* – without which realistic artworks would be merely brazen copies, not works of art in their own right – with alleged objectivity was undoubtedly the most challenging project of a Realist artist.

Wilde reacted to Realism strongly, primarily because its goal was to represent ‘factual’ accounts of reality, and, moreover, because the Realists were convinced that this could be done objectively. Objectivity, according to Wilde, is not possible in the *creative process* in the first place. In ‘The Critic as Artist’ he writes:

The difference between objective and subjective work is one of external form merely. It is accidental, not essential. All artistic creation is absolutely subjective... For out of ourselves we can never pass, nor can there be in creation what in the creator was not.

(The Critic as Artist: 1142)

Thus Wilde states that the subjectivity of the Artist is always present in his representation of the things around him, even though the *work itself* can afford experiences that differ

markedly from those of the artist. (Thus here the paradox between subjectivity in Art and autonomy of Art raises its head again, although by considering "creation" in the above passage as referring to the process of artistic production and not to its outcome, the contradiction may be slightly alleviated.) "Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital", Wilde writes in the preface of *Dorian Gray*, and continues: "When critics disagree the artist is in accordance with himself" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*: 17). Thus, what Wilde suggests is that an artist who produces a work which invites multiple and controversial opinions may congratulate himself.

The primary flaw of realism, according to Wilde, is connected with the search for objectivity in the production of a work of art: the Realists attempted to employ objectivity as a tool already *within* the creative process, while Wilde regarded objectivity as one of the possible *outcomes* of the process. For Wilde, the independent life of a work of art, discussed above, is the only exemplification of objectivity in Art.

However, it must be pointed out that in Vivian's passionate attack on Realism, some of the aspects of the theory of Realism are callously oversimplified: Vivian dismisses the Realist artists as copyists of tedious, everyday life. Thus Wilde carefully avoids mentioning any element of personality and subjectivity in their work, which naturally makes his argument lack depth. Furthermore, Vivian does not acknowledge that the French realists did, in fact, recognise the significance of the subjective touch of the artist as an essential element in a work of art. For example, Flaubert did not at any point close his eyes to the importance of the personal, original touch of the artist as an essential element within a work of art (Israel-Pelletier 2004: 180-195). As Green points out, "Flaubert once wrote that an author should be like God in the universe, omnipresent but nowhere to be seen" (1996: 132). This idea is wholly compatible with Wilde's own view presented in the preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, according to which art's proper aim is "to reveal art and to conceal the artist" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*: 17). Subjectivity in realism was not merely supposed to be visible in the *perspective* from which a novel, for example, was written, but rather in the author's choice of words, characters and so on.

However, Wilde considered imagination to be the most important tool of an artist, and the complete abandonment – or, at least denial – of *imagination* was true of some of the writers within the French Realist movement. In his essay 'Naturalism in the Theatre', Zola (1880), for example, declared that "imagination no longer has a function" (quoted in Beardsley 1966: 295). And indeed, Zola is the writer who is most fiercely criticised in 'The Decay of Lying'. Wilde's conviction of how the realist-naturalist line of thought was absolutely fatal to Art comes out sharply in Vivian's satirical comment on Zola as artist:

M. Zola, true to the lofty principle that he lays down in one of his pronunciamientos on literature, *L'homme de genie n'a jamais d'esprit*, is

determined to show that, if he has not got genius, he can at least be dull. And how well he succeeds! He is not without power. Indeed at time, as in *Germinal*, there is something almost epic in his work. But his work is entirely wrong from beginning to an end, and *not wrong on the grounds of morals, but on the ground of Art.*

(The Decay of Lying: 1075; my emphasis)

At the end of the essay, Vivian notes: "The moment Art surrenders its imaginative medium it surrenders everything" (The Decay of Lying: 1091). Imagination can never be objective, nor can it be an outcome of *conscious effort*. Imagination thus becomes a kind of a mediator between what can be regarded as the autonomous existence of Art and the subjective input of the Artist, which is so essential in the process of mediating "beautiful, untrue things" (ibid.).

According to Wilde, the *principal* error of the realists is, however, neither the abandonment of the beautiful and imaginary nor the banality of their subject matter – although Vivian does criticize both these tendencies in 'The Decay of Lying' – but their goal to tell the 'truth' in the first place. As Danson puts it: "The realist novel was condemned to be a copy of the worst, not because its morals are bad, but simply because it aims to tell the 'truth' instead of making it new" (1997: 87, my emphasis).

One of the metaphors most commonly associated with the Realist Movement is the metaphor of a work of art as a mirror walking along the street. "*Un roman: c'est un miroir qu'on promène le long d'un chemin*" is a slogan made famous by Marie-Henri Beyle (1783-1842), writing under the pseudonym of Stendhal, in his novel *Le rouge et le noir* (1830[1825]: 85). This idea of art reflecting the reality of everyday life is criticised by Vivian in the essay. First of all, he supports escapism in art – stating that everyday life and facts are "usurping the domain of Fancy" (The Decay of Lying: 1080). Secondly, he notes that "Art is a veil, rather than a mirror" (The Decay of Lying: 1082) because far from *reflecting* reality, Art, in fact, produces reality: "[it] makes and unmakes many worlds" (ibid.). What Vivian attacks in 'The Decay of Lying' is thus not merely the idea of objectivity in artistic endeavour to represent reality, but the very conception of 'reality' as something existing *a priori* 'out there'. Instead, reality is something which is constructed by the viewer.

Despite Wilde's obvious disdain for objective realism in the production of art, he saw a place for objectivity in the *reception* of art. Some issues we habitually consider as 'objective', true accounts, according to Wilde, often originate in Art. Thus, some sort of objectivity, an element to which we react in the process of reception, must be available in the work of art. Vivian illustrates his point by noting how we perceive, for example, history: "The fact is that we look back on the ages entirely through the medium of art" (The Decay of Lying: 1089). Hence, history – which is regarded as the 'reality' of our past – is, in fact, composed of

subjective interpretations and reflections of artworks, and “art, very fortunately, has never once told us the truth” (ibid.).

The idea of reality, time and history as always mediated and created in the form of a narrative has been much discussed in the 20th century literary and aesthetic theory, e.g. by Hayden White (1980) and Paul Ricoeur (1981). In *Narrative Time*, Ricoeur remarks how narrative, “this communal act of repetition, which is at the same time a new founding act and a recommencement of what had already been inaugurated”, sets the basis for our perception of time (1981: 185). Here again we can remark how topics and prospects that are closely related to contemporary criticism, are, in fact, already manifest in Wilde’s criticism.

Although Wilde dismissed objectivity in artistic production, he acknowledged that once the creative process has been completed, objectivity becomes possible in the ‘afterlife’ of the work of art, when it is opened to interpretation. Here again, Wilde’s paradoxical argumentation emerges: a work of art obtains objective qualities only *after* it becomes the meeting point between multiple subjective interpretations, each of which is different from another and yet equally valuable.

In discussing the relationship between the Artist and the work of art, and how the latter becomes independent of the former, the metaphor of the artist as a mother who gives birth to a child is also extremely applicable to Wilde’s philosophy. Marcel Proust, for example, uses this metaphor in the final of volume of *In Search of Lost Time*, where the protagonist reflects upon the creation process of his impending book. The work of art is like a child who, at some point, becomes independent of his mother and starts to lead a life of his own. Yet the mother always retains a certain attachment to the child, as well as some kind of sense of responsibility:

[E]ven my work had become for me a tiresome obligation, like a son for a dying mother who ... has to make the exhausting effort of constantly looking after him. ... In me, in the same way, the powers of the writer were no longer equal to the egoistical demands of the work.

(*Time Regained*: 443)

Although Proust places great emphasis on the artist, he underlines the fact that a (great) work of art cannot be created through conscious effort; it is “the egoistical demands of the work” that actually master the artist, not the other way around. Both Wilde and Proust recognised that true Art is something which cannot be understood, valued, or, least of all, created through *conscious endeavours*. Rather, the aesthetic experience *precedes* our consciousness, as Wilde’s example of the way we comprehend history through medium of

art, or Proust's idea of awakening of involuntary memory by chance (as opposite to conscious remembrance) demonstrate.

In 'The Decay of Lying', Vivian states that the best kind of creativity rejects "the burden of human spirit" and that Art "gains more from a *new medium or a fresh material* than she does from any...great wakening of the *human consciousness*" (The Decay of Lying: 1087; my emphasis). The "burden of human spirit" here does not refer to the subjective input of the artist but rather to theories and expectations imposed on Art by the human mind. Thus, at its best, the process of artistic production is not tied to conscious endeavours and some predefined 'spirit' according to which the artist has decided to compose his work; rather, the outcome of this process, the work of art itself, 'spiritualizes' and illuminates meanings that inhabit both the recipients and the creator himself.

Due to Wilde's highly ironic and provocative style, Vivian's opinions cannot be taken at face value. This is part of his argument: Wilde refrains from 'instructing' his reader on how the text should be read and allows them the pleasure of asking questions, without making them feel unintelligent. Wilde's style is deliberately provocative in order to show that, as far as Art is concerned, nothing is ever quite as it seems. Thus, rather than providing answers, Wilde manages to both make his readers feel clever when (or, if) they are capable of pointing out paradoxes in Vivian's theory, and simultaneously furnish them with a fresh outlook on Art.

Vivian takes the idea of Art preceding our consciousness further in the next phase of his argument, as he embarks on the goal of showing how Life, in fact, imitates Art, and not the other way around.

3. "*Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life*"

CYRIL: What do you mean by saying that life, 'poor, probable, uninteresting human life,' will try to reproduce the marvels of art? I can quite understand your objection to art being treated as a mirror. You think it would reduce genius to the position of cracked looking-glass. *But you don't mean to say that you seriously believe that Life imitates Art, that Life in fact is the mirror, and Art the reality?*

VIVIAN: Certainly I do.

(The Decay of Lying: 1082; my emphasis)

The third part of Vivian's argument escorts us to the questions attached to the foundations of Art: what is the ultimate ground upon which Art is built, and how can this ground be found? Can it be found? The relationship between Art and knowledge (Art's cognitive dimension) creates yet another paradox in Wildean aesthetics, which I will discuss in the following.

So, Vivian's argument is that Art by no means copies Life or 'Reality', and Nature does not set an example for Art to imitate, but exactly the other way around. According to Vivian, Art's impact on the human mind is so extensive that Art can, in fact, be said to exist prior to human consciousness and Life itself. Although the idea of Life imitating Art might initially seem to be counter-intuitive, Vivian manages to support his argument relatively convincingly, first by presenting a few examples of the effects of works of art upon an individual:

The basis of life... is simply the desire for expression, and Art is always presenting various forms through which the expression can be obtained. Life seizes them and uses them, even if they be to her own hurt. Young men have committed suicide because Rolla did so, have died by their own hand because by his own hand Werther died.

(The Decay of Lying: 1085)

Here Vivian refers to the 'Werther effect' – the copycat suicide wave that followed the publication of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*) in 1774 (see e.g. Phillips, 1974). Vivian continues with an example of how Impressionistic art has made "people see fogs, not because there are fogs but because poets and painters have taught them the mysterious loveliness of such effects" (The Decay of Lying: 1086). This phenomenon is explained by Vivian through the statement "one does not see anything until one sees beauty" (ibid.). Thus, Vivian portrays the aesthetic process as something which *precedes* our consciousness.

When Cyril asks Vivian to prove his theory about Art preceding reality and nature, Vivian leans on a metaphysical (and also very modern) observation of nature itself as a human invention, saying: "For what is Nature? She is no great mother that has born us. She is our creation" (The Decay of Lying: 1086). Thus, Wilde's essay remarks on how our way of regarding binary oppositions as 'natural' manipulates us, and how they thus eventually lead to a range of over-simplifications. The connection to Antonio Gramsci's (1891-1937) notion of hegemony is apparent here; Gramsci suggested that these kinds of 'natural' categories create hegemony through which intellectuals "help to create an environment that supports the ideas of a ... dominant class" (Knight 2003: 786). For Wilde, this kind of hegemony is fatal not only in the context of society (as in the Gramscian scenario) but particularly dismal in the context of Art.

Vivian, thus, brings to light the fact that Nature and Life themselves lack structure as well as form before they are imposed upon these concepts by the human mind. Since the task of the artist is to tell "beautiful, untrue things", an artist must not accept the idea that there are things that could be regarded as 'natural' in the first place. Rather, he must acknowledge that Nature is just as much a human construction as, for example, is society or

culture. Art, however, does not need to search for justifications outside itself – it aptly recognizes itself as lying, and thus is *more truthful* than that which presents itself as ‘natural’.

Here Wilde distances his philosophy from that of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), whom he greatly admired. Schopenhauer’s aesthetic theory locates “the proper foundation of art in the perceptual *apprehension of natural forms*” (Foster 1999: 214; my emphasis). According to Schopenhauer, good art can be distinguished from bad art “only on the basis of *fidelity* to this foundation [in the natural forms]” (ibid.) Thus, Schopenhauerian evaluation of art is based on how well a work of art carries out this function of representing ‘natural’ forms – “a function which is *primarily cognitive or illuminative*, though it partakes a palliative dimension” (Foster 1999: 214, my emphasis). As the above discussion on Wilde and Proust shows, Wilde does not seem to regard (re)cognition or consciousness as essential elements within the artistic production; rather, for Wilde, the success of a work of art is *not* to be measured according to how well it corresponds to the world around it, but according to how well it succeeds in creating *new, imaginary* things.

According to Beardsley, Art for Schopenhauer is “essentially cognitive enterprise, with its own special object of knowledge, the Ideas”, but since this knowledge is “utterly removed from ... the ordinary intellect, it has no practical use” (1966: 269). Thus, Schopenhauerian aesthetic experience is an intellectual process, but it does not result in ordinary ‘use’. As Vivian states:

As long as a thing is useful or necessary to us ... or appeals strongly to our sympathies, or is a vital part of the environment in which we live, it is outside the proper sphere of Art.

(The Decay of Lying: 1077)

Thus, Wilde shares Schopenhauer’s view of how Art is detached from ‘practical’, matter-of-fact use. Furthermore, even if Schopenhauer examines the aesthetic experience as a way of gaining knowledge of Ideas (in the sense of a kind of meta-structure for individual things and phenomena existing in the world), it is important to bear in mind that he regards these Ideas themselves as unconscious and that, as Gardner puts it, “consciousness, like a magic lantern, can display only one image at a time, and is related to the mind as a whole as a traveller in an intermittently illuminated labyrinth” (1999: 376). However, Schopenhauer still connects the artistic expression to the goal of *consciously* reaching for the Idea, even though the Idea itself is not conscious.

For Wilde, aesthetic experience does not seem to be concerned with *knowledge* to the same extent as with Schopenhauer, not at least *objective* knowledge. However, when examining ‘The Decay of Lying’ as a whole, we notice that, according to Vivian’s argument, Art *does* function as an important contributor in the processes through which we perceive

and understand the world; therefore Art would ultimately seem to establish itself as something highly *useful*, essential even, for human consciousness. This creates another paradox: how can Art as something unconscious, untrue and detached from Life serve as the basis of our consciousness and what we consider as 'Reality'? It is important to note at this point, however, that, according to Wilde's line of thought, Art is not *produced to serve this function*; on the contrary, its autonomous and self-valuable existence sets an example for the 'natural forms'.

For Vivian in 'The Decay of Lying', the so-called 'natural forms' are nothing more than another invention of man and, in line with this idea, he proceeds to his argument about the nature and Life itself imitating Art: "The self-conscious aim of Life is to find expression" (The Decay of Lying: 1091), he states. Life does this by imitating Art, *not* the other way around. Appositely, Vivian illustrates his point with an example with a reference to Schopenhauer: "Schopenhauer has analysed the pessimism that characterises modern thought, but it was Hamlet who invented it" (The Decay of Lying: 1083). By this, Vivian suggests how the unhappy prince's state of mind, brought to our consciousness through Shakespeare's play, has subsequently begun to characterise our perceptions of the world.

While suggesting that reality seems to be initially constructed through aesthetic experiences, Wilde acknowledges that the relationship between the sensitive, sensuous and cognitive-intellectual dimensions of the aesthetic experience is highly complex, for there *is* a cognitive dimension to Wilde's view as well. Wilde's idea of our *ultimate* experience of the aesthetic draws from the Kantian theory of reception as something based on our thinking (thus, conscious recognition) of those sensations that art evokes in us. Unlike Walter Pater and the Aesthetes, for example, it is not only the "palliative dimension" of aesthetic experience in which Wilde is interested (Foster 1999: 214); both the elements of intellect and sensation are recognised. However, what Wilde seems to suggest is that the intellect cannot *produce* sensations, but rather those sensations proffered by Art shape our thought:

Things *are* because we see them, and what we see, and how we see it, depend on the Arts that have influenced us. To look at a thing is different from *seeing* a thing. *One does not see anything until one sees beauty*. Then, and only then, does it come into existence.

(The Decay of Lying: 1086; my emphasis)

Whilst for Schopenhauer an aesthetic situation has a double aspect, cognitive and affective, for Wilde, the creative process and the reception are first and foremost affective. As the above passage shows, the aesthetic experience can, however, *lead* into a cognitive and illuminative experience. Wilde's view does differ from that of Schopenhauer in the sense that, for Wilde, the aesthetic experience *in itself* is not pragmatic nor conscious, nor can it be justified by reasoning or explained (or even described) simultaneously with the experience.

In 'The Critic as Artist', Wilde notes that a lover of Art must love it above all other things and that "against such love, the reason, if one would listen to it, would cry out" (The Critic as Artist: 1145).

What kind of a role, then, does the intellect play in the Wildean aesthetic experience? Is there a way to arrive at an understanding of the magic embodied in Art by conscious effort? As neither the artist nor the public seem to be using their critical apparatus in their engagement with the aesthetic, Wilde introduces a contributor who *will* bring Art into contact with intellect: the Critic. In 'The Critic as Artist' – another essay in which Wilde employs the dialogue form – Ernest asks Gilbert what he thinks is the purpose of criticism with respect to art, and Gilbert replies: "You might have just as well asked me the use of thought. [...] It is criticism...that makes the mind a fine instrument" (The Critic as Artist: 1151). When introducing criticism as an essential element in the sphere of Art, Wilde acknowledges that Art *is*, in fact, founded upon a certain set of rules and conventions. However, the artist must be *unaware* of these in the creative process and only yield to the imagination in order to make his or her work unique:

Certainly: each art has its grammar and its materials. There is no mystery about either ... But while the laws upon which Art rests may be fixed and certain, *to find their true realization they must be touched by the imagination* into such beauty that they will *seem an exception*, each one of them.

(The Critic as Artist: 1151; my emphasis)

These laws are situated, as it were, in the sub-consciousness of the artist, an inseparable but oblivious part of their personality which only the Critic is able to reveal: "Technique is really personality. That is the reason why the artist cannot teach it, why the pupil cannot learn it and why the critic can understand it" (ibid.), Gilbert explains.

If Art, then, exists prior to our consciousness, prior to reality and life itself, what is it founded upon? As the above discussion shows, Wilde acknowledges that each art "has its grammar and its materials" (The Critic as Artist: 1151), but that it is only through processes of creation and reception that Art really comes into life, and in these processes *imagination* plays an essential role. In 'The Decay of Lying', Vivian declares, "the moment Art surrenders its imaginative medium it surrenders everything" (The Decay of Lying: 1091); the aesthetic expression is thus seen as something highly subjective and closely attached to the imaginative power of the artist.

On the one hand, the claim that a work of art does not stand in direct relation to anything 'real' or to any undeniable, objective truth – and that "the only beautiful things are the things that do not concern us" (The Decay of Lying: 1091) – would seem to suggest that the work of art is equally available for *everyone*, allowing multiple sensations and interpretations, and it is along these lines that Art becomes independent. On the other hand,

this kind of 'democracy' in interpretation seems contradictory to the significance that Wilde places on the Critic. Yet Wilde does not define the 'critic' as someone who has somehow established (or institutionalised) the status of a critic; he defines the qualities of a good critic, but these could, in principle, be applicable to anyone who has genuine love of Art. Thus, although the idea of a Critic as the one who can bring Art into contact with intellect might, at first, seem tremendously elitist, Wilde is, in fact, encouraging the recipients (and creators) of artworks to reflect on their experiences of the work and, in so doing, become critics themselves.

While Schopenhauer places the artist and a philosophical genius on the same line, in so far that they are both reaching for embodying the Ideas in their work (Foster 1999: 215), Wilde seems to associate the *critic* and philosopher than the artist and philosopher. Even though in 'The Decay of Lying', Vivian states that "[Art] has an independent life, just as Thought has, and develops purely on her own lines" (The Decay of Lying: 1091), we should be wary of drawing too precise parallels between the artist and philosophical genius. According to Wilde, "those who do not love Beauty more than Truth never know the innermost shrine of Art" (The Decay of Lying: 1090). However, with respect to the critic's role, we are facing yet another paradox: Wilde expects a good critic to be *creative* – as creative as an artist, in fact. By maintaining that the Critic must be creative, Wilde suggests that the creative and conscious-intellectual faculties do not need *exclude* one another, after all.

So, what can ultimately be said about the relation of knowledge and intellect to aesthetic experience in Wilde's criticism? Considering the various paradoxes I have discussed so far, it would seem that, various contradictions emerge when we attempt to examine Art or the aesthetic experience simultaneously from the perspective of artistic production and from that of reception; it is important to note how Wilde treats the two as very different processes. Nevertheless, Wilde proposes that the production of criticism functions as a *meeting point* for production and reception of an artwork (not as a 'resolution', however, as Wilde's aim is not to explain away the 'conflicts' or paradoxes in the discussion about Art). Criticism proper enables, in Wilde's view, a dialogue between the two; it enfold (or, *should* enfold) elements of creativity and imagination (like artistic production) and yet find a firm basis in the reception of the artwork. In this sense, the Critic is engaged in both of the two processes simultaneously.

So far, I have mainly examined the relation between Art and knowledge with regards to the aesthetic experience, and therefore my focus has been on *self-knowledge* rather than on 'objective' knowledge. In the following, I will move on to Vivian's final argument concerning Lying in Art and examine the way Wilde's essay deals with Art's relation to 'objective' knowledge, or, 'truth'.

4. "Lying is the proper aim of Art"

In Wilde's day, one of the most striking features in his criticism was undoubtedly his outlook on the value of truth. Still today, truth is most often considered as normative in some way, and, as Medina and Wood point out, "we seem to take for granted all kinds of *prima facie* obligations with respect for truth" (2005: 3). With respect to the philosophy of truth, there are similarities between the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche and Wilde. Nietzsche, who was responsible for posing "the hardest and the most crucial questions that the subsequent philosophical debates on truth will have to answer" (Medina and Wood, 2005: 9), rejected absolutism (the idea of truth as an unquestionable, absolute value) and opened debate on the *normativity* of truth – a concept which has "traditionally has been either assumed or denied" (ibid.). Indeed, truthfulness has been placed on a pedestal throughout the history of Western philosophy, even in modern analytical aesthetics: cognitivists, such as Lamarque and Olsen (1994), have aimed at demonstrating that art can give us genuine knowledge, and that a work's capacity to fulfil this function actually contributes to its aesthetic merit (see Gaut 2003: 449).

With respect to the role of truth in aesthetics, there are several common interlocutors between Wilde and Nietzsche. As Prewitt-Brown points out, "Wilde and Nietzsche inherited the same situation in philosophy" (1997: 58), as both of them were faced with "the Kantian undermining of truth itself" as well as the 'despair of reason', meaning the confessed inability of reason to "solve the contradictions with which it is ultimately faced" (1997: 58-9). Prewitt-Brown also suggests that this despair was visible in the *use of paradox* in each writer, and also points out that "their shared deployment of aphorism may be seen as a sign of resistance to enter any system" (1997: 59). However, Nietzsche's view on truth is nihilistic, and thus not wholly compatible with that of Wilde.

One of the issues on which Nietzsche and Wilde part company concerns the *motives* and *purposes* of truth (or, with respect to Wilde's essay, those of lying). According to Nietzsche, there is a "will to truth", which is primarily at the service of the preservation of the herd, and a "will to falsehood", which, respectively, functions at the service of the individual (Medina and Wood 2005: 11). For Wilde, it is not truth that is used for the "preservation of the herd", but rather lying that plays a significant role in the everyday functions of our society:

Lying for the sake of the improvement of the young, which is the basis of home education, still lingers amongst us ... Lying for the sake of a monthly salary is, of course, well known in Fleet Street²¹... *The only form of lying that is absolutely beyond reproach is lying for its own sake, and the highest*

²¹ Fleet Street in central London (WC2) was the centre of journalism up to the 1970s.

development of this is, as we have already pointed out, *Lying in Art*. Just as those who do not love Plato more than Truth cannot pass beyond the threshold of Academe, so those who do not love Beauty more than Truth never know the innermost shrine of Art.

(The Decay of Lying: 1090; my emphasis)

On the one hand, Wilde thus shows that lying does, in fact, play a significant role in the way the human mind works. On the other hand, he points out that lying in Art – “lying for its own sake” – is the only completely *justifiable* form of lying, because it does not seek to either control or benefit from the act of lying but simply *is* (The Decay of Lying: 1090).

Hence, another paradoxical element in Wilde’s philosophy emerges: how can Art be claimed to be a separate and abstract realm, and works of art free from ethical reverberations, when Art, in fact, shapes our consciousness and enables us to perceive the world a certain way? It seems justified to claim that Art must also have its say in the development of our ethical sensitivity. In order to approach this paradox, Wilde, following in Aristotle’s footsteps, represents a stance according to which an aesthetic experience *purifies* one’s soul (regardless of the morals the work of art presents are ‘good’ or ‘bad’), and suggests that it is exactly because a work of art is not real or true that we can observe the ethical dimension of things more clearly through it. Along these lines, lying in Art becomes the one form of lying that is “absolutely beyond reproach” (The Decay of Lying: 1090).

In ‘The Decay of Lying’ the assessment of truth seems to pertain to Wilde’s renouncement of the idea that Art should (or could) represent ‘reality’. Considering what Wilde writes about nature, history and our perception of time in the essay, it is not only Art that represents “beautiful untrue things” but, in fact, life itself is an “untrue” thing. Hence, the whole essay is coloured by the “Kantian undermining of truth itself”, to which Prewitt-Brown refers (1997: 58) – a constant questioning of any ‘given’ or ‘inherited’ nature of truth. And this is another point of similarity for Wilde and Nietzsche: the consideration of truth as a human construction.

According to Nietzsche, truths are always *produced*; this process is similar to the making of an illusion, since “to believe the truth [...] we have to forget how things have been *made* true” (Medina and Wood 2005: 11). Even if Vivian, in ‘The Decay of Lying’, presents the Liar as an illusionist whose fighting against the “morbid and unhealthy habit of truth-telling” (The Decay of Lying: 1074), Wilde’s essay as a whole, in fact, represents the idea of *truth itself* as something relative and produced. Through his argument on how Life imitates Art, Vivian shows the un-sustainability of some of the concepts we normally regard as ‘true’; with respect to history, for example, Vivian shows how our view of the past is actually an illusion created through Art.

What Wilde's ultimate view of the cognitive and truth value of Art is, is too broad a topic to be dealt with precision here, especially since Wilde's approach to this topic is very different in *De Profundis* compared to his earlier criticism. (See Orhanen 2008: 78-106 for a fuller discussion.) On the whole, however, it would seem Wilde attaches the elements of cognition in Art primarily to self-knowledge which is produced in reflection upon one's aesthetic experience and considers 'truth', first and foremost, as a *subjective* entity.

5. Contradiction as expansion: The core of Wildean aesthetics?

Just as Wilde's paradox concerning the foundation of Art – what is Art based on if it actually precedes our consciousness and reality – the reader of Wilde's criticism is perplexed with the question of how criticism can exist, and on what basis, if the modes like logical argumentation and consistent lines of thought are founded upon on assumptions that are mistaken for 'reality', such as binary oppositions? It is obvious that neither the paradoxes themselves nor the ostensible criticism that Vivian presents in the essay form the core of Wildean aesthetics; rather, it is the *motivation* behind these paradoxes and hyperboles that makes Wilde interesting as a critic. Paradoxicality, as a method of argumentation, is part and parcel of the content of Wilde's philosophy of art. The reader, who observes the paradoxicalities and inconsistencies in the text, simply cannot be regimented by it. Instead, s/he too is forced into a continuous dialogue with Wilde's ideas.

In the essay, Vivian adopts the Socratic Method for his argument. Plato's dialogues do not yet represent quite the consistent logical analysis which was only properly introduced and developed by Aristotle. Aristotle aimed at providing a syllogistic system, which comprises working back to reveal the premises by means of which a given proposition (assumption) can be obtained. Thus, in Aristotle's logic, any given assumption can be proved 'right' through logical argumentation. While the Socratic Method also requires certain assumptions to be accepted for the duration of the discussion, these assumptions are obtained through the art of posing suitable questions, which may lead into paradoxical propositions as well. Thus, it is not difficult to ascertain why the method appealed to Wilde; like Plato, he saw it as a means of revealing *momentary* glimpses of truth, while still retaining its humanity in the sense that the discussion is never closed with declaration of eternal or undeniable conclusion.

Due to a dialogue form used in the essay, Wilde is able to disguise himself and express, through the voice of his characters, some extremely thought-provoking observations on the condition of the current (i.e. of Wilde's day) state of art, spiced up with more than a hint of irony. Thus, Vivian's statements are not to be taken at face value; rather, they function as stimuli to the reader in forming a view of one's own, as do the aporia in the Socratic dialogues by Plato. In the context of Wilde, I refer to aporia in Classic rhetorics, pointing to

the way in which two statements individually seem to make sense but when combined they create such a disjunction – a paradox, if you like – that they cannot *mutually* be true. Whereas in deconstruction, aporia signifies a loss of voice, always terminating in silence, the function of aporia in Wilde is to do exactly the opposite: to induce conversation about matters that cannot be fully terminal. The aesthetic value, according to Wilde, is different *and* separate from ‘truth’ in the first place and should not, therefore, be evaluated according to the ‘truthfulness’ or ‘falsity’ statements about Art.

The dialogue in ‘The Decay of Lying’ takes place on at least three levels: in addition to (i) the dialogue between Vivian and Cyril, Wilde creates (ii) ‘conversation’ through his references to various philosophers, artists, movements and works of art. Through these references, Wilde sustains a link to the colossal field of preceding aesthetic debate, which, in fact, ranks Wilde’s readers into different categories according to their familiarity with Western aesthetics. However, I maintain that despite its apparent elitism, Wilde’s text serves first and foremost as an invitation to the reader to enter into (iii) a dialogue with his or her *own* aesthetic attitudes. This third element invokes Wilde’s claim that good criticism, like good art, provokes continuous conversation.

To a degree, Wilde’s views represent aesthetic anti-intentionalism, a belief that the meaning of an artwork is not tied its creators’s intentions. According to anti-intentionalist views, the recognition of irony within a text, for example, “need involve no reference to the empirical author’s actual attitudes or aims [...] since the ironic sense is manifest in the tone and other connotations of the text” (Livingston 2003: 281). This applies to Wilde’s essays as well as his various other ironic remarks; Wilde makes an art of being ironic as well as contradictory, and through the employment of these features in his criticism, makes it impossible for the reader to pin down the actual opinions of the author.

Beneath Vivian’s trivial comments on how modern art and art criticism should be approached lies Wilde’s observation of the un-sustainability of what we tend to consider as ‘obvious’, ‘natural’, or, ‘true’ – concepts which are based on our understanding of the world by means of binary oppositions. Through the use of paradoxes and irony in the dialogues in ‘The Decay of Lying’ and ‘The Critic as Artist’, Wilde demonstrates how easily shaken these oppositions are; Wilde’s method of contradicting can thus be considered as an antecedent to the methods and principles that were introduced more than a half a century later in the context of deconstruction.

Propositional meanings, meanings often defined through oppositions, are central to a logical theory. In ‘The Decay of Lying’, Wilde does not merely shake some of the propositions we tend to consider ‘true’ or ‘natural’, but also seeks to find a kind of hermeneutic explanation as to why we experience things the way we do. Thus, Wilde’s approach – although it might at first appear superficial, even chaotic, because of its

contradictory nature – follows Wilde his principle of how criticism should be regarded “a creation within a creation” and is “in its way more creative than creation” (The Critic as Artist: 1125).

At the end of ‘The Truth of Masks’, Wilde writes:

Not that I agree with everything I have said in this essay. There is much with which I entirely disagree. The essay simply represents an artistic standpoint. For in art there is no such thing as a universal truth. A Truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true.

(The Truth of Masks: 1173; my emphasis)

This remark illuminates Wilde’s view on both the form and function of criticism: at their best, paradoxes and inner contradictions within criticism can: first of all, demonstrate the fact that, with respect to Art, no definite conclusion can be drawn; and, secondly, to induce conversation and the recipient’s participation.

Wilde’s criticism, as Prewitt-Brown points out, “bespeaks a philosophy of ethical aestheticism that does not point elsewhere but always back to its own paradoxical truths” (1997: 27). Through the art of contradicting, which activates the reader, Wilde takes art criticism to a whole new level. It is not only in the context of aesthetic experience that involves the recipient’s attention and input; criticism should also engage its addressee in the similar manner. Therefore, although from a traditional perspective, Wilde’s approach to Art can be regarded as hopelessly incoherent, it is, simultaneously, also highly constructive and beneficial from the point of view of its individual reader.

References

Primary Sources

- Wilde Oscar 2003. *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, with an introduction by Merlin Holland. Glasgow: Harper Collins.
- Wilde Oscar [1889] 2003. ‘The Decay of Lying’. In *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*: 1071-1092.
- Wilde Oscar [1890] 2003. ‘The Critic as Artist’. In *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*: 1108-1155.
- Wilde Oscar [1885] 2003. ‘The Truth of Masks’. In *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*: 1156-1173.
- Wilde Oscar [1891] 2003. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*: 17-159.

Secondary sources

- Adorno Theodor W. 1997. *Aesthetic Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [Translated from German and edited by Robert ulloa-Kentor].

- Beardsley Monroe C. 1966. *Aesthetics: From Classical Greece to the Present*. Alabama: The University of Alabama Press.
- Booth Wayne 1983. *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Second Edition). Chicago: The Chicago University Press.
- Bristow Joseph (ed.) 2003. *Wilde Writings: Contextual Conditions*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press in association with the UCLA Centre for Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Studies and the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library.
- Danson Lawrence 1997. *Wilde's Intentions: The Artist in His Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellmann Richard 1988. *Oscar Wilde*. New York: Vintage.
- Foster Cheryl 1999. Ideas and imagination: Schopenhauer on the proper foundation of art'. In Janaway (ed.): 213-251.
- Gaut Berys 2003. Art and knowledge. In Levinson (ed.): 436-450.
- Gardner Sebastian 1999. Schopenhauer, will, and the unconscious. In Janaway (ed.): 375-421.
- Green Anne 1996. The nineteenth century (1820-1880). In Worth-Stylianou (ed.): 130-146.
- Israel-Pelletier Aimee 2004. Flaubert and the visual. In Unwin (ed.): 180-195.
- Janaway Christopher (ed.) 1999. *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kiberd Declan 1996. *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. London: Vintage.
- Knight Deborah. 2003. Aesthetics and cultural studies. In Levinson (ed.): p. 783-795.
- Lamarque P. and Olsen S. 1994. *Truth, Fiction and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Levinson Jerrold (ed.) 2003. *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Livingston Paisley 2003. Intention in art. In Levinson (ed.): p. 275-290.
- McCormack Jerusha 1997. Wilde's Fiction(s). In Raby (ed.): p. 96-117.
- McKenna Neil 2004. *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde*. London: Arrow Books.
- Medina José and David Wood (eds.) 2005. *Truth: Engagements across Philosophical Traditions*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mitchell W.J.T. (ed.) 1981. *On Narrative*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Orhanen Anna 2008. *Celebrating Creative Consciousness: Insights into Oscar Wilde's Aesthetics*. University of Turku: Master's thesis. Available: <https://oa.doria.fi/handle/10024/43436>
- Phillips David P. 1974. The influence of suggestion on suicide: Substantial and theoretical implications of the Werther Effect. *American Sociological Review* 39: 340-54.
- Prewitt-Brown Julia 1997. *The Cosmopolitan Criticism: Oscar Wilde's Philosophy of Art*. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia.

- Proust Marcel 1996. *Time Regained*. London: Vintage. [Translated from French by C.K. Scott Moncrieff & Terence Kilmartin, revised by D. J. Enright].
- Raby Peter (ed.) 1997. *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ricoeur Paul 1981. Narrative time. In Mitchell W. J. T (ed.), p. 165-186.
- Rumi Jeluluddin 2000. *Love Is a Stranger: Selected Lyric Poetry of Jelaluddin Rumi*. Boston: Shambala Publications, Inc. [Translated by Kabir Helminski].
- Small Ian 2003. Identity and value in *De Profundis*. In Bristow (ed.): 86-100.
- Stendhal [1830] 1972. *Le rouge et le noire*. Paris: Librairie Générale Française.
- Unwin Timothy (ed.) 2004. *The Cambridge Companion to Flaubert*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- White Hayden 1980. The value of narrativity in the representation of reality'. *Critical Inquiry*. 7 (1): 5-27.
- Worth-Stylianou Valerie (ed.) 1996. *Cassell Guide to Literature in French*. London: Cassell.

*"Other ways of looking out over wide things": Polyphonic criticism
of the present moment in John Ashbery's 'Litany'*
Elina Siltanen

Abstract

John Ashbery's poetry is often conceived of as being difficult or incommunicative. This impression results partly from expectations generated by conventions of poetry, particularly the presupposition that a poem should be coherent and have a single voice. The reader's place in relation to conventional poems is clearly defined: the reader is an overhearer, who may seek to empathize with the speaker. This article explores the ways in which Ashbery's 'Litany' (1979), a 68-page long poem in two columns, proposes an unusually active role for the reader as the poem resists conventions and relies on a polyphonic structure (cf. Bakhtin 1984) which is capable of containing dialogical utterances rather than simply being concentrated on the self. I examine the ways in which the poem creates senses of presence through the use of ambiguous personal pronouns (cf. Benveniste 1966) and establishes several speaker positions. The interplay between the positions of the *I* and *you* creates a place for the reader. Through its polyphonic structure, 'Litany' transgresses the boundaries between poetry and critical discourse and drafts a new, polyphonic form of poetic criticism, which is conscious of poetry as a discursive practice. This consciousness is employed to emphasize the importance of comprehending the present moment. 'Litany' invites the reader to consider the relations between different points of view and the tones of the statements offered in the poem instead of accepting a single idea. The indeterminacies and difficulties of the text thus become productive elements.

1	For someone like me The simple things Like having toast or Going to church are Kept in one place. ...	<i>So this must be a hole Of cloud Mandate or trap But haze that casts The milk of enchantment ...</i>
15	The casual purring of a donkey Rouses me from my accounts: What given, what gifts. The air Stands straight up like a tail. He spat on the flowers. Also for someone Like me the time flows round again With things I did in it.	<i>Matters like these No one can care about, "Noone." That is I've said it Before and no one Remembers except that elf. Around us are signposts Pointing to the past, The old-fashioned, pointed Wooden kind. And nothing directs To the present that is About to happen.</i>
25	I wish to keep my differences And to retain my kinship To the rest.	

('Litany', part I, *As We Know*: 3-4)

The above passage comes from the beginning of John Ashbery's 'Litany' (1979), a 68-page long poem in two columns. The right hand column is written in italics, the left in plain text. 'Litany' is a fragmentary, 'difficult' text. If one attempts to read it linearly, seeking to identify narratives and the emotive value of the statements of an individual, confusion is the likely outcome. The linear reader will wonder to whom the pronoun *I* in this poem refers, and be confused by the pronouns *he* or *us*, neither of which have obvious antecedents. What is meant by "*signposts*" or "*that elf*"? What should the reader make of the relation of the two columns, as they juxtapose objects like "toast" and "*a hole / Of cloud*"? How can one approach a poem that at first appears so incommunicative without dismissing it simply as an experiment in incoherence? In what follows, I shall discuss 'Litany' as a productively 'difficult' poem, showing how the poem's awareness of its own disjunctions and multiple possibilities of meaning offers new positions for the reader.

The poem begins by calling attention to a central poetic convention, namely the position of the speaker. Traditionally, poetry is expected to be single-voiced, the speech of a stable subject (perhaps the poet him/herself), and to be addressed to the speaker. Such an individual position is usually explicit in the pronoun *I*, which is expected to refer to a single persona, often referred to as 'the poet', throughout the text. Single-voicedness leaves the reader outside the poem and proposes for him or her a position as an 'overhearer' who listens to the insights offered by the poet. This view of poetry was made prominent in 1833 by John Stuart Mill ([1833] 2003), who suggested that "*eloquence is heard; poetry is overheard*. Eloquence supposes an audience. The peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener". For Mill, poetry was "*feeling confessing itself*

to itself in moments of solitude" ([1833] 2003). This, however, would not be a fitting description of Ashbery's 'Litany'.

The poem begins by referring to "someone like me", a position which is not precisely *I*, but possibly any individual who is inclined to, for example, keep "simple things" "in one place". The pronoun *I* does not reoccur until line 24: the phrase "With things I did in it" draws attention to the speaker's own position which has evidently been decentralized in the interim and projected against "someone like me". Simultaneously in the right hand column, a different discourse begins, making reference to "us" and claiming that our consciousness of the present moment is lacking. Thus, the poem does not establish a single personality that could be readily identified, but rather presents multiple pronominal possibilities of presence. This also results in contradictory ideas: for example the left column presents a subjective position for whom "simple things" are important, while the right column suggests that there are "[m]atters" that "[n]o one can care about" like "a hole / Of cloud", which can be seen as a "simple", insignificant 'thing'. More important than an individual, stable *I* are the "things I did", which circulate around the position of "someone like me". The *I* expresses the desire to "keep my differences", to be distinguished individually, but also to explore and retain close affinity with other positions and possibilities.

The beginning of the poem has a metatextual inclination; it calls attention to the way subjectivity is constructed. As I shall come to show over the course of my discussion, 'Litany' ultimately presents itself as polyphonic, that is multi-voiced, rather than concentrating on a single voice or a self. In its material appearance, the poem is laid out as a dialogue as the text is presented in two adjacent columns. The "author's note" states at the beginning that they are "meant to be read as simultaneous but independent monologues" (*As We Know*: 2). The note implies that there is no communication between the columns in the form of listening or responses. John Shoptaw (1994: 227-228) also suggests that in a sense, there are three columns, of which the blank space between the two columns of text marks silence and absence of communication. However, as I will come to show, an apparent absence of communication does not have to mean that the poem is ultimately monologic and solipsistic.

In addition to the absence of a continuous presence, 'Litany' is disjunctive in that it lacks a linear 'plot', even though some continuities and trains of thought can be perceived through careful reading. There is no unified context of speaking nor a single subject with which a certain speaker would be concerned. The two-columned poem does not require a linear reading; instead, the role of the readers is foregrounded, as they can construct their own narrative structure by choosing the order in which to read the text, which can lead to a new reading each time the poem is read.

Bonnie Costello suggests that the second column of 'Litany' is devoted to the reader's position, and goes on to remark that, in 'Litany', *I* and *you* form "a polyphony of writer and reader" (Costello 1982: 493&495). The distinctions between the reader and the speaker are not, however, straightforward. The columns do not simply contain one voice in each, but multiple, indeterminate subjective positions. The reader's position is taken into account in the openness of the pronoun *you*, which allows for metatextual readings. The recurring address to an indeterminate *you* is an invitation to dialogue, as the *I* calls for the participation of an other and relates ideas to an other, even though actual responses are rarely heard. Thus, the poem can be seen as constructing a self-conscious, dialogic exploration of the possibilities of the present moment. 'Litany' drafts a distinctly postmodern form of polyphonic criticism that could direct the reader's attention towards "*the present that is / About to happen*". I shall begin discussing the dialogic process of the poem by exploring how it constructs senses of presence and then go on to discuss the shifts in the speaker position. In the last section, I will discuss the way in which pronominal shifts and the absence of a continuous position are used to draft a polyphonic criticism of the present moment.

1. "*For someone like me*": Establishing indeterminate presences

By playing with pronominal references, 'Litany' problematizes the role of the *I* as a singular, subjective position in the poem. The idea of an individual, unified self that has the power to assign meanings has already been shown to be a result of specific linguistic and literary conventions (see Culler [1975] 1985: 28-29, Barthes [1977] 1990a: 145). Antony Easthope (1983: 40) draws on the ideas of Émile Benveniste to explain how subjectivity in a poem is constructed through personal pronouns. Benveniste (1966: 251) remarks that personhood can only be attributed to the pronouns *I* and *you* (*je/tu* in his original French), whereas a third person pronoun does not point towards presence. A name is understood to refer to a certain being, but *I* and *you* do not have stable reference outside the context in which they occur, and therefore several occurrences of the pronoun *I*, even within the same text, can refer to several different persons (Benveniste 1966: 252-253). The pronouns become referential in relation to reality only when a speaking voice occupies them in an utterance (Benveniste 1966: 254). What this means for poetry is that the sense of person is produced only at the point at which it is read.

The beginning of 'Litany' establishes a decentralized position for the *I*, and focuses instead on "the things I did": possible events which may be true for "someone like me". The beginning of the poem also presents third person positions like *he*, the identity of which is not defined. However, the utterances of the poem are not ultimately stripped of a voice, nor are they totally impersonalized. There is a sense of someone conceiving the mentioned

issues, but the presence is scattered into different pronouns like *I* and *he*, and then gathered together as *us*. The position of the decentralized *I* is countered and complicated by the pronoun *you*, which is as evasive as the reference to the *I*. Like *I*, *you* marks presence, but there is no way of determining whether all instances of *you* refer to the same second person throughout, or whether *you* refers to different presences, to the reader or to one or more fictive characters. When *you* can be understood as an address to the readers, it also serves to engage them in constructing the text.

Generally, personal pronouns in a poem are indicators that the readers use to construct a sense of presence as they begin to read. 'Litany' foregrounds this process of making sense. When the poem presents *I* and *you* and other pronominal positions as indeterminate and in changing contexts, it thus resists the readers' attempts, which are no doubt inevitable, to merge the pronouns into a coherent subjective presence, thereby preventing the readers from perceiving a continuous speaker-persona. Ideally, this could prompt readers to become conscious of the automatic suppositions they make. As I will come to show, the absence of a stable subjectivity, and the way the poem metatextually calls the readers' attention to the construction of the text, also encourages readers to consider the judgments they make on the basis of the pronouns about the tone of an utterance, for instance whether to read it ironically or take it at face value. This is where the polyphony of the poem culminates. I shall return to this in the second section. First, however, an overview of the various dispersed positions contained within 'Litany' will help establish the key points of uncertainty.

1.1. "Anyway, I am the author": Defining and decentralizing authority

The title 'Litany' refers to a type of prayer in the Christian church, where the public responds to the clergy. The voices in the poem are not, however, as Perloff (1981: 280 & 283) points out, structured in a hierarchical relation of the clergyman and the people who would reply. Actual instances of response are scarce. Of the possible meanings of the word 'litany', perhaps a more relevant one is the colloquial meaning; a long and perhaps tedious speech or, as the poem itself puts it:

656 ...maybe just
A long list of complaints or someone's
Half-formed notions of what they thought
659 About something

(*'Litany'*, part II, *As We Know*: 38).

Indeed, the poem comes across as being the voice of someone expressing his or her concerns and feelings in somewhat haphazard manner. However, the discourse is so disjunctive that it cannot readily be perceived as the speech of a stable individual. The text is not a

'solipsistic' monologue as it addresses the reader and refers to various subjectivities through its pronominal indeterminacies.

John Keeling (1992: 127-128) has characterized the poem as containing two voices in its two columns. He states that "[n]either of the columns can simply be identified with the poet, with an independent/parallel voice of experience, or with any single subject position". For my purposes, the observation of the lack of a "single subject position" is also central, but as already stated, I view the poem as explicitly multi-voiced rather than merely dual voiced.

Keeling (1992: 128) proposes, rather contradictorily given that he admits that the poem lacks a single position, that both of the columns can be referred to as "Ashbery". While such naming of the speaker is common in readings of poems, perhaps only for reasons of simplicity, for my argument there is not much to be gained by restoring the voices in the poem to the poet "Ashbery". Consider for example the following statement:

565 *It's sad the way they feel about it—*
 Poetry—
 As though it could synchronize our lives
568 *With our feelings about ourselves,*

(*'Litany'*, part II, *As We Know*: 35).

I could assume that this is Ashbery's authentic 'lamentation', spoken in his own persona as if in a critical essay. Such a reading of this proposition would, however, reveal little more than what is obvious and would not take into account its position in the poem. Since the sense of presence in a poem is, after all, created linguistically, there should be more possibilities for interpreting the occurrences of the pronoun *I* than simply resorting to the author. I deliberately avoid naming the senses of presence which can more generally be referred to as speakers or different voices as 'Ashbery' or 'the poet'. I am essentially not interested in which of the utterances in the poem are the poet's own experiences or opinions. The intention is to comprehend the nature of multiple fictional voices as they relate to each other in the world of the poem.

As far as authorship is concerned, the speaker appears to make his/her stance clear when s/he states:

963 *Anyway, I am the author. I want to*
 Talk to you for a while, teach you
 About some things of mine

(*'Litany'*, part II, *As We Know*: 48).

This statement abruptly proposes to define the place of the author in the middle of a poem that overall denies the possibility of a fixed, singular position. The lines address the readers directly and turn their attention to the text itself. Since 'Litany' foregrounds issues that are

related to art and writing, the speaker of an utterance can often be regarded as a writer who comments on the construction of the text itself or on poetry in general. However, "the author" is not the only position that claims his/her authority over the text. Metatextual commentary also emanates from a source that is named as separate from "the author":

131 *The narrator:*
 Something you would want here is the
 Inexpressible, rage of form
 Vs. content, to show how the latter,
135 The manner, vitiates the thing-in-
 Itself that the poem is actually about

(‘Litany’, part III, *As We Know*: 62).

In this passage too, the construction of the poem and the readers’ position are clearly at issue. The poem hints at the possibility that there is no self-explanatory relation between form and content, and suggests that readers should reconsider their expectations about how poems are constructed. Mentioning the author and narrator is one way in which ‘Litany’ foregrounds its status as a textual construction and as a limited representation of reality.

‘Author’ and ‘narrator’ are conventionally conceived of as separate entities. ‘Author’ usually refers to the person who actually wrote the text, whereas a ‘narrator’ is a point of reference for the structure of the text. There are, then, at least two different positions in ‘Litany’: the author, who is concerned with the “things of mine” that he wants to discuss, and a narrator who is concerned with the relation between form and content. One cannot definitively decide where these positions are distinct, as there is no indication, such as speech marks, of where one voice stops speaking and the other begins. Obviously, a narrator is conventionally the property of a novel, whereas poems are understood as having a speaker or a voice. ‘Litany’, then, also crosses traditional textual genre boundaries, which is a common feature in Ashbery’s work throughout, for example in how much of his recent poetry resembles prose in its narrativity. In ‘Litany’, the confusion of authors and narrators is a departure from traditional ‘lyric’ poetry, which partly enables the inclusion of several voices instead of a conventional, single lyrical speaker.

The acts of suddenly mentioning the author and narrator are aspects of the poem’s decentralizing force as regards the speaking voice and authorial position. Instead of a central speaking voice, there are various positions: authors, narrators and other occurrences of the pronoun *I* which occasionally call attention to their ‘presence’ through stating their position overtly. Obviously, readers tend to seek a continuous voice in poems regardless of how much the poem resists this tendency, much in the same way that novels are perceived as having a narrator no matter how polyphonic they may be. Keeling’s (1992: 127-128) reduction of multiple positions to two voices is therefore not, in a sense, totally

contradictory, but needs to be redefined. When 'Litany' resists readers' attempts to perceive a continuous speaker, the center of the voice is constantly eluded, and the poem prevents readers from simply fixing a voice with any of the pronouns or other manifestations of authorial presence such as metatextual utterances. The 'voices' of the two columns, as Keeling defines them, should, therefore, be understood as a structure, an implied author or a 'writer' position that holds together all the different voices, but which does not merge into a unified 'persona', a single narrative position or an authorial consciousness. Next, I shall consider further the role of pronouns in constructing presences.

1.2. "The agony of looking steadily": Unconfirmed ideas

'Litany' presents constant changes in the speaking position. Some of these are overtly signaled, but most are not. There are passages framed in speech marks, often without an overt reporting clause. Sometimes the passages in speech marks are presented as the speech of a non-human character, such as a goddess, the sun, or a voice belonging to no one in particular, as in "automatic greetings, summonses / From a brazen tongue" ('Litany', *As We Know*: 29). Sometimes reporting clauses are presented without any immediately apparent marks of reported speech. For example a passage in the left column presents such a change that generates ambiguity:

640 ...And the agony
Of looking steadily at something isn't
Really there at all
645 ...its charm, no longer
A diversionary tactic, is something like
Grace, in the long run, which is what poetry is.
648 Musing on these things he turned off the
Great high street which is like a too-busy
Harbor

(*'Litany'*, part II, *As We Know*: 37-38).

The passage presents a reporting clause that suggests that the observation about the relation between poetry and "the agony / Of looking steadily" is the idea of a third person, but there are no speech marks to indicate where the 'musings' of *he* begin, nor is there any clear indication of who *he* is, and who in turn provides this description of the actions of the third person. Sentences about third persons, of course, often come from 'a narrator', but one cannot know whether such an inexplicit narrator is the same as the one that explicitly begins to speak as "the narrator" later in the poem. In the next stanza in the left column, the text turns to presenting an *I* in a specific context again: "I was waiting for a taxi", but the relation of this position to the ones in the previous stanza remains unclear (*'Litany'*, part II, *As We*

Know: 39, line 674). The boundaries between different voices and positions are thus not clearly defined.

The uncertainties of reference and speaker positions are also related to the relationship between personal pronouns and naming in 'Litany', where the latter are, contrary to conventions of ordinary communication, of little importance. Apart from beings such as a goddess, the sun, author and narrator, 'Litany' rarely names the speakers who participate in fictive events or speak in the text with a substantive or a proper name. Even when a name appears, the named positions are left as undefined as the positions that are marked by pronouns. Names do not help define the speaker of a particular utterance. The ambiguous use of the pronouns *you* and *I* suggests that the act of speaking or participating is more important than knowing exactly who is involved in the event. There is no ultimate authorial consciousness, nor specific personas nor characters, but rather multiple possibilities of presence, each of which is only defined at the moment of the utterance. The utterances are, thus, distinctly generalized.

The utterance about "the agony / of looking steadily" and its relation to poetry (though it is unclear whether "the agony" or instead, for example, "Grace" "is what poetry is") clearly gains a different position depending on who utters it. The statement appears to be somewhat traditionally lyrical as it muses on the nature of poetry. If it came from a stable speaker who is sincere in his observation, the reader would have little choice but to either accept or reject it as such. But since the utterance is presented as the opinion of a third person, it can be understood as an alternative view that may only be true for one person. The reader may, of course, make inferences and provisional decisions about who the speaker of the statement is, which may affect how the tone of the utterance is perceived. Such inferences might entail fixing the 'he' in the passage quoted at the beginning of this section alternately as a poet, as a critic, or as a reader of poetry. The idea of "what poetry is" could then be understood, for example, as traditionally lyrical (coming from a poet) or sentimental (if uttered for example by a naïve admirer of lyric poetry). Again, the utterance could be seen as ironic, as it is the thought of an individual who "turn[s] off the / Great high street", which could be understood as turning away from traditional, "Great high" notions of poetry. The argument about the nature of poetry is quickly dispelled as the poem turns to describing a third person turning away.

When the statement about the nature of poetry is presented ambiguously, without the presence of a defined, affirmative speaker, it can contradict and contrast with other points of view about poetry that are presented elsewhere in the text, for example the following idea, which is much more gloomy about art and seeing:

503 *And in this way make room for the general public*
To crowd around and be enchanted by it too,
 505 *And then, hopefully, make some sense of their lives,*
Bring order back into the disorderly house
Of their drab existences. If only
They could see a little better what was going on
Then this desirable effect might occur,
 510 *But today's artists and writers won't have it,*
That is they don't see it that way.

(‘Litany’, *As We Know*: 33).

The statements that appear in the poem are offered not as a single idea, but as an essentially polyphonic representation of ideas and various points of view, which the reader is invited to consider. Such an ordering of ideas corresponds to Mikhail Bakhtin’s understanding of a polyphonic text, in which “a *plurality of consciousnesses* ... combine but are not merged in the unity of the event” (Bakhtin 1984: 6; emphasis as in the original). In Bakhtin’s view, a monologic text presents certain ideas as “confirmed ... in the unity of the author’s seeing and representing consciousness” (Bakhtin 1984: 82). Polyphony lies not in contradictions of ideas as such, but in the absence of an ultimate authority who could confirm an idea. As the pronominal references are indeterminate, and other markers of speaker positions such as metatextual commentary do not help define an authorial consciousness, nothing can be affirmed. Polyphonic poetry gives voice to other positions besides the authoritative ‘author’.

Normally, the illusion of a speaking voice that the personal pronoun *I* creates calls upon the readers to empathize with the speaker and the text (Easthope 1983: 46). Readers can, as Easthope (1983: 43) affirms, “produce the meaning” of the utterance and “take the position of [its] subject”, but such a subject position is never fixed in a poem like ‘Litany’. The pronoun *I* has no stable reference. Readers can, then, consider not just the content of an utterance, but also the process of making inferences about the utterance and its position in the text. This could ideally lead to a heightened awareness of the process of reading and of one’s desire to, for example, integrate a fragmented text into a coherent construction and to perceive a natural, unified voice, and perhaps to accept uncertainty of meaning. In this sense, the poem promotes a new approach to “looking” at the text, one which does not resort to finding an ultimate meaning. The readers do not have to submit to “the agony / Of looking steadily” at the poem. Instead, they are free to construct multiple readings of it.

If readers cannot, then, create a fixed subject position for themselves in relation to the *I*, in part because the position of *I* is always difficult to determine, ‘Litany’ nevertheless provides another way for the readers to be ‘included’ in the text. This is the address to a *you*, which invites the participation of others. The use of the pronoun *you* and its relation to the *I* are best discussed in the context of part II of ‘Litany’, which will also further clarify the way utterances are posited in the text.

1.3. "Whose subjects are these?": Blurring the boundaries between you and I

The position of the *I* is not determined in 'Litany', and therefore when an unidentified *I* addresses a *you*, the position of the other is not stable either. Both of these pronouns take different positions during the course of the text, but the relationship between a speaker and a listener is always central. Consider the following passages where a speaker in the left column addresses a *you* who appears to be telling a story or writing a novel, while the right column entails a reflection on criticism:

553	... Distance, one's new approximation of oneself:		... <i>What then</i>
555	A seated figure, neither imperious nor querulous, No longer invoking the riddle of the skies, of distance, Nor yet content with the propinquity Of strangers and admirers, all rapt, In attitudes of fascination at your feet, waiting		<i>Shall it criticize, in order to dispel The quaint illusions that have been deluding us, The pictures, the trouvailles, the sallies</i>
560	For the story to begin.		<i>Swallowed up in the howl? Whose subjects Are these? Yet all Is by definition subject matter for the new Criticism, which is us: to inflect It is to count our own ribs, as though Narcissus Were born blind, and still daily Haunts the mantled pool, and does not know why.</i>
	All right. Let's see— How about "The outlook wasn't brilliant For the Mudville nine that day"? No,		<i>It's sad the way they feel about it— Poetry— As though it could synchronize our lives With our feelings about ourselves,</i>
565	That kind of stuff is too old-hat. Today More than ever readers are looking for Something upbeat, to sweep them off their feet Something candid but also sophisticated		

('Litany', *As We Know*, part II: 35).

As is characteristic of the second section of 'Litany', the right column discusses poetry and criticism whilst the left provides an account of a specific event, though neither column is exclusively narrative or argumentative. In the above left column passage, the distinction between the speaker and *you* is redefined. When first addressed, the anonymous *you* is posited as being separate from the speaker, someone who will perhaps express different ideas and take a different direction. While the speaker is addressing *you*, he also gradually adopts the other's way of speaking, as he starts looking for a way to begin the story by saying "All right. Let's see—". Here, again, the lack of speech marks makes it possible to read this line as the speech of either one of those presences that were identified as the positions of *you* and *I* in the previous stanza, presuming, of course, that they are separate beings. The speaker of this phrase can be the voice that just made a remark on admirers "at your feet", or the person who is about to tell a story.

The identity of the speaker becomes doubtful again after the sentence about the "Mudville nine", which is the first line of an old baseball poem by Ernest Thayer called 'Casey at the Bat: A Ballad of the Republic Sung in the Year 1888'. The rejection of this line

may come from the same voice who suggested it or from another voice. Thus, the distinction between *I* and *you* becomes blurred. The renouncement of the baseball poem – which is primarily a popular text – as too “old-hat” highlights the notion on the readers’ wish to have “[s]omething... sophisticated”. On the other hand, a poem that describes a baseball match in such a light manner could also be considered to be “[s]omething upbeat”. The position of the allusion remains unclear, because readers do not know from whose point of view the baseball poem should be regarded as “too old-hat” and for whom “[t]he quaint illusions” should be dispelled. The question “*Whose subjects / Are these?*” can also be seen as a comment on this indeterminacy of voice. There is no authoritative voice which would affirm, for example, what the readers of today really want to read.

As the train of thought in the left column advances, the *you* is again presented as someone separate from the speaker who is writing a novel:

602 ... Whom
 Should I refer you to, if I am not
 To be of you? But you
 Will continue in your own way, will finish
 Your novel, and have a life
 607 Full of happy, active surprises
 ...
 612 Anyway, as
 I said, I like you this way, understood
 If under-appreciated, and finally
 My features come to rest, locked
 In the gold-filled chain of your expressions,
 The one I was always setting out to be—
 618 Remember? And now it is so.

(‘Litany’, part II, *As We Know*: 36-37).

The indeterminate relationship of *you* and *I* is troubling the speaker, and he wishes to be “of you”, that the two of them were not separate after all. The passage speaks of the possible end of a relationship, and again, of the beginning of a ‘union’ as the features of the *I* coincide with the other’s “expressions”. This longing to become one with another, to be the other, is again placed in a questionable light in the next stanza: “Yet—whether it wasn’t all just a little, / Well, silly” (‘Litany’, part II, *As We Know*: 37, lines 620-621). The readers cannot fix the pronoun *you* to refer to a certain persona; its position is constantly shifting.

The above segment from line 602 onwards can also be understood as a metatextual comment. The lines “Whom / Should I refer you to, if I am not / To be of you?” echo the common understanding of the relationship between the speaker and the reader of a poem: conventionally, the reader’s position would be to be “of you”, to empathize with or to put oneself in the place of the speaker. In this sense, the lines refer to the reader’s confusion about the new situation. On the other hand, the pronoun *you* may also designate the reader,

in which case the passage implies that the reader can actually 'write' the text for him/herself, and will then continue "on [his/her] own way", as separate from the poem. The textual position of the writer in the poem has no control over the readers, and any ideas s/he may have been able to impose on them may soon be dispelled after the reading is over.

Similar 'send-off lines' for the other, which are a common element in Ashbery's poetry, are encountered at the end of 'Litany' where the speaker notes "*But you are leaving*" ('Litany', part III, *As We Know*: 67, line 299). He explains about a tape he has erroneously been billed for and then makes a direct appeal to *you*: "*I've written them several times but / Can't straighten it out—would you / Try?*" ('Litany', part III, *As We Know*: 68, lines 307-309). The poem ends with a sense of failure on the speaker's part, and he reaches for an other, perhaps for the reader, to "straighten it out", encouraging the other to be active. Despite the fact that these 'send-off lines' are posited as specific fictive events, their context in a poem that evidently reflects on the nature of poetry and art invites readings that pertain to the construction of the text itself. Moreover, because the poem is disjunctive and does not contain a single position for the *you* or *I*, even specific events lose some of their potential to signify 'as such'. They are not primarily events that are meaningful for a single person in terms of a biographical search for self-discovery, although they can be that. The fact that these utterances do not unambiguously have such significance does not mean that the utterances are meaningless; instead they are open for possibilities.

The possibilities of *you* as the reader, the *you* as the embodiment of the 'writer' of the poem as well as the *you* as a fictive character in the above passages are all available. The relationship between *you* and *I* is never fixed. The beings to whom the pronouns refer are primarily textual constructions, senses of presences that posit the utterances as emanating from a source. As Charles Altieri affirms when discussing the beginning of 'Litany': "[p]erhaps the self is primarily a function, not an entity – a function that is manifest in our assertions of desire or our investments in things" (Altieri 1984: 162). The positions of *you* and *I* are presented in constantly changing fictive situations, but a metatextual reading is often also available. There are a variety of ways of understanding, but essentially the reader is invited to consider the relations between fictive occasions, and the discourse on art, criticism and representation.

The address to an other is central in the polyphony of 'Litany'. The poem is not presented as a series of monologic assertions, but instead as a discourse in which the meanings are constructed between the *you* and *I*, which also implies that meanings are constructed between the text and the reader, in contact with an other rather than being affirmed and thrust to the reader by an authorial consciousness. Discourse that addresses a *you* calls attention to the position or perspective of the other. This corresponds to Bakhtin's understanding of how ideas must be constructed dialogically, in contact with other voices,

for their full potential for meaning to be realized (Bakhtin 1984: 85 & 87). However, Bakhtin's (1984: 99-100 & 251) understanding of polyphony supposes the existence of distinct characters and personalities. Given that Ashbery's 'Litany' presents no characters who can be either defined or fixed, but instead provisional presences, there is also a further indeterminacy in the positions of the utterances, which allows their potential for meaning, such as the tones of the utterances, to be explored in various ways.

In the passages quoted in the beginning of this section, the juxtaposition of the two columns creates conflicting connections between similar themes and ideas. *You* in the left column is searching for ways to give the readers the story that they want. On the other hand, a voice in the left column is disdainful of the common readers' desires and dismisses them with ironic, hyperbolic formulations such as "all rapt", "sweep them off their feet". Simultaneously, the right column can also be understood as expressing an ironic stance on the ideas of criticism it presents, as the tone is unusually assertive compared to the other parts of the text. There are sentences like "*But today / Nobody cares or stands for anything, / Not even the handful of poets one admires*" ('Litany', part II, *As We Know*: 33, lines 495-497). When such sentences are placed next to the far less assertive voice of the left column, the assertiveness of the right column becomes only one position among many. In order to illustrate how the indeterminacy of tones functions in the poem, the metacritical discussion of art and criticism that 'Litany' is engaged in requires further consideration.

2. "*new Criticism*": *Metatextual discourse and the present moment*

Already in the beginning of the poem, 'Litany' presents an *I* who engages in events, speaking of the "things I did" and their connections. Yet, this involvement of the *I* does not happen in the way that Charles Altieri has deemed important for most American poetry in the 1970s and early 1980s. In the dominant mode of the period in which 'Litany' was published, "an experience is significant in the precise way 'I' engage in it" (Altieri 1984: 22). The sincerity of a particular, unified self and the degree to which other points of view are merged into the dominant speaking voice are important conditions in creating an act that can be "representative" and a "bond between the self and others" (Altieri 1984: 15&21-22). Positing that a voice is sincere also requires maintaining a close relation "between the authorial presence and the dramatic voice" (Altieri 1984: 16). When the sincerity of a central *I* is important, poems are understood as communicative by virtue of the representative value of the events and emotions presented in them. Readers can empathize with the emotions and experiences that the individual position presents, and accept the statements offered in the poem as sincere. As we have already seen, however, this communicative process is not as straightforward in 'Litany'.

Altieri (1984: 22) notes that the position of a central self of a single-voiced poem is only meaningful "beyond language". The sense of presence marked by the pronoun *I* has to be an individual, and experiences are meaningful in relation to the person's history. 'Litany', however, does not present a stable 'self' that readers would immediately be invited to look for beyond language. For Altieri (1984: 16-17), poetry that concentrates on a sincere single voice position may become self-contained and lack self-awareness. Self-awareness is precisely what 'Litany' achieves in the way it resists readers' attempts to perceive a single voice in the text, and thus foregrounds subjective positions as the result of discursive practices. Since the speaker is not unified, the requirement of sincerity as the prevailing attitude is also cast aside. In this way, no statement can be either accepted or rejected by the reader as being essentially authentic and earnest. Readers are encouraged not simply to consider what an act or a statement represents, but instead the relations between positions and the specific way the speaking act or its potential for representation *happens*. Ideally, readers are encouraged to engage in constant negotiation with the poem and the attitudes that are presented in it instead of drawing final conclusions and finding ultimate meanings. This is important in creating the metatextual, polyphonic criticism or what is referred to in the poem as "*new / Criticism*" ('Litany', *As We Know*: 34).

According to Breslin (1987: 218), the way in which Ashbery's poetry resists the "earnestness about 'experience'" that prevailed in most of the poetry up until the 1980s partly explains why his work became so widely acclaimed at the time. The "earnestness" was already characteristic of the so-called confessional poetry of the 1950s and 1960s, which focused on a central *I*, who ponders on his or her life experience, often in order to arrive at a personally important understanding with which the reader can empathize. Confessional poetry diminished in importance after the 1960s, but the centrality of "earnestness" persisted in the 1970s and after. The importance of being earnest also relates to ideas received from New Criticism about how a poem was expected to be coherent and to have a unified speaker. When 'Litany', then, does not offer an illusion of a sincere, stable subjective presence, it also posits itself against these traditions (for a more detailed discussion on Ashbery's poetry's resistance to traditions, see Siltanen 2008: 10-11&15-25). Next, I shall discuss the uncertainty of statements in the light of the second section of the poem.

2.1. "Solemn abstractions": Uncertain attitudes and multiple meanings

339	So death is really an appetite for time That can see through the haze of blue Smoke-rings to the turquoise ceiling. She said this once and turned away	<i>The spaces between the teeth told you That the smile hung like an aria on the mind And all effort came into being Only to yank it away Came at it</i>
343	Knowing we wanted to hear it twice,
351	What it was like to be mouthing those Solemn abstractions that were crimson And solid as beefsteak.	<i>The background but were not much more than The dust as it is seen In folds of the furniture, ...</i>
359	Because it is the way of the personality of each To blush and act confused, groping For the wrong words so that the <i>Coup de théâtre</i> Will unfold all at once like shaken-out	<i>Certainly the academy has performed A useful function. Where else could Tiny flecks of plaster float almost Forever in innocuous sundown almost</i>

(‘Litany’, part I, *As We Know*: 14).

As Brian McHale asserts, metatextual utterances in Ashbery’s texts can be difficult to take at “face value”, or as sincere (McHale 2000: 582; see also Shoptaw 1994: 90-91). Such uncertainty of attitudes is present throughout ‘Litany’, and it often relates to aspects which are central in Ashbery’s poetry, namely irony and parody. For example, a sentence such as “it’s poetry, it’s extraordinary, / It makes a great deal of sense” may seem blatantly self-parodic in a text that is so obviously disjunctive (‘Litany’, part III, *As We Know*: 63, lines 171-172). ‘Litany’ contains possibilities for parodic readings, even though humor is not as obvious as, for example, in Ashbery’s most recent works from the millennial era onward such as the collection of short poems *Your Name Here* (2000).

In the case of ‘Litany’, one may wonder whether it is wise to read, for example, the sentence from the above passage “*Certainly the academy has performed / A useful function*” as a serious proclamation, as Helen Vendler has done, concluding that Ashbery is “quite willing, for example, for the academy and the critics to exist” (Vendler 1988: 234). Vendler (1988: 234) ties this part of the poem definitely to the poet’s own feelings toward the academy and critics, by which the poem “will be preserved”. Certainly it may be possible Ashbery had this in mind when he wrote the text, but such a biographical reading ignores the poem’s openness to other readings. For Vendler, the pronoun *I* in ‘Litany’ appears to refer to a continuous, sincere self, who might as well be Ashbery himself, offering these “perfectly intelligible and heartfelt ruminations on soul-making in art, life, and criticism” (Vendler 1988: 232). However, a more fruitful way of reading would be to understand the poem on a more complex level than a ‘face value’, biographical reading would allow.

The attitudes of the poem towards critics and establishments like the academy are ambiguous. Throughout the second section, the right column of 'Litany' provides a critique of "criticism", with an observation that critics are not doing "[w]hat they are supposed to be doing" ('Litany', part II, *As We Know*: 32, line 479). The poem presents 'critical' views towards criticism, which can be associated with the academy. Also, the particular notion about the academy that Vendler discusses is complicated by the following statement:

361 *Where else could*
 Tiny flecks of plaster float almost
 Forever in innocuous sundown almost

(*'Litany'*, part I, *As We Know*: 14).

The academy is presented as preserving "[t]iny flecks of plaster", small particulars that are perhaps insignificant, which as a reference to works of art may appear ironic or demeaning. The academy can thus be understood to be presented as a highly conventionalized institution that preserves insignificant works. The "[t]iny flecks of plaster" are also juxtaposed with the phrase "[s]olemn abstractions" in the left column. The tone of the left column may be regarded as ironic or humorous, as the "abstractions" are described as being "solid as beefsteak". The "abstractions" characterize the notions presented earlier in the left column about how "death is really an appetite for time", which appears rather conventionally poetic given that it is abstractly metaphorical and that death is, after all, a privileged theme in the poetic canon. Both columns thus criticize institutionalized matters and conventionalized points of view towards works of art without, however, positing any single attitude as final.

If the assertiveness of the right column is not a serious attitude, the utterances may also merely exemplify the kind of discourse that is normally used by poets and critics to criticize art and society. Building on Shoptaw's (1994: 95) discussion of Ashbery's 'The Skaters', McHale states that in Ashbery's poems, it is difficult to distinguish between 'use' and 'mention': whether a "mentioned" statement exemplifies the discourse, the way of speaking about the topic it addresses, or whether something is actually "used" as a statement about the text or as a description of a situation (McHale 2000: 585). In a text like 'Litany', one can rarely be certain whether something can be taken as a 'sincere' utterance or whether it stands as a quotation or allusion to a discourse that belongs to a specific context.

Readers cannot, then, know whether statements like "*Certainly the academy has performed / A useful function*" or "*So death is really an appetite for time / That can see through the haze of blue / Smoke-rings to the turquoise ceiling*" are to be taken as sincere observations of a certain speaker, ones that are meaningful for the thematic or narrative development of the text, or whether they are merely examples of such assertions. The statement on death could, for example, be read as an allusion to traditional poetic discourse, rather than as an assertion that should be taken 'as such' and read for its content, for what it

pronounces about death. This leads to a situation in which, if there is parody in the text, one cannot be sure what the parody is directed at; whether a statement about death that is either “used” or “mentioned” is posited parodically, or whether it is spoken in earnest. The indeterminacy in the tones of the utterances may lead to a situation in which the poem is not “direct description of some world, fictional or real, but secondhand description, mediated by another, prior representation—intertextuality, not ‘reality’” (McHale 2000: 569, punctuation as in the original).

The presence of a variety of textual materials, discourses, and tones renders the text fragmented; no position or discourse dominates. The definitive decisions are left to the readers, and they have to decide for themselves which of these voices and tones – like lyricism, assertiveness or irony – they listen to and which of the pronominal positions they want to empathize with, if any. The poem could ideally be read as a dialogical investigation of critical and lyrical positions, rather than as a straightforward personal narrative or a critical essay, even though it contains elements of both. In order to understand what the indeterminacy and the reader’s dominant position ultimately do for the poem, I shall conclude by discussing ‘Litany’ as poetic criticism.

3. “Poetic license”: Poetry as criticism in ‘Litany’

471 Seriously. The old-timers will
Let you take over the old lease.
One of them will be in you.

475 If there were concerts on the water there
We could turn back. Tar floated upriver
In the teeth of the gulls’ outlandish manifestations;
The banks pocked with flowers whose names
I used to know,

480 Before poetic license took over and abolished
everything.
People shade their eyes and wave
From the strand: to us or someone behind us?

*By being rendered less sensitive to them.
Just one minute of contemporary existence
Has so much to offer, but who
Can evaluate it, formulate*

*The appropriate apothegm, show us
In a few well-chosen words of wisdom
Exactly what is taking place all about us?
Not critics, certainly, though that is precisely
What they are supposed to be doing, yet how
Often have you read any criticism*

*Of our society and all the people and things in it
That really makes sense, to us as human beings?*

(‘Litany’, part II, *As We Know*: 32)

‘Litany’ may not appear to be very ‘reader-friendly’, as the complex structure of the text does not offer easy access to meanings and narratives. As I have suggested, however, the disjunctions and indeterminacies of the poem can be treated as a productive element in the reading process. ‘Litany’ is not a straightforward, transparent communication of narratives and meanings. Instead, because the poem is not ‘easy’ to read, it suggests an active approach to meaning construction. This is evident in the dialogical construction of the text as well as in the metatextual commentary. The active approach is particularly formulated in relation to one of the most central ideas of the poem, which is visible in the above passage: the

importance of an examination of the present moment. The right column passage appears as a criticism of conventional forms of poetic criticism, suggesting that contemporary reality is not sufficiently taken into account by critics or artists.

Later in the right column, the speaker goes on to drafting a "*new / Criticism* [which] *should take into account that it is we / Who made it*" ('Litany', part II, *As We Know*: 34, lines 543-545) and which should "*dispel / The quaint illusions that have been deluding us*" ('Litany', part II, *As We Know*: 35, lines 554-555). The speaker is disappointed by the lack of variety in critical practice, and the "*new / Criticism*" that is being drafted is suggested as a solution to this lack. The "*new / Criticism*" is not, however, presented as an equivalent of the literary critical approach New Criticism. Even the different use of capitals and the line break suggest of a difference. Insofar as 'New Criticism' expects texts to be integrally unified and harmonious, "*new / Criticism*" can contain breaks, breaches and inconsistencies. The "*new / Criticism*" of 'Litany' is closer to the postmodernist idea of the intertwined roles of art and theory than to 'New Criticism'.

While the train of thought about art and criticism goes on in the right column, the left column presents a speaker's thoughts concerning particular occasions or possibilities of occasions, such as "If there were concerts on the water there / We could turn back", and also another character, a companion perhaps, is addressed. The left column passage is, then, concerned with offering an account of how "*one minute of contemporary existence / Has so much to offer*" as the passage describes the indeterminate positions of *you*, *I* and *we* with their possible concerts and their being surrounded by such ordinary matters as flowers and gulls. However, this image of a situation that is rich in detail appears to be shattered in the phrase "Before poetic license took over and abolished everything". The passage can be understood as suggesting that "poetic license" has the power to interfere in or to put an end to the moment of "*contemporary existence*". This directly contradicts the right column, if the proposition for a new form of criticism that could direct one's attention to "*what is taking place all about us*" is taken to mean that poetry itself should become the "*new / Criticism*". The juxtaposition of the two columns and the absence of a stable, sincere subjective position resist extracting definite statements from the poem on this issue; instead the poem offers an open-ended reflection.

'Litany' is an essentially fictional text with its references to memories and specific events that are true for any person referred to as *you* or *I*, yet the poem contains no clearly discernible plot nor full-fledged characters. Various memories and occasions are presented, but through the critical level, they are turned into more than just 'subjective expression' or authentic recollections from the poet-speaker's life that would be presented, for example, in order to reach a personal revelation. The memories and occasions are generalized rather than particular. Obviously there are individual utterances spoken by an *I* that readers may

empathize with just as when one reads poetry that focuses on a central *I*. Nonetheless, because of the pronominal relations and the structure of the text, readers are invited to remain alert to different possibilities.

The columns comment on similar themes from different points of view, creating dialogical relationships and connections between ideas. The voices change and call each other into question or cancel each other, even though they do not enter into direct dialogues. In a sense, the voices speak past each other, while they do not unambiguously answer each other. Nevertheless, 'Litany' departs from the traditional form of a lyric poem, where a single speaker is engaged in a monologue.

The two column structure and the various voice positions build a metacritical level into the text. The poem attempts to take in the present moment as experienced by *I* and *you* while discussing the importance of such immersion through various voices. A variety of critical and lyrical positions, tones and occurrences is brought into play through a variety of voices. The metatextual notions can direct the readers to consider how these various utterances function in the poem, or in other possible contexts. Overall, the polyphonic poem emphasizes the necessity of exploring issues such as the present moment and its ordinariness through multiple perspectives:

571 *No one has ever really done a good piece*
 On all the things a woman carries inside her pocketbook,
 For instance, and there are other ways
 Of looking out over wide things.
575 *And yet the sadness is already built into*
 The description. Who can begin
 To describe without feeling it?
 So many points of view, so many details
579 *That are probably significant.*

(‘Litany’, part II, *As We Know*: 35)

The poem draws attention to the multitude of perspectives available and explicitly proposes that “other” points of view should be taken into account. As there is no central authorial consciousness, but instead a polyphony of voices dispersed over various pronominal positions, the text resists being read conventionally, in search of an ultimate, unified meaning.

The fluctuation between persons, subjectivities, and constantly varying subject matter, as well as the moments of direct address to a *you*, have the effect of drawing the readers in: they cannot just sit back and ‘overhear’ or receive the true statements of the singular speaking voice. Instead, in order to identify the implication of an utterance, the readers have to make decisions about who speaks and what the tone of an utterance is, whether a statement refers to a fictive event within the world of the text, or whether it is

metatextual. The readers are therefore encouraged to develop new reading strategies, where the ultimate aim is not to arrive at conclusions, but at constant negotiation with the text and the points of view it offers. In this sense, the reader is the one who can render the poem into a "finished artifact" (see Breslin 1987: 212). The sense of a 'finished artifact', however, is only temporary, as the implications of the utterances in the text can be different at each reading. The reader is the most central element for the composition of the text.

While 'Litany' itself remains ultimately uncertain about the extent to which poetry and criticism are, or could be, successful in comprehending the present moment, the text already engages in a "*new / Criticism*". The poem presents a form of criticism that makes use of literature's capacity for ambiguity, a blurring of the textual categories of poetry and theory which is particularly characteristic of postmodernist texts. Nevertheless, 'Litany' remains primarily a poetic or a fictive text. What it communicates is not a clearly defined argument or a transparently representative personal experience, but instead an interplay of multiple positions, which includes many different viewpoints without imposing its own definitive arguments. 'Litany', in essence, embodies a certain "poetic license", a departure from the received forms of both poetry and criticism.

Charles Altieri remarks that in New Criticism poetry is understood as providing "a nondiscursive alternative to the simplicities of argument" (Altieri 1984: 26). In other words, poetry can offer modes of reflection that are not restricted by the requirements of discursive logic that, for example, arguments in an academic text are expected to respect. This would keep poetry and criticism wholly separate. As Altieri affirms, however, Ashbery's poetry presents a challenge to this notion of poetry as an essentially "nondiscursive alternative", because his poems stretch and explore "poetic conventions" in such a way that attention is directed toward how discursive practices in the poems function (Altieri 1984: 26). The exploration of poetic conventions is evident in 'Litany' in the way it resists being integrated into a unified construction which is uttered by a single, sincere voice. The poem puts into play different presences and voices and their relations to specific experiences, and foregrounds the linguistic grounds of subjective and individual positions.

'Litany' is aware of poetry as an essentially discursive practice, rather than presenting itself simply as a transparent, representative form of lyric speech, or as hermetic argumentation. In its attention to discursiveness, then, 'Litany' also shows Ashbery coming back to the old position of the so-called New York School of poets, the group of writers Ashbery was associated with in the 1950s and 1960s. Along with Kenneth Koch, Frank O'Hara, and James Schuyler, Ashbery wrote against the prevailing understanding of how poetry should be read and written, a mode which had been established by New Criticism.

Susan M. Schultz (1996: 31 & 45) reads the conflation of criticism and poetry in 'Litany' in the light of Harold Bloom's understanding of how, in Schultz's words, "there is

no real difference between poetry and criticism". In her discussion, Schultz (1996: 24-48) convincingly displays the relations that Ashbery's poetry has to Bloom's ideas, both as a critique of Bloom's position as well as a means of exploring similar ideas. Nevertheless, 'Litany' hardly submits to another position of Bloom's, his idea of what poetry should be: it "has no true subject except the poet's own selfhood" (Bloom [1982] 1983: 287).

'Litany' is a poem about "someone like me", as it presents many subjectivities and voices, and it is a poem that can contain more than just a profound reflection of an individual's selfhood, like critical reflection, a seemingly impersonal activity, and constant negotiation, rather than a definitive, coherent line of argument. Obviously, in conflating particular events in which *I* and *you* participate, the poem *is* in the personal sphere; yet one can hardly say that this is its "true subject". As 'Litany' calls attention to its own construction and addresses the reader, it also creates a space for the other. The constant, ongoing negotiation for meanings in which the reader is encouraged to engage is a dialogic or polyphonic process in Bakhtin's sense: a "genuine thought" or "an idea" cannot be constructed in isolation, inside a single solipsistic mind, but in a dialogic relationship "with the ideas of *others*" or other consciousnesses (Bakhtin 1984: 87-88, emphasis as in the original). The central elements in this dialogic process of negotiation are the text and the reader, not the authorial consciousness. What 'Litany' suggests, above all, is a new mode of reading the discourses and positions of the present moment: an active, conscious process in which the reader's position is ultimately dominant, and which always considers that there are "*other ways / Of looking out over wide things*".

References

Primary source

Ashbery John [1979] 1981. *As We Know*. Manchester: Carcanet New Press.

Secondary sources

Altieri Charles 1984. *Self and Sensibility in Contemporary American Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bakhtin Mikhail 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [Edited and translated from the Russian *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*, 1963, by Caryl Emerson.]

Barthes Roland [1977] 1990a. The death of the Author. In Barthes: 142-148.

Barthes Roland [1977] 1990b. *Image – Music – Text*. London: Fontana Press. [Translated from French by Stephen Heath].

- Benveniste Émile 1966. *Problèmes de linguistique générale* [Problems in General Linguistics]. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.
- Bloom Harold [1982] 1983. *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Breslin Paul 1987. *The Psycho-Political Muse: American Poetry since the Fifties*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Costello Bonnie 1982. John Ashbery and the idea of the reader. *Contemporary Literature* 23: 493-514.
- Culler Jonathan [1975] 1985. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Easthope Antony 1983. *Poetry as Discourse*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Keeling John 1992. The moment unravels: Reading John Ashbery's 'Litany'. *Twentieth Century Literature* 38: 125-151.
- McHale Brian 2000. How (not) to read postmodernist long poems: The case of Ashbery's 'The Skaters'. *Poetics Today* 21: 561-590.
- Mill John Stuart [1833] 2003. *Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties*, section 1 [online]. Available: www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/jsmill/diss-disc/poetry/poetry.html (22 February 2009).
- Perloff Marjorie 1981. *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Schultz Susan M. 1996. "Returning to Bloom": John Ashbery's critique of Harold Bloom. *Contemporary Literature* 37: 24-48.
- Shoptaw John 1994. *On the Outside Looking Out: John Ashbery's Poetry*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Siltanen Elina 2008. "That you too were the I": *Forms of Polyphonic Communication in John Ashbery's Poetry* [online]. University of Turku: Master's thesis. Available: <https://oa.doria.fi/handle/10024/43653> (22 February 2009).
- Vendler Helen 1988. *The Music of What Happens: Poems, Poets, Critics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.