

TEJADA CALLER, P., *El Cambio Lingüístico. Claves para Interpretar la Lengua Inglesa*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial. 1999. (240 pp). ISBN: 84-206-8657-3 (Pb)

*El Cambio Lingüístico. Claves para Interpretar la Lengua Inglesa* is a clear proof that Historical Linguistics (HL) is at the core of linguistic research today, as Tejada states in the introduction of the book, and that there is still much more to be said about both language change and the history of the English language.

Tejada's book is not another introductory book to the field nor another textbook, nor is it simply a contribution to language change theory. *El Cambio Lingüístico. Claves para Interpretar la Lengua Inglesa* is all that: an introduction, a textbook, a theoretical contribution, and more. The book bridges the gap between traditional teaching companions or introductory books (Culpeper 1997, Blake 1996, Trask 1994, Barber 1993, Leith 1983, Berndt 1982, Fernández 1982) and more theoretical approaches to language change (Crowley 1997, Fox 1995, Aitchison 1981). It is evident that Tejada's intention is less to offer a detailed study of the different periods, varieties and levels of grammar than to encourage a holistic and open approach to English Historical Linguistics. The book provides a comprehensive up-to-date insight into the present state of research in the field and, what is more important, the author applies recent linguistic theoretical models to the explanation of some of the most complex and controversial issues of the history of the English language such as the emergence of the standard, semantic change or grammaticalization processes. The result is that *El Cambio Lingüístico. Claves para Interpretar la Lengua Inglesa* constitutes a thought-provoking approach to English HL and processes of language change, dealing with the most recent and polemical issues under discussion in the field, due, among other things, to their inherent interdisciplinary nature.

The overall plan of the book at first sight looks similar to other textbooks on the history of the English language: (Chap. 1) introduces the book with a survey on the nature of language change and of the most recent linguistic theories that are being applied to the field. A description of the scope of HL, its main sources, present and past methods and main research problems is presented in (chap. 2); the Germanic backgrounds of the English language are summarised in (chap. 3), where both the main linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the language-family are presented, as well as the specific characteristics of English within the branch. The sociohistorical and cultural contacts and movements of speakers and their influence on the language are described in (chap. 4), in addition to the role of literacy, the printing press and the influence of different authorities on the development and codification of English. (Chap. 5) gives a detailed account of the interdependent factors which have influenced the emergence of the standard and of the other varieties of the British Isles during the different periods of the language. (Chap. 6) explains the semantic and lexical processes which conform Present-day English vocabulary: a highly dynamic level of grammar, both as regards semantic and lexical innovation, in comparison to other Germanic languages. Recent developments of pragmatics and cognitive linguistics explain, in (chap. 7), some of the most controversial morphosyntactic changes of the English language, such as changes in word order and the grammaticalisation of verbal forms into modals and future markers. Finally the gradual divergence between English phonology and spelling throughout its history is described in terms of the oral and written nature of the

different periods of the language in (chap. 8). A closer look at the contents of the book, however, especially at the headings and subheadings of each chapter, reveals a new approach to the different topics, an approach we are not used to in this field. Some of the most noticeable subheadings which illustrate this innovation are, for example: *Change: catalyst of perspectives and linguistic issues* in chapter 1; *Travels and intellectual travellers* in chapter 2; *Morphosyntax: the codification of saliency or Productive or receptive orientation of linguistic structure* in chapter 7, and *Visual stability of words* in chapter 8, among others.

It is almost impossible to summarise the contents of this book because of the great variety and complexity of topics analysed by the author, and because it would imply, besides, paraphrasing Tejada's well-structured and well-written ideas, which is not my intention. What I will do is call the reader's attention to those topics which are either dealt with in an innovative way, or simply not found in other books in the field. The order I will follow is not the conventional linear order of chapters but that of the main theoretical approaches described and their application throughout the book.

The author opens the book with a chapter on the most recent linguistic theories applied to HL, theories that, she claims, are being developed and corroborated by HL. In my opinion this is one of the best conceived and most innovative chapters of the book. Such a comprehensive theoretical description does not exist in the literature<sup>1</sup>, as far as I know.

Language change has always fascinated experts and non-experts. In the past change has been described by both linguists and laymen, who, however, were not able to explain its causes. Nowadays, we have new methodological and theoretical tools to apply for this problem. From a methodological point of view, computer corpora such as *The Toronto Microfiche Concordance to Old English or the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* have greatly facilitated work in older periods of the English language. But it is from the theoretical point of view that HL has gained most. The revival of the discipline can be clearly seen in the number and quality of publications which have appeared in the last 15 years. Topics such as grammaticalization, semantic extension, place and applications of HL today are core issues in International Conference discussions (ESSE, Debrecen 1997 and 5th and 6th International Conferences of Cognitive Linguistics, Amsterdam 1977 and Stockholm 1999, for instance). In spite of this, Tejada states, it is interdisciplinary research which has mainly contributed towards this revival. HL occupies a leading position within Theoretical Linguistics today and especially within Sociolinguistics, Cognitive Linguistics, New Structuralism or Complex Systems Theory and Language Typology<sup>2</sup>. As a result, insists the author, the scope of HL has been extended from what traditionally has been interpreted as purely linguistic studies to include a great variety of disciplines such as semiotics, cultural studies, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and history, among others.

Sociolinguistics (SL) has contributed to provide a new methodology for the study of the origin and spreading of changes, Tejada explains. This new methodology, although it should be used with caution (Labov 1994 in Tejada), intends to explain the past by applying factors or principles operating in present day changes -the 'uniformity principle'. In addition, SL has "put speakers back into the picture"<sup>3</sup>. That is, by readdressing concepts like *parole*, SL research introduces real speakers in real

sociolinguistic situations and tries to give linguistic explanation from that position. In other words, SL looks at the *why* of changes, not only the *how*. A direct consequence of such an approach is that the field of study now becomes broader, vaguer and more difficult. But this is precisely the new challenge: to describe and explain the marginal, changing and fuzzy edges of language.

The close and interdependent relationship between SL and HL comes from the interdisciplinary character of science today and is made evident in the birth of the new discipline: Sociohistorical Linguistics (Labov 1994, Romaine 1982, Milroy 1992). In this line, one of Tejada's major contributions to the theoretical study of English HL, in addition to the application of the most recent linguistic theories, is her insistence on the new relationship between language and history based on a new, active approach to historical studies in general (p. 63-68). As sociolinguists, historians are putting 'individuals back into the picture'; that is, they are changing the focus of study from abstract structures to real socio-cultural situations, revising everything: canons, methods and texts. As Tejada points out, the history of ideas, ideology, is back.

Sociolinguistic explanations illuminate many of the issues presented in *El Cambio Lingüístico. Claves para Interpretar la Lengua Inglesa*. Especially worth mentioning are the explanations of how and why English, throughout its history, from being a rural and insular language has been transformed into an urban and international one, or how and why its varieties, originally geographical, have become social. Chapter 4, thus, includes not only traditional 'external' explanations such as: migrations, contact between languages and dialects or the effects of Christianisation on the linguistic make-up of English, but explains it as a panoply of interacting sociolinguistic, political and psychological factors, which have shaped the concept of standard English. That is, how and why the concept of the standard moves from being considered on purely linguistic grounds, a necessary device for communication, to being seen as a social institution, which has to be protected. Socio-psychological factors, then, would also explain why there is a change in the attitude of English speakers towards their language throughout history: from apology to self confidence. This change marks, in addition, the beginning of the *centripetal* stage of English, XVth century onwards, the author explains, referring to the progressive absorption of varieties by the standard within the British Isles, and its dominance abroad. Another example in the same line, is the *Great Vowel Shift* which, in chapter 8, is explained as the interaction of sociolinguistic factors, such as prestige, functioning together with cognitive and natural articulatory tendencies, and modified, at the same time, by pragmatic and communicative forces. Nevertheless, Tejada insists that, if we want to bring language research back to reality, we must not forget that real speakers have real minds. In other words, the cognitive aspects of language have to be included in language change explanations.

Of all theoretical frameworks, Cognitive Linguistics is the model which has contributed most to the revival of HL (and vice versa, since evidence from studies of language change is corroborating many of the principles of this model)<sup>4</sup>. Integration and multidisciplinary are the keywords of Cognitive Linguistics (CL). Within CL, language is not understood an independent, autonomous cognitive ability but an integrated one within the other human cognitive abilities, which can only be studied as the interaction of experiential, psychological, communicative and functional factors. Another basic premise, according to CL, is that linguistic categories are not abstract,

stable entities but are ever-changing, dynamic and flexible. In addition, changes are not arbitrary: semantic change and grammaticalisation processes not only show that all three levels of grammar are closely interrelated in language change, but also indicate that these changes are motivated in most cases; that is, they follow universal, regular patterns of change -they are not arbitrary. A third major issue in CL has been the breaking down of traditional linguistic dichotomies, since these linguists are convinced that the relationship between *langue* and *parole*, literal and non-literal meaning, stability and change, synchrony and diachrony is a matter of degree rather than discreteness.

In the area of semantic change, then, we see how meaning and lexical change is structured by cognition. Especially interesting is the work which shows how temporal vocabulary emerges from spatial vocabulary, knowledge vocabulary from sense-perception words or emotion terms from colour vocabulary. In sum, we have now evidence of how whole domains, usually the more abstract, are conceptualised in terms of more concrete, physical or experiential ones or, in other words, how most semantic changes or extensions can be understood in terms of metonymical or metaphorical mappings and in terms of changes within *prototypes* or *radial models* (Geeraerts 1997, Sweetser 1990).

Furthermore, these regular evolutionary patterns do not belong only to the realm of semantics. Bybee et al. 1994, Heine et. al. 1991, Traugott 1989 and Givón 1984 have given particularly interesting pragmatic, functional and cognitive explanations of how lexical-content words develop and take on grammatical morpheme status. There, Tejada's chapter 7 on "Morphosyntax: the codification of saliency" is a good example of integration of approaches, levels of grammar, and conditioning factors in the explanation of highly complex linguistic processes such as, for example, the move from a more synthetic (speaker oriented) to an analytic (hearer oriented) language type or, the changeover from a more aspectual or stative verb system to one more temporal or dynamic. A third example, explained in the chapter, could be the development of a modal-auxiliary system to mark *irrealis* and subjective meanings.

This interdisciplinary and inter-theoretical approach, a dominant feature in *El Cambio Lingüístico. Claves para Interpretar la Lengua Inglesa*, presents the diachronic study of English morphosyntax from an original perspective. Instead of considering Old and Modern English two different periods of the same language in which similar grammatical categories can be contrasted, Tejada suggests a linguistic-typological model which analyses precisely the main differences or lack of correspondences between systems or categories throughout time (p. 170). Old English would, therefore, be a *semantically oriented language*, more similar to Present Day Spanish<sup>5</sup> than to Present Day English, which is more *syntactically oriented*. Languages belonging to the first type such as Old English are pragmatically and semantically structured languages, more text based than the syntactically oriented, which would explain why linguistic categories overlap, why they show a wider variety of meanings and functions or why word order is freer (more speaker-oriented). Present Day English, a syntactically oriented language, on the other hand, shows a higher degree of codification and conventionalisation and has, therefore, a more rigid word order than Old English, and, in consequence, is more hearer oriented, and less transparent and more sentence based.

Finally, Tejada applies the most recent theoretical concepts and terminology of Self-Regulating or Complex Systems Theory to the history of the English language. Most of the linguistic processes explained within this frame would show that language change and use exhibit many features of this theoretical model, such as its open character, its partial regularity and stability, its ability to adapt to changes in its psychophysical environment by means of changes within the system itself, its dependency on the initial conditions which will determine its future behaviour and its tendency to keep its overall expenditure of energy at an optimal-minimum state. In other words, the book shows that language is basically heterogeneous, dynamic and processual (Bernárdez 1995, Lass 1997<sup>6</sup>). By using the theoretical concepts of this mathematical-philosophical theory, HL, thus, has integrated linguistics within the 'hard sciences', especially within mathematics and biology.

In short, we can say that *El Cambio Lingüístico. Claves para Interpretar la Lengua Inglesa* represents a valiant attempt to explain the most complex and controversial issues of the history of English from a general, holistic and, thus, a more difficult perspective than that taken by the traditional approach in HL, that limited itself to rigorous description of the most objective and unquestionable changes of the language, and the author certainly succeeds. Tejada does not reduce the history of English to a detailed description of ideal stages and processes but offers a general and open approach which includes all the complexity inherent in real language use and change. The processes presented are far from being 'closed'; on the contrary, they invite further thinking and research. This is in fact the author's main objective: to have readers write their own book, substituting examples, applying them to new situations and completing the network with their own illustrations and favourite models (p. 9). Such a task would mean that the reader has fully assimilated the content of the book and has reflected upon language and language change.

In addition, proposals and explanations given in the book are enhanced by copious examples, both in English and Spanish, which allow readers to bring language change even closer to their own reality; that is, to think about and see how their own language is changing. Also worth consulting is the clear summary of universal processes or paths of language change presented in chapter 1 and the comprehensive and up-to-date commented bibliography at the end of the book, which includes a list of the leading journals in the field, both national and international. The footnotes and further reading selection for each chapter send readers to both basic readings and their expansions in related fields, facilitating the learning task.

The book is evidently the result of laborious research in the field and many years of thoughtful teaching. What Tejada demonstrates is that no single method of linguistic research nor single theoretical framework is sufficient to address the broad and complex range of issues involved in language change. Consequently, what is required is an integrating approach like the one presented here. What Tejada displays in this publication is methodological breadth and tolerance, qualities which seem to have been absent in many historical linguistic studies till recently.

My last words are for the publishers who deserve to be congratulated for the series in linguistics which has been initiated with this innovative and useful book. A collection like this was needed in the Spanish market. Although the book, the author tells us in page 9, has been written for Spanish university students, that is students

equipped with basic linguistic concepts, I believe that *El Cambio Lingüístico. Claves para Interpretar la Lengua Inglesa* will also interest anybody concerned with sociolinguistic and functional-cognitive explanations of language, both from a synchronic and a diachronic perspective. The book should, thus, be translated into English so that it would have the distribution it deserves. A final note to the editors: it is a pity there is no index (a necessary part of any modern publication). I would also recommend that in future editions the book is given its original title *El Cambio Lingüístico. Claves para Interpretar la Historia de la Lengua Inglesa*; it is a book that deals with the *history* of English, it is not an introduction to the English language. The present title may be misleading.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Except for Tejada 1997.

<sup>2</sup> We could also mention recent work in Functional Linguistics, Discourse Analysis or Pragmatics on grammaticalization processes in spoken language, for instance.

<sup>3</sup> Following the title of Joseph's 1992 article.

<sup>4</sup> It is not surprising to find a chapter titled "Language across time: Historical Linguistics" in one of the most recent publications in the field: *Cognitive Exploration of Language and Linguistics* by René Dirven and Marjolijn Verspoor (1999). In it, different lexical, phonological and morphosyntactic changes are explained in terms of changes in *radial networks* and *schemas*, for instance.

<sup>5</sup> In spite of the fact that differences between both languages are obvious, the similarities presented by Tejada are very useful for Spanish students of English Philology.

<sup>6</sup> Even though he does not recognise it formally nor defend such an approach in HL, Lass 1997 uses theoretical concepts and terminology coming from Complex Systems Theory.

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