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Linguistic Insights

Studies in Language and Communication

Carlos Prado-Alonso,
Lidia Gómez-García,
Iria Pastor-Gómez &
David Tizón-Couto (eds)

New Trends and Methodologies in Applied English Language Research

Peter Lang

Diachronic, Diatopic and
Contrastive Studies

This volume approaches the analysis of variation in English from diachronic, diatopic, and contrastive/comparative perspectives. The individual case studies, all closely interrelated, are organized into three parts or sections. Part I (*Diachronic Studies*) applies a variationist methodology to the analysis of developments in the use of the courtesy marker *please*, adverbs in *-ly*, the *s*-genitive and a number of phrasal combinations with the verb *get*. It also examines Early Modern English regional dialect vocabulary. Part II (*Diatopic Studies*) is concerned with the analysis of several morphological and phonological features in different varieties of English, namely Standard English, Modern Scottish English, Galwegian English, and Black South-African English. Part III (*Contrastive Studies*) contains four chapters dealing with the contrastive analysis of a number of morphosyntactic features, such as the use of modifiers of adjectives by advanced learners of English, the acquisition and use of aspect by advanced EFL learners with different mother-tongue backgrounds, a comparison of the tempo-aspectual categories of English and Italian, and some of the problems encountered by researchers when compiling and analysing learner corpora of spoken language.

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New Trends and Methodologies in Applied English Language Research



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Santiago de Compostela, May 2009

The Editors

CARLOS PRADO-ALONSO

Introduction: Exploring New Methodologies in English Language Research

This volume offers a representative sample of papers presented at the *First ELC International Postgraduate Conference on English Linguistics (ELCI)*, held at the University of Santiago de Compostela, 10–11 May 2008. This was the first conference organised by postgraduate students from the English Departments of the Universities of Santiago de Compostela and Vigo, and was supported by those two universities as well as by the *English Linguistics Circle*, a research network comprising the following research teams: *Variation, Linguistic Change and Grammaticalization (VLCG)*; University of Santiago de Compostela), *Spoken English Research Team at the University of Santiago de Compostela (SPERTUS)*, *Language Variation and Textual Categorisation (LVTC)*; University of Vigo) and *Methods and Materials for the Teaching and Acquisition of Foreign Languages (MMTAFL)*; University of Vigo). The distinguished panel of plenary speakers featured Geoffrey K. Pullum (University of Edinburgh), Ingo Plag (University of Siegen) and Antonella Sorace (University of Edinburgh).

The analysis of variation in English is approached here from diachronic, diatopic, and contrastive/comparative perspectives. The thirteen individual case studies are organised into three parts. Part I comprises five diachronic studies that apply a variationist methodology to the analysis of developments in the use of the courtesy marker *please* (Faya-Cerqueiro), the *s*-genitive (Juvonen), a number of phrasal combinations with the verb *get* (Rodríguez-Puente), the behaviour of the dual-form adverb *short/shortly* (Chao-Castro) and Early Modern English regional dialect vocabulary (Ruano-García). In Part II, four diatopic studies deal with the analysis of morphological and phonological features in different varieties of English, including

Standard English (Dahak), Modern Scottish English (Schützler), Galwegian English (Sell), and Black South-African English (Terblanche). The four papers in Part III address the contrastive study of a number of morphosyntactic features: the use of modifiers of adjectives by advanced learners of English in the Swedish part of the *International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE)* as compared with native use in different spoken and written corpora (Börjesson), the acquisition and use of aspect by advanced EFL learners with Bulgarian and German mother-tongue backgrounds (Rogatcheva), the methodologically and terminologically sound comparison of the tempo-aspectual categories of English and Italian (Schneider), and the problems encountered by researchers when compiling and analysing learner corpora of spoken language (Tizón-Couto).

The opening contribution of the volume, FAYA-CERQUEIRO's 'Please in the Nineteenth Century: Origin and Position of a Courtesy Marker', focuses on two aspects of the courtesy marker *please*: the origin of the construction, and its status in the nineteenth century, particularly in relation to the verbal origin of the form. Faya-Cerqueiro opens with some preliminaries, such as a definition of *please* – which is usually vague in the literature – and also of the word class to which *please* belongs, since it is variously classified as an adverb, as an insert, or as a discourse or pragmatic marker. The discussion then moves on to a diachronic survey of the origin of *please* and its treatment in the literature. It is noted that the first recorded cases of *please* as a courtesy marker date back to the late eighteenth century, and that it is usually taken for granted that the item developed out of a conditional construction, as in *if you please*. After a detailed corpus-based analysis, Faya-Cerqueiro concludes that *please* as a courtesy marker might well have originated in an imperative construction such as *be pleased to* that was eventually contracted to *please to*. This latter would subsequently lose the particle *to*, leading to the reinterpretation of the following verb as an imperative, with *please* reanalysed as a courtesy marker. Faya-Cerqueiro's analysis is not only interesting in itself, but also provides a new argument in favour of the verbal origin of this courtesy marker.

In his chapter 'Genitive Variation in Late Middle and Early Modern English: The Persistence of the *S*-genitive in the Corres-

pondence Genre', TEO JUVONEN describes how the *s*-genitive was the preferred, neutral, unmarked structure used with human possessors in private correspondence from about 1450 to 1630. The study is divided broadly into two parts. The first, which is theoretically oriented, examines the morphosyntactic nature of the *s*-genitive in order to determine the real choice context of variation with the *of*-genitive. It also briefly reviews the relevant literature, and looks at the various types of *s*-genitive in the corpora used to illustrate how they acquired more determiner-like properties towards the end of the seventeenth century. The second part of the study focuses on the corpus. By analysing material from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC) and the *Helsinki Corpus* (HC) (cf. Hofland et al. 1999), the author makes use of linguistic factors – topicality and genitive function – and extralinguistic factors – genre, time, region and social rank – to explain possible motivations for the persistence of the *s*-genitive and to show how genitive variation appears in private letters. What is particularly interesting about Juvonen's study is that his findings, which show the *s*-genitive to be clearly more common in the correspondence genre than in any others, and also show that clear socio-regional differences are evident, serve to refute previous claims on the topic (cf. Rosenbach et al. 2000, among others). These previous claims suggest that the *s*-genitive was to a large extent replaced by the *of*-genitive during the Middle English period, so much so that by the time it slowly began to appear again in the Early Modern English period, it had become almost fossilised.

The contribution by RODRÍGUEZ-PUENTE, 'The Effects of Lexicalization, Grammaticalization and Idiomatization on Phrasal Verbs in English: Some Combinations with *Get* as a Test Case', constitutes a preliminary approach to the relationship between phrasal verbs and the processes of grammaticalisation, lexicalisation and idiomatisation, with special reference to the intransitive verbs *get across*, *get away*, *get back*, *get by*, *get down* and *get together* and the transitive verbs *get in* and *get out*. The reader's attention is first drawn to the fact that a precise and adequate definition of phrasal verbs must take into account their morphological, semantic and syntactic features. In this chapter, phrasal verbs are defined as a subtype of multi-word verbs consisting of the combination of a verb and a post-verbal adverb (or

intransitive preposition) which function semantically and syntactically as a single unit. Rodríguez-Puente argues that the semantics of these structures is best described by means of a cline ranging from the more literal meanings to the more idiomatic ones, whereas the degree of syntactic cohesion between the two members of the combination must be measured by means of a series of structural tests. The analysis of a number of phrasal combinations with *get* shows that, in phrasal verbs, *get* can have a literal meaning (movement), a bleached meaning (self-causation, causation or hindrance), or it can form an idiomatic construction with the particle. Ultimately, the study here argues that the degree of semantic and syntactic cohesion of a particular combination depends on the extent to which the combination has been affected by the lexicalisation process. This allows the identification of three different types of phrasal verb: low-lexicalised phrasal verbs, half-lexicalised phrasal verbs, and highly lexicalised phrasal verbs. In conclusion, it is argued that phrasal verbs with *get* can be classified into the three previously established groups of phrasal verbs: *get away*, *get back* and *get down* can be considered low-lexicalised, the combinations *get together*, *get in* and *get out* belong to the group of half-lexicalised phrasal verbs and, finally, *get across* and *get by* can be regarded as highly lexicalised phrasal verbs.

The chapter by MILAGROS CHAO-CASTRO, ‘Does it Fall *Short* of Expectations? On the Origin and Behaviour of the Dual-form Adverb *Short/Shortly*’, investigates the behaviour of adverbs in Late Modern English by analysing the dual-form adverb *short/shortly* in the eighteenth century. In Chao-Castro’s analysis, a dual-form adverb is defined as an item which derives from an elementary adjective and which presents two variants, a suffixless and a suffixed adverbial form. The author first offers a diachronic survey of the word-formation processes involved in the origin of dual-form adverbs, and makes it clear that the analysis of these items in the Late Modern English period has been largely overlooked. Special attention is then paid to the individual analysis of the adverbial form *short/shortly* in the *Century of Prose Corpus (COPC)*. The corpus-based results suggest that two word-formation processes are involved in the origin and development of this dual-form adverb: conversion and derivation. The process of conversion explains the origin of the suffixless adverb,

while derivation by means of the suffix *-ly* justifies the appearance of the suffixed form. The findings further show that the different syntactic tendencies which other scholars have observed in the use of the dual-adverb in Middle English and Early Modern English (cf. Mustanoja 1960; Nevalainen 1994, among others) seem not to be at work from 1700 onwards. Rather, as Chao-Castro demonstrates, the tendencies which can be observed in Present-day English – namely, the suffixless adverb occurring after the main verb or combined with specific verbs in fixed expressions, and the suffixed form not presenting a regular fixed position – began to be operative in the eighteenth century.

Following this, RUANO-GARCÍA's 'The Account Book of William Wray: An Evaluation of Yorkshire Lexis in two Inventories (1599-1600)' examines Early Modern regional dialect vocabulary. This study aims to determine which words were natural to the area and other northern counties, and to distinguish between regionalisms proper and items of more widespread usage which also formed part of the non-standard periphery of English. The evaluation of regional lexical variation in Early Modern English has generally been neglected, in view of the seeming scarcity of texts and other sources which might provide reliable linguistic data. Glossaries of regional vocabulary and literary works written in dialect do provide valuable material, although the former are not fully comprehensive and the latter frequently reflect a conscious selection of lexical items for literary purposes. But for a very few exceptions, traditional research on popular speech has paid scant attention to non-literary texts as sources for unconsciously produced real usage of provincial lexis. Ruano-García's investigation not only bridges this gap but also demonstrates that non-literary documents, such as probate inventories, are valuable historical sources of lexical data for use in dialect investigation. The chapter thus adds a significant new perspective to current work in lexical studies, and sheds light upon the neglected field of Early Modern English regional dialect vocabulary. Among other findings, it shows that Wray's use of words like *arke*, *buffet fourme* or *laithe* testifies to their distribution in the county of Yorkshire even though modern dictionaries, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, have gathered little corroborative evidence for this.

ANISSA DAHAK's contribution, 'Vowels in Inter-tonic Syllables: A Corpus-based Study', is the first of a series of diatopic studies in this volume. Her study, based on a computerised corpus extracted from pronunciation dictionaries, aims to show that the presence of full vowels in unstressed syllables is not completely random in English, but rather is based on various morphological, phonological and isomorphic constraints. Emphasis is laid on the analysis of those stress patterns in which a secondary stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed syllable and a primary stressed syllable, as in *guarantee*. The data illustrate that prefixation is the most frequent morphological feature in words with a vocalic or a stress variant. Besides morphology, the study also shows that some phonological features – namely consonant clusters, free vowels and stress variation – induce a full vowel in the inter-tonic syllable. What is particularly interesting about Dahak's corpus-based analysis, however, is that it provides illustrative examples of how there is a higher probability for vowels in inter-tonic syllables to be realised with a full vowel when several of the above-mentioned constraints occur in combination.

The following chapter, 'Unstable Close-mid Vowels in Modern Scottish English' by OLE SCHÜTZLER, explores the impact of internal and external factors on the variation between monophthongal (/e/ and /o/) and diphthongal forms (/eɪ/ and /əʊ/) in Scottish Standard English, and whether these factors keep each other in check or pull in the same direction, thus propagating sound change. The author discusses the limitations of previous linguistic studies in this area, arguing that they are essentially prescriptivist abstractions based on anecdotal observation and intuition, and explores two ways of quantifying the extent of diphthongisation, one based on auditory – that is, impressionistic – evaluations, the other on formant measurements. The results suggest that the acoustic method is preferable and generally reliable. They also show that some individual factors dealt with in the analysis, namely speaker age and vowel duration (largely conditioned by coda structure) are the factors with the strongest effect on diphthong trajectory lengths, and indicate some linguistic trends. Nevertheless, Schützler concludes that these trends need to be quantified and must be viewed as part of the interplay of the totality of factors which include not only speaker age, speaker gender, coda-

structure and vowel duration, but also the parameters phoneme, institution (school or university in this case) and regional background. Schützler's conclusions highlight the need for a multifactorial analysis of covariance, and open up new research challenges for the study of the Scottish diphthongisation system.

In her chapter 'Current Vowel Shifts in Irish English: Analysing Galwegian English', KATRIN SELL presents data collected during fieldwork in Galway City, a fast-growing university town near the Irish-speaking Connemara Gaeltacht in the West of Ireland, in order to ascertain the extent to which the vowel system of Galwegian English conforms to Dublin pronunciation, considered to be the prestige form of English in the southern part of Ireland. Over the last 15 years major sound changes have occurred in the English spoken in the city of Dublin, and it has been suggested that this 'new pronunciation' is spreading rapidly to other areas of Ireland (cf. Hickey 2005: 72). By applying a logistic regression methodology to her own corpus, Sell is able to demonstrate that the phonological changes – a retraction of diphthongs with a low or back onset, and a raising and/or rounding of low back vowels – are spreading across Southern Ireland. Interestingly, the investigation also shows that age and gender prove to be highly significant variables in the change, with young people using the new variants most often and female speakers tending to lead the trend.

LIZE TERBLANCHE's contribution, 'Morphological Productivity: A Black South African English Perspective', is the fourth and last diatopic study in the volume. In it she aims to refute Quirk's claim (1990: 6) that non-native speakers do not have the same intuitions as native speakers about morphological forms, and therefore cannot form complex words as readily as native speakers (see also De Klerk 2006; Van Rooy/Terblanche 2006). The methodology used, derived from Baayen (2006), is a mathematical formalisation of productivity consisting of three measures: realised productivity, expanding productivity, and potential productivity. The author uses two corpora of Black South African English, the *Tswana Learner Corpus* (cf. Van Rooy/Schäfer 2002) and a subdivision of the *Xhosa Spoken Corpus* (cf. De Klerk 2002), and examines the productivity in speech and writing of a number of suffixes used in the formation of nominalisations (e.g. *-tion*, *-er*, *-ity*, *-ment*, *-(e/a)nce*). She is thus able to show that speakers

of English as a second language do have access to morphologically complex linguistic features such as nominalisations.

Terblanche's study also serves here to anticipate the third and final grouping of chapters in the volume, contrastive studies. The first of these is VIKTORIA BÖRJESSON's 'Reinforcing and Attenuating Modifiers of Adjectives in Swedish Advanced Learners' English: A Comparison with Native Speakers'. This chapter deals with the use of modifiers of adjectives by advanced learners of English in the Swedish part of the *International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE)* and the *Louvain International Database of Spoken English Inter-language (LINDSEI)* (cf. De Cock et al. 1997), as compared with native use of modifiers in the *Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS)* and in a corpus of native conversational Swedish (cf. Norrby/Wirdenäs 1998), namely *Gymnasisters Språk- och Musikvärldar (GSM)*. In particular, it focuses on the frequencies of modifiers such as adverbs (e.g. *quite, really*), noun phrases (e.g. *a bit, a little bit*), prepositional phrases (e.g. *in a way*), and clauses (e.g. *I would say*), in both pre- and post-modification. The findings are in line with those provided in Granger's (1998) and Lorenz's (1999) analyses of modifiers of adjectives in the English of French and German speakers, and show that Swedish learners' written and spoken texts contain a higher frequency of adjective modifiers than native speakers, especially of informal modifiers that can be combined with a wide range of adjectives and hedging modifiers. In both modes, for instance, Swedish learners use *not that, kind of, not so, extremely* and *a little bit* more frequently than native speakers, who favour *not too, quite, really* and *a bit*. After resorting to different possible linguistic explanations, Börjesson concludes that learners of English distinguish between written and spoken registers, but that this distinction needs to be stronger than that of native speakers in order to reflect native-speaker idiomaticity.

The contrastive analysis of particular morphosyntactic features in learners of English as a foreign language is also the concern of SVETLA ROGATCHEVA's contribution: 'I've only found the answer a few days ago': Aspect Use in Bulgarian and German EFL Writing. Under examination here is the acquisition and use of aspect by advanced EFL learners with different mother-tongue backgrounds,

namely Bulgarian and German. For this purpose, Rogatcheva makes use of a learner corpus of argumentative writing, the *International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE)*. This is then compared to a corpus of native English argumentative writing, the *Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS)*, within the framework of *Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis* (cf. Granger 1996). After some preliminaries, the corpus-based results reveal that there are significant quantitative and qualitative differences between native and non-native use of the progressive and the perfect, as well as between British and American patterns of use. These differences are explained in terms of learner-related variables such as native-language influence and target-language exposure.

In the following chapter, SUSANNE SCHNEIDER's 'Progressivity in English and Italian: A Typologically Guided Comparative Study', the author makes use of a descriptive tool, the so-called meta-category, which enables a methodologically and terminologically sound comparison of the tempo-aspectual categories of English and Italian. In keeping with the methodological principles of scientific comparison, meta-category incorporates typological standards such as external *tertium comparationis* against which individual forms from the two selected languages are measured and evaluated. Schneider's subsequent graphicalisation of the analysed data provides an exhaustive yet highly accessible illustration of how progressivity is encoded in both English and Italian, encompassing not only its canonical markers, but also a list of possible alternative constructions in both languages, together with the semantic descriptions pertaining to each. Among other findings, the analysis shows that the English form *be V-ing*, as opposed to the Italian *stare V-ando*, extends considerably beyond the shared prototype to encompass meanings which Italian subsumes under the imperfect and the present tenses. Moreover, while prototypical *be V-ing* is obligatory, its Italian counterpart is only one among several options.

This brings us to the final contribution in the volume: BEATRIZ TIZÓN-COUTO's 'A Study of Complement Clauses in a University Learner Spoken English Corpus: Issues behind Compilation and Analysis'. Tizón-Couto's investigation addresses some of the problems encountered by researchers when compiling and analysing

learner corpora of spoken language. She illustrates this through a comparison of clausal complementation in a corpus compiled by herself (the *Vigo Corpus of Learner Spoken English* = *VICOLSE*) with native language data extracted from the spoken component of the *British National Corpus* (*BNC*) (cf. Burnard 1995). The analysis focuses on complement clauses as grammatical patterns, not from the point of view of the linguist's perception of appropriateness, but in terms of the actual patterns of language use. After a detailed description of the compilation process and the characteristics of the learner corpus used in the study, she goes on to explain some issues which must be borne in mind when working with learner corpora. From this, she moves on to present the findings of the corpus-based comparison of clausal complementation in *VICOLSE* and *BNC*, whose analysis allows for answers to questions such as: Do different groups of learners and native speakers use verbal complementation in a similar way?; Do different groups of learners and native speakers use the same complement taking verbs?; Is there any particular complement clause type that these learners overuse or misuse?; Do learners use fewer complex complementation patterns?; Is there any particular type of verbal complementation that EFL learners never acquire or heavily underuse? Overall, the findings indicate that the learners in *VICOLSE* use complement clauses slightly more often than the native speakers in *BNC* oral, for which the author suggests different linguistic explanations.

The thirteen chapters in this volume illustrate that interesting diachronic, diatopic and contrastive linguistic work is being currently undertaken by junior researchers. We hope that these contributions will open up new directions for future work in the field, which will in turn cast further light on different areas of applied English language research.

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Part I: Diachronic Studies

Please in the Nineteenth Century: Origin and Position of a Courtesy Marker¹

1. Introduction

The courtesy marker *please* is one of the most frequently used words in everyday conversation. However, this frequency in use is not matched by the treatment the item has received in the literature. The definition of *please* is usually vague: it is sometimes referred to as an *adverb* (Quirk et al. 1985), elsewhere as an *insert* (Biber et al. 1999), or as a *discourse or pragmatic marker*² (Stenström 1994; Brinton 1996) or a *courtesy or politeness marker* (Quirk et al. 1985; Watts 2003). Although most of these terms are not mutually exclusive, this lack of preciseness is probably due to the nature of pragmatics itself. The emergence of *please* has been traced by authors such as Brinton (2006, 2007) and Traugott and Dasher (2002), who point to *if you please* and similar constructions as the ultimate origin of the item. This study will focus on two aspects of the courtesy marker *please*: (a) the origin of the construction (for which a possible verbal origin will be posited), and (b) its status in the nineteenth century, particularly in relation to the verbal origin of the form.

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- 1 I am grateful to the Autonomous Government of Galicia (grants 2008/047 and INCITE08PXIB204016PR) and the Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation and the European Regional Development Fund (grants HUM2007-60706 and BES-2005-9113) for their generous financial support of this work.
 - 2 ‘Pragmatic marker’ and ‘discourse marker’ are usually taken as synonyms, but not always. For Fraser (1999) discourse markers are considered a subgroup of pragmatic markers.

2. What is *please*?

The word class to which *please* belongs is not clear. There are references to the word as an adverb (Quirk et al. 1985), an exclamation (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*), or an interjection (Chen 1998). *Please* is also included in the *inserts* group by Biber et al. (1999). Defined by its pragmatic features, this new word category refers to items classed as *peripheral*, “both in the grammar and in the lexicon of the language” (1999: 1082). In relation to *inserts*, therefore, there appears to be a certain overlap between grammar and pragmatics.

Dictionary definitions of *please* emphasise its use as a courtesy marker; that is, its role of enhancing the politeness of a request (see entries for *please* in the *Collins English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, and *please* as an exclamation in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*). Contemporary grammars describe the marker in the same way: “*please* is a request propitiator”, according to Biber et al. (1999: 1093); Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 861), meanwhile, define it as a “non-propositional marker of illocutionary force” that “serves to indicate that I am making a request”, but “does not express any part of [the] propositional content”.

When attempts are made to define and categorise pragmatic elements (discourse markers, pragmatic markers, etc.), *please* is not usually included. In most of the literature on this subject, the authors tend to adapt their definitions of the term to the items on their list; since *please* does not usually appear there, the definitions do not always match its characteristics. The items in Biber et al.'s ‘inserts’ group, among which *please* is included, share the following *defining features*:

- they may appear on their own, i.e., not as part of a larger grammatical structure;
- they may appear attached to a larger structure, which may be a clausal unit or a non-clausal unit;
- they rarely occur *medially* in a syntactic structure;

- they are morphologically simple;
- they are not homonyms of words in other word classes;
- semantically, they have no denotative meaning: their use is defined, instead, by their pragmatic function. (Biber et al. 1999: 1082)

These features are associated with the more central members of the category. *Please*, however, should be regarded as peripheral, since it lacks a number of the characteristics of the class. It does not share the first feature, for example, since it does not frequently appear on its own; it may only be found on its own when it is used to accept an offer politely or to call someone's attention. Likewise, it is not constrained as regards position (second feature), since it may occur freely in initial, final or middle position. Finally, it does not share the fifth feature, since it is a homonym of the verb *to please*.

Some authors have demonstrated an evolution in relation to their attitude to *please*. For instance, while in Brinton (1996) the item is absent from her list, in later papers by the same author (2006: 326; 2007: 58-60) *please* is included as a pragmatic marker. The characteristics of pragmatic markers are not clear-cut. Watts (2003: 273) defines a discourse marker as "a linguistic expression used to create semantic and/or pragmatic cohesion between different parts of the overall discourse". Nevertheless, as we have seen in the case of inserts, although some of these markers are quite fixed as regards position, others, like *please*, seem to be less constrained. Thus, we find examples with clause-initial *please*, as in (1), with *please* in final position, as in (2), or with *please* in middle position, as in (3):

- (1) Please come here.
- (2) Come here, please.
- (3) Could you please come here?

3. Origin

There is little attention devoted to the origin of the courtesy marker *please* in the literature. It is usually taken for granted that *please* developed out of a conditional construction (as in *if you please*). *Please* as a verb was first introduced into English in the fourteenth century through Anglo-Norman and Middle French *plaisir* (*OED* s.v. *please* v.). In fact, in Present-day French, the conditional expression *s'il vous plaît* [if it please you], the counterpart of *please* in French, still retains a form of this verb. The first recorded cases of *please* as a courtesy marker date back to the late eighteenth century; before that time the most common courtesy marker was *pray*, as in (4):

- (4) ‘*Pray* forgive me!’ he murmured humbly, leaning forwards towards the girl with eyes which deprecated her displeasure (1891, Gissing, G., *New Grub Street*)

Please as a courtesy marker replaced *pray* – also a form of French origin – in its use in requests in the nineteenth century. Akimoto (2000: 40) offers at least three possible reasons for this replacement:

- as a new form, *please* is “dynamic, new to the ear and more expressive”;
- the religious connotations of *pray*;
- the effectiveness of the long vowel in *please* to signal ‘earnest appeal’.

Busse (1999) mentions the replacement of *pray* by *please* in connection with a change towards negative politeness in English. Following Busse (1999), Traugott and Dasher (2002) mention the same shift in pragmatic strategies. These authors suggest that the origin of the courtesy marker lies in constructions like *if you please*. Brinton (2006: 326; 2007: 58-60) also sees the source of the marker in *if you please* and offers this development as an example of the shift from an ‘adverbial clause’ to a ‘pragmatic parenthetical’.

The *OED* online has recently included a separate entry for *please* as an adverb and an interjection, in which three different sources are proposed as the possible ultimate origin for *please*, depending on its function (s.v. *please* adverb and interjection):

- as a request for the attention or indulgence of the hearer, (1) probably originally short for *please you* [...], (2) but subsequently understood as short for *if you please*;
- as a request for action, in immediate proximity to a verb in the imperative, (3) probably shortened from the imperative or optative *please* followed by the *to*-infinitive.

Although the third suggestion in the *OED* mentions a possible origin in an imperative form, no analysis has been devoted so far to this option, and the second suggestion has usually been accepted as the most likely. Looking at conditional constructions, Chen (1998) groups together structures similar to *if it please you* under the heading of ‘addressee-satisfaction conditionals’. In relation to the function of *please* forms, Chen (1998: 27) remarks that “when used in making a request or accepting an offer [...] *if it please you* and its variants had the potential of being reduced to a bare *please*”.

However, a recent study by Tieken and Faya (2007) hypothesises a different origin for the courtesy marker: *please* could have emerged not from a conditional clause containing the verb *please*, but from a form of the verb. According to this theory – as the *OED* suggests – the courtesy marker would have derived from an imperative form of the verb *please* when followed by a *to* form as in (5) below:

- (5) Dora’s conceit, *please to remember*, is, to begin with, only a little less than my own (1891, Gissing, G., *New Grub Street*)

Consider now the sentence in (6), in which the same author adopts the modern form using the same verb:

- (6) *Please* remember me kindly to Mrs. Rolfe (1897, Gissing, G., *The Whirlpool*)

In (6), *please* may be interpreted either as a verbal *please* followed by an infinitive without *to*, or as a courtesy marker followed by the imperative *remember*. The development would, thus, read as follows: *please* v. + *to*-infinitive > *please* v. + bare infinitive > *please* (courtesy marker).

In addition to the examples of imperative *please* followed by a *to*-infinitive, the verb *please* also occurs in the passive form,³ as in (7), while in (8) the same verb in the infinitive follows imperative *please to*:

- (7) Why then, Sir, says he, be *pleased* to give me Leave to lay down a few Propositions as the Foundation of what I have to say (1719, Defoe, D., *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*)
- (8) Then *please to* give my name, and ask if Mrs. Yule can see me (1891, Gissing, G., *New Grub Street*)

These examples would suggest the existence of a previous stage in the development of *please* in the imperative constructions, giving us the model: *be pleased to* > *please to* > *please*. On the basis of this evidence, the origin of the courtesy marker *please* would seem to lie in a verbal form, probably an imperative construction. Bearing in mind that imperatives typically occupy a clause-initial position, it may be instructive to consider the position of *please* in the clause.

4. Data from the corpus

In a previous study on the origin of *please*, I selected a number of texts from the *Chadwyck-Healey* electronic databases of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* and *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Since my intention was to carry out a real-time study, I made a selection of texts from three decades, leaving an interval of 80 years between one period and

3 The change in meaning of *please* from 'to be agreeable (to)' to 'to be pleased' may be similar to the change observed in *like*.

the next. The total number of words for the three periods is 3,742,363. The distribution of words in each period is as follows:

- Period 1 (1710-1720): 646,032
- Period 2 (1800-1810): 1,368,202
- Period 3 (1890-1900): 1,728,129

Three types of constructions are examined: imperative forms of *be pleased to* (stage i); imperative forms of *please to* (stage ii); and *please* on its own as a courtesy marker (stage iii). In the last group I also include those instances in which *please* followed by a verbal form is sometimes ambiguous. The frequency of these three constructions is displayed in Table 1 below:

FORMS	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3
(imperative) <i>Be pleased to</i>	16/2.48	1/0.07	1/0.06
(imperative) <i>Please to</i>	—	3/0.22	22/1.27
(courtesy marker <i>Please</i>)	—	3/0.22	157/9.08

Table 1. Distribution of the three *please*-constructions (raw numbers and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words).

The construction *be pleased to* seems to lose ground to the other imperative construction *please to*. This development is marked geographically and socially: possibly originating in the north among the lower classes, it then spread southwards and among the upper classes (Tieken/Faya 2007).

The earliest instances of the courtesy marker *please* appear in the first decade of the nineteenth century and the replacement of *pray* by *please* must have taken place during that century. Only three examples of it occur in Period 2, as we can see from Table 1. Two of the earliest examples, contained in (9) and (10) below, feature clause-initial *please*. They are clear examples of modern *please*, as the vocative following the courtesy marker in both cases shows:

- (9) *Please* Ma'am, Master wants to know why he be'nt to have his dinner (c. 1805, Austen, J., *The Watsons*)

- (10) *Please*, Madam, said he, let me know where I may find Miss Montreville (1810, Brunton, M., *Self-Control*)

The third example, in (11), shows *please* in middle position. The construction is, however, ambiguous:

- (11) So you'll *please* pay me the two hundred pounds which he owed to Mr John Dykes (1810, Brunton, M., *Self-Control*)

In (11) the modal form 'll may be interpreted as affecting the verb *pay*, *please* having by now become a pure courtesy marker. However, *please* could also be regarded as a full-meaning verb affected by 'll and followed by an infinitive form without *to*. A third choice would be to consider *please* as neither a full verb nor a courtesy marker, but rather as something in between.

Table 2 below shows the distribution of the courtesy marker *please*. Significantly, there is a high number of examples in which *please* is followed by an unmarked verbal form.

<i>Context</i>	<i>Period 2</i>	<i>Period 3</i>
followed by an unmarked verbal form	1/0.07	71/4.11
on its own	2/0.15	86/4.98

Table 2. Courtesy marker *please* (raw numbers and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words).

These occurrences are in middle position as in (11) above, but especially in initial position, as in (12):

- (12) *Please* make whatever arrangements you like (1893, Gissing, G., *The Odd Women*)

The position of *please* in those cases in which its role is that of a courtesy marker supports the theory of a verbal origin. We have seen that the courtesy marker *please* can be used in initial, final or middle position. If we examine the position of *please* in our corpus, we find instances of all three of these possibilities. In final position, as in (2), *please* is unambiguously a courtesy marker and no further explana-

tions are needed. Clause-initial *please*, as in (9) and (10), and *please* in middle position when followed by a non-inflected verbal form may be regarded as a verb, a courtesy marker or a hybrid form (not a full verb, but not exclusively a courtesy marker yet, either).

	<i>initial</i>	<i>middle</i>	<i>final</i>	<i>Total cases</i>
<i>Period 2</i>	0.15/2	0.07/1	—	0.22/3
<i>Period 3</i>	5.79/100	1.21/21	2.08/36	9.08/157

Table 3. Position of the courtesy marker *please*.

Initial position, the place where imperative forms usually occur, is by far the most frequent option for *please* in the last decade of the nineteenth century. We must also consider those instances in which *please* is followed by a non-inflected verbal form without a graphic pause (a comma) or other intervening material in between (excluding two cases in which *just* and *still* occur between *please* and the verbal form). While *please* in initial position may or may not be followed by a comma in Present-day English, these examples are interesting in so far as they reveal the persisting doubt among speakers and writers, especially regarding the correct way to use the new form.

These figures should be compared to similar data for Present-day English in order to verify whether any difference has developed in terms of frequency of use. In any case, it seems likely that *please* originated in a position typical of an imperative form; that is, most commonly, the initial position. Middle position *please* occurs mainly in questions, a form typical in offers and requests, but its frequency is considerably lower. Final position was a later development, something which would again support the argument for the courtesy marker's deriving from an imperative verbal form, rather than from a conditional phrase (*if you please*), the latter being less constrained than an imperative construction as regards position. Indeed, by the time final position did come about, *please* was probably already unambiguously a courtesy marker. Nonetheless, conditional forms did have some role in the origin of the courtesy marker: significantly, their decrease in use coincides with the increase in the use of the courtesy marker *please*.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a new argument in favour of the verbal origin of the courtesy marker *please*. According to this theory, as (13) shows, *please* originated in an imperative construction like *be pleased to*, contracted at a later stage to *please to*. The latter of these would subsequently lose the particle *to*, leading the verb following it to be reinterpreted as an imperative and *please* to be reanalysed as a courtesy marker:

- (13) *be pleased to* > *be please(d) to* > *please to* > *please* (v) > *please* (marker)

This hypothesis is supported by the position of *please* in the sentence. The preferred position of *please* by the nineteenth century was clause-initial, as it is customary for imperative constructions. In addition it is often followed by an unmarked verbal form, as also happens with imperatives. Final position was a later development.

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