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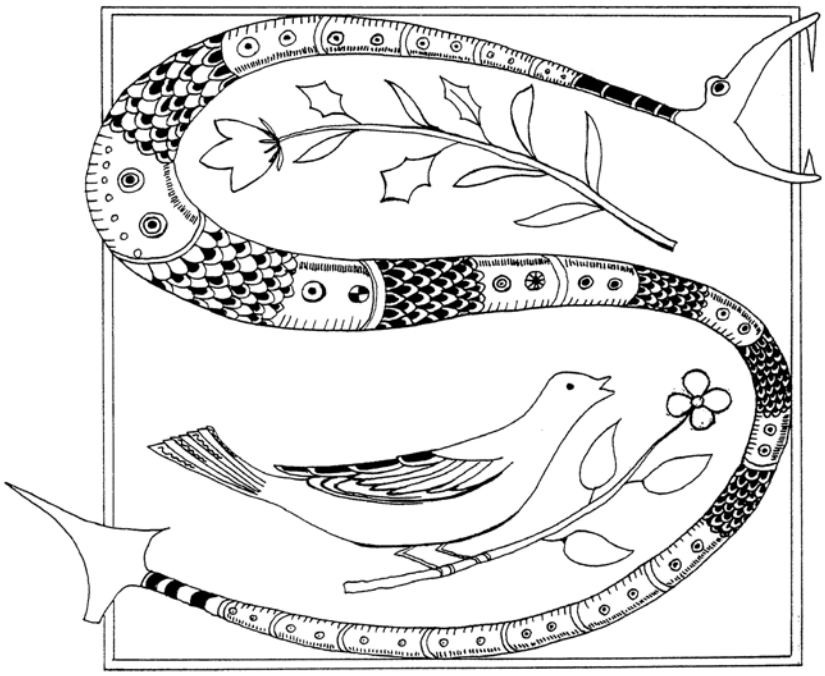

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OLD TEXTS IN NEW VESSELS: TEACHING AND LEARNING HEL ONLINE

Abstract

University education is nowadays undergoing exhaustive revision under the auspices of the European Higher Education Area reform initiative. More often than not, proposals for teaching/learning improvement are linked to technological innovations. ICT provide platforms that foster autonomous learning while training students in technological competences without which they are severely impaired today. Online teaching/learning is therefore not only more dynamic than traditional methodologies, but also in line with the ECTS framework, which contemplates less contact hours and more independent student work under the guidance of the lecturer. Against this setting, we present a website for the analysis of historical texts in English. The website has been designed so as to (i) enhance self-learning by means of readings, problems and textual commentaries and (ii) familiarize students with the technologies they will be using in their professional future. **Keywords**: English historical texts, online teaching/learning, HEL, ECTS

Resumen

En el marco cambiante en que se encuentran los estudios universitarios, todo proyecto de mejora pasa por la progresiva adaptación a las innovaciones que propone el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior. Las nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación proporcionan plataformas que fomentan el aprendizaje autónomo sin necesidad de enseñanza presencial continua, al tiempo que entrenan al alumno en competencias que hoy resultan imprescindibles. La enseñanza online no es sólo más dinámica, sino también más acorde a los parámetros de la innovación docente con ECTS, que contempla menos docencia presencial y más trabajo personal del alumno tutorizado por el profesor. En este contexto, presentamos una página web para el análisis de textos históricos de la lengua inglesa diseñada con el fin de (i) fomentar el autoaprendizaje mediante lecturas, problemas y comentarios textuales y (ii) familiarizar al estudiante con las tecnologías con las que habrá de convivir en su futuro profesional. **Palabras clave**: textos históricos del inglés, enseñanza/aprendizaje online, historia de la lengua inglesa, ECTS

1 New Vessels for Old Texts

The Bologna Process, a reform initiative aiming at establishing a European Higher Education Area by 2010, is steering the introduction of the ECTS credit system in Spanish universities. The ANECA, Spanish contributor to the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA),

has stressed the significance of the European Credit Transfer System for an adequate upgrade of university degree structures. The pursuit of easily readable and comparable degrees aims not only at increased mobility and employability of both students and academics throughout Europe, but also at increased excellence within the higher and lifelong education systems. As a transfer and accumulation system, ECTS supports the adoption of innovative teaching and learning procedures in which the student workload is at the core of the qualification process. One of the immediate effects is therefore the need for online platforms that allow independent student practice while promoting the acquisition of ICT competences, without which students will be severely impaired once university years are over.

Nowadays, being literate involves both multi- and transliteracies, that is, a proficient command of the multimodal ways for making meaning today, and within these, IT/ICT literacy stands out. However, online teaching platforms (synchronous or asynchronous) are not widely implemented yet, which widens the gap between the vocational and scholarly pursuits of students. Website browsing, SMS texting, instant messaging, chat rooms and forums are part of the everyday life of students, who choose them over traditional media for a wide variety of uses. Such a demand, however, is not met by the educational arena, in which traditionally there has been little room for technological innovation. The university reform process, however, has placed an emphasis on competences and learning outcomes that brings the need for such an innovation to the fore.

Learning outcomes are statements of the competences a student must have acquired as a result of the learning process. Such competences typically emphasize what students will "be able to do" rather than what students will "know", and in the case of a discipline such as the study of the History of the English Language (HEL)

verbs such as "analyzing", "appraising", "assessing", "categorizing", "collecting", "contrasting", "describing", "designing", "discussing", "explaining", "formulating", "identifying", "interpreting", "locating", "relating", "reviewing" or "solving" should come up and replace mere "knowing". Outcomes-based instruction is a learner-centred approach that fosters the professional component in university education while training students for autonomous life-long learning and flexibility towards change. And if there is one thing that studying HEL promotes, that is indeed an open approach to change. The attachment of increased technological competences to this far-reaching learning outcome predicts a bright future for the historical study of language even in an increasingly matter-of-fact scenario.

A glance into the TUNING[1] taxonomy of university competences reveals interesting insights, such as the presence of "synthesis", "analysis", "time management", "learning strategies", "problem solving", "decision making", "planning", "ICT competence" and "written and spoken competence in a foreign language as well as in the mother tongue" among unavoidable instrumental competences. Is there anything in the list which is not fully addressed by HEL—even if "synthesis" and "analysis" were not keywords both in the list and in the historical study of English? Let us now take a look at key TUNING interpersonal competences: "critical and self-critical attitude", "multicultural and diversity awareness", "teamwork"... Once again, is there anything in the list not addressed by HEL? The same might be applied to systemic competences in TUNING: "skills for project design and management", "creativity", "entrepreneurial spirit", "innovativeness", "leadership" or "success and achievement orientation".

[1] The Tuning Project is available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/tuning/tuning_es.html and http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu

What is the problem with HEL then? What has been the reason for the steady neglect of historical disciplines in philological curricula? The answer is manifold for sure, but some degree of uncreativeness in teaching and learning methodology is likely to play a role, and in this respect, the adoption of ICT innovations stands out as an optimal candidate for a revival of the discipline. Within this framework, the paper presents a website[2] (http://www.ffil.uam.es/textoshel/HEL/Home.htm) designed for the analysis of historical texts of the English language by means of readings, problems and textual commentaries. In providing students with tools and materials for the textual analysis of early texts, the website aims at fostering autonomous learning and hands-on acquisition of ICT competences. Online teaching (and online-aided in-class teaching) is not only more dynamic, in that it allow courses to "grow" and meet student needs as they come up. It is also much more in line with the parameters of ECTS innovation, in that it encompasses less class attendance and more independent student work under the supervision of the lecturer. For these reasons, the enterprise of creating a website for the analysis of HEL texts seems worthwhile and the pages that follow will be devoted to the description of the website against the relevant context.

2 The Study of History of the English Language at UAM today

The Autónoma University of Madrid (http://www.uam.es) is a state university founded in 1968 and known for its distinguished record in scientific research as well as for its social commitment. The UAM offers a wide choice of undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes, one of which is a four-year bachelor degree in English Studies (http://www.uam.es/departamentos/filoyletras/

[2] ® M-008521/2007

filoinglesa). The historical study of English within the degree is addressed by three subjects, two core subjects in the first and second semesters of the third course (History of the English Language I & II) and one elective subject in the fourth year (Diachronic English Linguistics).

The theoretical basis for delimiting the contents and methodology of the two HEL courses at UAM is based on the recent[3] idea that synchrony and diachrony overlap and stress the significance of one another. On the one hand, historical linguistics (in fact, dynamic approaches to language at large) helps corroborate synchronic analyzes and is therefore at the center of linguistic research within fields such as cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, pragmatics, anthropology and so on. On the other hand, the findings and theoretical premises of these synchronically-oriented fields are helping unravel the past. This is a healthy state of affairs, with historical linguistics at the core of linguistic theories, which sharply contrasts with the scarce presence of diachronic subjects in the curricula of most European universities, Spain among them.

The causes for the gradual reduction of diachrony from European university curricula have already been analyzed in depth (Schousboe,[4] Tejada 1997). Let us just recall, among some of the most significant reasons for this decrease, the shift within English departments towards more experimental subjects with concrete and immediate applications within society, to the detriment of more relational, open subjects such as historical linguistics. The distinction (Savater 1997) between open and closed disciplines is one that opposes

[3] Although already present in the pre-structuralist historical approach (Geeraerts 1988 and 2006), this conception of language was not reintroduced until the birth of the functional and cognitive paradigms in the late 1970s.

[4] *Teaching Historical Linguistics* is available at http://www.univie.ac.at/Anglistik/hoe/pschousboe.htm

technical subjects, which can be completely mastered and directly applied within society, to open-ended ones, which can never be thoroughly learnt with no ifs nor buts. Indeed, the more one learns about an open subject (be it language, music or philosophy), the more conscious one becomes of what is still left to know, and the more paths and questions appear—a scenario which does not seem particularly tuned with the fast, earthbound requirements of the world today.

This is not the place to insist on the many reasons to promote dynamic approaches to language in present and future university curricula (Tejada 1997, Romano 2000) but let us go over our main aims in the choice of contents for HEL I and HEL II, which will help explain our methodology within the new ECTS system. The course of instruction for both subjects falls within the conception of language as a *complex, dynamic* and *open* system, an approach within which students should be made aware of:

(1) The variety and complexity of the linguistic and extralinguistic factors which intervene in any linguistic change.
(2) The interdisciplinary nature of the field and the necessity to take into account the findings of related disciplines for the explanation of language (change), especially those which relate language to cognition and culture.
(3) The fact that we carry, from school, linguistic prejudices on the superiority of certain languages, styles, registers and therefore people over other varieties/people(s). Prejudices which are not based on linguistic, scientific data.

Upon the bases of the foregoing aims, which provide the encompassing theoretical rationale for these two subjects, let us now summarize the contents of both courses in terms of learning outcomes. At the end of HEL I, students should have a basic

understanding of (i) the place of historical linguistics within the history of linguistics, (ii) the main causes and processes of language change, (iii) the main research methods in historical linguistics as well as (iv) acquaintance with the sociolinguistic and historical backgrounds of English. By the end of HEL II, students should (i) have a basic understanding of the most significant lexico-semantic, morpho-syntactic and grapho-phonological changes undergone by the English language over time (in particular from the seventh to the seventeenth centuries, but also into the present day) and (ii) they must be able to identify and analyze the grammatical structures of a historical text.

Together with these learning outcomes, a number of conceptual, procedural and attitudinal competences should have been developed over the course of both HEL semesters. To our mind, the following outstand out the many competences enhanced by the historical study of language:

(1) Conceptual competences: (i) to understand language change as a natural, universal process, (ii) to learn the importance of diachronic linguistics for the explanation of present-day linguistic problems, (iii) to develop linguistic awareness in order to promote a scientific rather than intuitive approach to the analysis of different languages and cultures by learning to establish connections between different disciplines and languages and by acquiring theoretical background for linguistic analysis—in the case of HEL I, together with those conceptual competences fostered by HEL II: (i) to understand the major lexico-semantic, morpho-syntactic and grapho-phonological changes undergone by English over time and (ii) to acquire the theoretical background and applied expertise for the linguistic analysis of English historical texts.

(2) Procedural competences: to learn how to (i) explore diverging approaches to a topic, (ii) pose questions and formulate hypotheses upon data, (iii) locate and assess relevant references, (iv) acquire learning autonomy by means of analytic reading, (v) improve oral and written communication in English and (vi) present work to an audience.
(3) Attitudinal competences: to become critically aware (i) of the different means that different languages and periods of the same language have to express similar grammatical meanings and (ii) of the ever-changing character of language, (iii) to develop an analytic advance towards linguistic issues and a critical attitude towards linguistic theories and (iv) to cooperate towards the success of teamwork while (v) stressing the value of sustained effort when confronted with texts and realities at first alien to our eyes and minds.

Once the rationale and learning outcomes looked for have been presented, let us briefly turn to the teaching/learning methodology and procedures for assessment within the new ECTS system, which will help us show the usefulness of the website within the new framework. As discussed earlier on, one of the most challenging demands of the new system is the introduction of notable changes in the teaching/learning methodology, with an emphasis on learner autonomy. In this way, for the estimated 125 hours of student work assigned to each of the HEL courses, the following contact/non-contact arrangements are suggested:

(1) A weekly in-class session devoted to (i) a brief lecture on the weekly topic, (ii) solving the weekly assignments and (iii) discussing the weekly readings (some 25 hours altogether)
(2) Independent study devoted to (i) reading a weekly paper, (ii) completing a weekly task (including both problems and critical

discussion of relevant topics) and (iii) preparing a joint oral presentation on a topic selected by out of an assortment of research lines, coupled with a short essay on the same topic once incorporated the feedback from the audience, as well as (iv) regular revision of class notes and course website materials and drawing of conceptual maps (some 75 hours altogether)

(3) Seminars and/or workshops devoted to (i) hands-on activities at the library or the language lab and (ii) audiovisual tasks (some 20 hours altogether)

(4) Tutorials which students have to attend at least twice as a compulsory requirement in order to (i) keep up momentum with the summative evaluation scheme and (ii) address the composition and presentation of the research project (some 5 hours altogether)

(5) Online teaching by means of UAM teaching platform (which encompasses both synchronous chat rooms and asynchronous forums as well as sections for student contributions and teacher posting of relevant materials) and also by means of the HEL website presented in this paper

Hence, the new methodological approach is paired with continuous assessment in which the final grade depends not only on a final exam (worth no more than fifty per cent of the final grade), but also on class engagement and completion of weekly assignments (worth fifteen per cent of the final grade) and on the submission of a short essay about a topic previously presented in class (worth the remaining thirty five per cent of the final grade). Such a work plan, which promotes uninterrupted student (and teacher) work, is paired with reduced contact hours (for, although students are encouraged to attend office hours liberally, most prefer the advantage of email consultations), which creates a new scenario in which no more than fourteen in-class sessions can ever be planned per semester. This is

of course the setting against which the website "Texts for the Study of the History of English" has proved to be most useful, since it has allowed to counteract the difficulties posed by reduced teaching hours. Let us then explore the website.

3 The website "Texts for the Study of the History of English"

The website is divided into four major sections: (i) How to analyze a historical text, (ii) Sample textual commentaries, (iii) Texts for the study of the history of English and (iv) Links, each of which will be reviewed in the subheadings below.

3.1. ***How to analyze a historical text*** is a theoretical guide on how to analyze (rather than translate, since texts in the website are transliterated) English historical texts, since students must be able to date and comment on a text by the end of the two HEL courses. The principle underlying the compilation of this template was the assumption that students have never been taught how to comment on the linguistic features of an early text, and therefore, the hard Labovian (1994:11) target of "making the best use of bad data" becomes even harder. These guidelines insist on the complexity of using historical texts as raw data, as well as on the necessity to study the socio-historical and cultural factors surrounding the text before attempting the linguistic analysis, as well as on a number of practicalities with which students are often not aware of beforehand. Since no such guide had been previously compiled within the arena of English historical studies until the moment (to our knowledge), the section stands out as one of the most significant contributions of the website, and for this reason it is replicated in full below.

A few remarks to get you started

Texts are not stable, perfectly defined entities. They are subject to a great number of variables, such as social, geographical, rhetorical, cultural and historical factors which make them fuzzier than they seem at first sight. This fact becomes even more evident when analyzing a text from the past, since historical texts are not without problems. To begin with, texts are limited in number and often restricted to given genres or registers. Besides, there exist many difficulties in interpreting written language, typically more conservative than spoken discourse, when there are naturally no native speakers to consult. Texts are, nevertheless, our best data to unravel the past, and as Labov points out, we can learn to "make the best use of bad data."

And the very first thing we have to learn when dealing with linguistic data is *honesty*. This means that we should never try to squeeze textual data into our previous theoretical knowledge of the language: the linguistic evidence should match the theory rather than vice versa. And only those linguistic features actually present in the text should count as data: how could it count as *evidence* otherwise?

The second thing that we have to learn is that we have to be very careful: dealing with texts from the past is tricky. Why is this so? Because in interpreting a historical text from a contemporary standpoint, we might end up analyzing the function and meaning of linguistic constructions from the past as though they were the antecedent of present-day ones, which is often *not* the case: Old English did have *-ing* patterns, which does not mean the progressive existed at the time.

Besides, when analyzing a text we should never forget that language is ingrained within a context. Therefore, before attempting the linguistic analysis of any given text, we should always try to find as much information as possible about aspects such as the following:

- Social, historical and cultural highlights of the period.
- Overall linguistic features of the language at that time.
- Specific features of the language variety displayed by the text: dialectal belonging, genre and stylistic constraints such as alliteration and rhyme in the case of poetry, calques in the case of translations, degree of formality in epistolary correspondence and so on.
- Author and intended audience as well as means of transmission: texts to be said aloud, manuscripts to be read by a selected few, printed matter, handwritten letters and the like.

More often than not, however, we will not know such details beforehand, in which case we should not try to decide on the date and variety of the text until having analyzed it carefully as a whole. Thus, we should only try to advance a rough date and location for the text once we have already considered the morphosyntactic, lexical and phonological levels in detail. Even at this point, precise dating or dialectal location might well be elusive, which is nothing to fret about, since a proficient textual analysis is never restricted to it.

As a matter of fact, neither geographic nor diachronic boundaries are clear-cut. As such, most texts are somehow transitional—in between two historical periods, in between

two dialectal zones. Even if we came across a text clearly belonging to a given place from a given time, we would still face the challenge of the different paces for change at the various levels of the language: a Middle English text will display a very simplified state of nominal inflection, while verbal inflection in the same text will still be very similar to that of the Old English period. Likewise, a late Middle English romance might well be very archaic in its lexicon because of the constraints of alliterative poetry and nonetheless very advanced at the morphosyntactic level. This is surely most interesting and challenging for the historical linguist and yet another reason not to hurry the analysis.

The linguistic analysis of a historical text

The linguistic analysis of a historical text should never be approached as a word for word description of the excerpt. Thus, each grammatical level, each phrase and each component should be analyzed independently rather than at a go and all at the same time. We will only have a holistic knowledge of the linguistic features of the text under study once we have considered all the grammatical levels. The analysis of a historical text should therefore include comments on the spelling, morphology, syntax, lexis and phonology of the text. How to combine them all into a coherent analysis rather than a useless checklist?

Spelling is a good starting point, even if not a hundred per cent trustworthy. Why not trustworthy? Because every printed text we have for the early stages of English is naturally an edited version of a manuscript. This means that abbreviations

have been filled out, punctuation has been added, gaps in the original rounded out and so on. Nonetheless, texts will still display graphemes and spelling conventions typical of given periods or varieties that will help us place the text in context. In addition to fairly broad considerations (such as chaotic spellings indicative of no linguistic standardization as opposed to orthographic consistency indicative of scriptoria and language planning), distinctive signals we should be in search of include:

- The appearance of runes such as wynn ⟨ƿ⟩ and asg ⟨ȝ⟩, ligatures such as ash ⟨æ⟩, the use of ⟨e⟩ to indicate palatalization, the occurrence of thorn ⟨þ⟩ in initial positions and eth ⟨ð⟩ anywhere else or graphemes such as ⟨cg⟩, ⟨cw⟩, ⟨hl⟩, ⟨hn⟩, ⟨hw⟩, ⟨lc⟩, ⟨lh⟩ and ⟨sc⟩—all of them markers of an Old English text, as well as the absence of the letters ⟨j⟩, ⟨q⟩, ⟨v⟩ and ⟨z⟩.
- The presence of yogh ⟨ȝ⟩, the occurrence of ⟨v⟩ in initial positions and ⟨u⟩ anywhere else or the appearance of French digraphs such as ⟨ch⟩, ⟨ck⟩, ⟨ph⟩, ⟨qu⟩, ⟨sh⟩, ⟨th⟩ and ⟨wh⟩—all of them indicative of a Middle English text.
- The addition of a final -e to mark vowel length or the replacement of yogh by ⟨y⟩ and thorn by ⟨th⟩—all of them suggestive of an Early Modern English text.

The linguistic analysis of a text should also include a brief analysis of its phonology. However, reconstructing the phonological system of a text is quite a difficult task because of the lack of correspondence between spelling and pronunciation throughout the history of English. The task is hard for the

early times since the idea of a stable spelling did not even exist until after the advent of print. Afterwards, it became even more difficult because of the Great Vowel Shift. This means that in Old and Middle English there were several spellings for the same word, while in Early Modern English and beyond there was only one spelling—but it often had nothing to do with the way in which the word was actually pronounced! Nevertheless, there are certain features that can be observed with the help of our theoretical knowledge:

- Changes in the syllable-structure of words, such as the reduction and loss of vowels in final unstressed syllables.
- Disappearance of voiceless fricatives.
- Lengthening of short vowels.
- Disappearance in the number of contrastive units in the vowel system.
- Loss of initial *h*-sounds (*hring* into *ring*), metathesis (*frist* into *first*) and appearance of initial *dg*-sound (as in *judge*) in Middle English.

Morphology will then become a crucial level of grammatical description, mostly if in front of an Old or Middle English text. Why mostly in early texts? Because the most influential change in the history of English was the transition from a semantically-oriented synthetic language type to a syntactically-oriented analytic language type. To make a long story short, this means that, in the transit from Old to Middle English, word endings were lost while word order became more rigid and prepositions more frequently used. Since nominal declensions were dropped well before verbal

inflections, a close inspection of noun and verb phrases will help us identify the stage for development of the text under study. Thus, as for the noun phrase, some of the questions we should ask ourselves include:

- Are nouns inflected for case, gender and number? Is gender natural or grammatical?
- Do adjectives agree with the nouns they modify?
- Are there weak and strong adjectives in the text?
- Do determiners display different forms for the different functions?
- Which forms and functions do personal and possessive pronouns show?
- Do we find Anglo-Saxon *h*-forms or Scandinavian *th*-forms of third person plural personal pronouns?
- Are genitive constructions synthetic or analytic?

As for the verb phrase, questions such as the following should be a must:

- Are verbs inflected for person and number?
- Which ending do we find for present indicative plural forms: *-eth*, *-en* or Ø?
- Which weak and strong preterits are there in the text? Have any of these forms disappeared or been replaced in PDE?
- What is the ending for present participles?

An analysis of the syntax of the fragment should follow the morphological review. Nonetheless, remember the transit from a synthetic to an analytic language type was not abrupt. Inflections did not disappear overnight as a means of signalling

relations among words within the sentence. Rather, they were gradually replaced by word order and prepositional constraints. This means that the boundaries between morphology and syntax got steadily blurred over the history of English. For this reason, analyzing the morphosyntax of a text rather than the morphology and the syntax as discrete levels will often be helpful. In any case, a comprehensive insight should combine overall textual matters and much more specific reflections about salient features. Questions such as the ones below will help us frame the analysis:

- Examine word-order constructions: Are they different from PDE in independent and subordinate clauses? What about in questions and imperatives? Does word order seem to be free or not? In the case of poetry, do not forget to observe whether the metrical system imposes any constraints on syntax!
- Is the number of different prepositions remarkable in any way? What about their frequency? Does the form or function of prepositions seem to have changed ever since?
- Are there any instances of redundant overmarking?
- How are definite and indefinite articles used in the text?
- Is there double negation?
- Are there impersonal verbs and dummy subjects such as there or it?

Besides, a detailed analysis of the formation and use of verb tenses should include questions such as the following:

- Is the tense system reduced to present and past only?

- Are there compound verbal forms for perfects, futures and passives instead?
- How advanced is the development of auxiliaries? Is the use of be, do and have equivalent to PDE in the formation of periphrastic constructions?
- Have modal verbs become auxiliaries? Do they seem grammaticalized already?

An analysis of how information is organized or structured within the text can also provide valuable data from a historical point of view. The earlier stages of the English language would be more *semantically-oriented*; that is, organized around communicative factors which determine word order, the appearance or non-appearance of subject forms, conjunctions, deictic markers, etc. In short: a language which is based on the speaker's need for economy and expressiveness. On the contrary, stages closer to Present-Day English would be more *syntactically-oriented*; that is, a language with more and clearer grammatical categories, a fixed word order and a higher degree of conventionalisation; in short: a language based on the hearer's need for transparency (Tejada 1999).

- Where are the most informative elements of the sentence/ text? How is this salience marked?
- Are coordination and parataxis more frequent than subordination or hypotaxis?
- Are deictic markers (demonstrative pronouns, personal pronouns, *þa* and so on) frequent in the text? What are their functions?

In any case, remember "*Why?*" and "*Why is this significant?*" are questions we cannot do without in our analysis. Always remember to discuss the entailments of every finding: there is no point in noticing the presence (or absence) of whatever feature if we do not discuss its relevance. Likewise, there is no point in analyzing the various levels of grammatical description as distinctively discrete entities with no relation to one another. There exist no coincidences in language, which means that the morphosyntactic analysis above will surely have a lot to do with the analysis of lexical and semantic aspects to follow.

The analysis of lexis within the text should ideally be tackled with the aid of an etymological dictionary such as the *OED*. An etymological dictionary will reveal the origin of words—when a given word entered the language and where from. This seems certainly relevant since as many as 75 per cent of the words in English today are of a foreign origin! Besides, an etymological dictionary will display all the various senses every word has and has had over the history of the language. This will allow us to trace changes in the meaning of words such as generalization (*bridd* 'small bird' into 'bird'), specialization (*tid* 'time' into 'tide'), amelioration (*nice* ultimately from Latin *nescius*) or pejoration (*sælig* 'happy' into 'silly')—in short, whether the meaning of a word has undergone a metaphorical or metonymic extension (*gebedu* 'bead for keeping count of the rosary' into *bede* 'prayer') or whether it has been subjectified.

Nonetheless, there will be times in which an etymological dictionary will not be an available resource. Even so, there will still remain a number of lexical questions to ask ourselves:

- Are there many words of Germanic origin that have been dropped from the language ever since? The knowledge of other contemporary Germanic languages becomes an asset at the time of identifying cognates not present in the language any more, such as Middle English *bocstæf* 'letter' (besides German *Buchstabe*), Middle English *frið* 'peace' (German *Frieden*) or Middle English *stund* 'hour' (German *Stunde*). This knowledge will also prove useful for identifying processes of semantic change, since this is the reason why existing cognates often become false friends in related languages.
- Are there many borrowings that make the lexicon of the text seem familiar to a contemporary speaker of English? Is it possible to identify the source from which the borrowings have been loaned?
- Do the words in the text belong to any specific genre or register? Are there calques (*ælmihtig* 'almighty' from Latin *omnipotens*), doublets (*lonely* versus *solitary*) or learned words?
- Do the semantic fields help to reconstruct the social and cultural context of the text?

New words are always being created—mostly out of other words through compounding and derivation. Even though the former stands out as a particularly inventive device for lexical innovation, derivation has always been the most productive source of new words in English. A close examination of the patterns for word formation will also become a useful tool for placing the text within its context:

- Old English exhibited a vast stock of prefixes and suffixes. Among the former, *ge-* is particularly outstanding. As a matter of fact, it was so widely used in so many different ways that it ultimately became meaningless and was dropped from the language shortly after the end of Anglo-Saxon times. Other prefixes were *æfter-, fore-, forþ-, ofer-, þurh-* or *wiþ-*, whereas common Old English suffixes included *-cund, -fæst, -ig, -isc, -leas*, *-lic, -sum* or *-wende*.
- Despite the loss of a number of native prefixes and suffixes, the new affixes borrowed from French and Latin in Middle English further increased the frequency of affixing as a means for creating new words. The novel affixes included prefixes such as *counter-, de-, dis-, in-, inter-, mal-, pre-, re-, sub-* or *super-* and suffixes such as *-able, -age, -ance, -al, -ant, -ence, -ery, -ess, -ify, -ist, -ity* or *-ment*.
- The massive loss of inflections during Middle English prompted the rise of a highly productive source of new vocabulary: functional shift or zero derivation, widespread from Early Modern English onwards and particularly distinctive of the English language ever since.

Rounding up

Now, once you have analyzed all and every one of the levels of grammar above, put your pencil down, think for a while and then write an all-encompassing review: a textual commentary should never reduce to a checklist of features! Plan your essay carefully, quote whenever using ideas other than your own and provide illustrative examples from the text. Remember length does not stand for quality—orderly argumentation does.

3.2. As a companion to the guide ***How to analyze a historical text***, the website includes a section entitled ***Sample textual commentaries*** which provides two models for the analysis of a historical text, one from Old English (*Matthew*) and another one for Middle English (*Cursor Mundi*). Both textual commentaries follow the principles advanced in the guidelines, but with a slightly different twist so that students understand there is no one single way in which a text can be analyzed, and that each text and commentator will necessarily follow different paths in their journey through the data.

3.3. The third section in the website, ***Texts for the Study of the History of English***, constitutes the backbone of the site, for it includes a collection of transliterated texts of diverse origin, both from a stylistic and from chronological point of view, for students to comment once acquainted with the instructions for the analysis of historical texts and the sample commentaries. This section of the website is further divided into four sub-sections, three of which correspond to the Old, Middle and Modern stages of the language and a fourth one dedicated to the biblical text on the *Tower of Babel*, presented in three versions, one for each of the main periodizations. Each of the sub-sections (Old, Middle and Modern English) presents the same structure:

- **Readings on the period**: an introductory article on the linguistic features of the period together with a list of suggested references on the socio-historical and linguistic context.
- **Audio sample**: a brief recording of an excerpt which provides students with some hints on what the oral language could have been like at each of the three main periods.
- **Texts**: a series of texts for each of the three stages of the language—all of them transliterated and accompanied by a number of guided questions which have been included to help students with the

analysis. The texts from which the excerpts were chosen are listed below:

- Old English: *Beowulf's Fight with Grendel, Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Ælfric's Parable of the Two Sons, Ælfred's Preface to the Pastoral Care* and *Peterborough Chronicle*.
- Middle English: *The Owl and the Nightingale, Ormulum, Layamon's Brut, Sir Orfeo, Piers Plowman, Canterbury Tales, Sir Gawain* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*.
- Modern English: *Everyman, William Caxton's Preface to Malory's La Morte Darthur, Thomas More's Last Letter* and *The Scholemaster*.
- Parallel texts: *The Tower of Babel* (*Genesis* chapter 11) in Old, Middle and Early Modern English.

3.4. The fourth and final section of the website contains a series of relevant **links**, organized again into periods, on various theoretical and practical linguistic issues, as well as on the socio-historical, cultural and literary context of the period.

The **map of the website** is therefore as follows:

- How to analyze a historical text
- Sample textual commentaries
- Texts for the study of the history of English
  - Old English
    - Readings on the Old English period
      - A reading on the linguistic features of OE
      - Suggested readings on the OE period
    - Old English audio sample
    - Old English texts

- Middle English
  - Readings on the Middle English period
    - A reading on the linguistic features of ME
    - Suggested readings on the ME period
  - Middle English audio sample
  - Middle English texts
- Early Modern English
  - Readings on the Early Modern English period
    - A reading on the linguistic features of EModE
    - Suggested readings on the EModE period
  - Early Modern English audio sample
  - Early Modern English texts
- Parallel texts
  - Suggested readings on the history of English
  - Biblical parallel texts

• Links

4 Future Prospects

Over the course of the two years in which the website "Texts for the Study of the History of English" has been accessible online, it has become more and more of a key factor for students aiming at fuller command of the textual commentary of early texts in English. Since a highly significant outcome of the learning of HEL as it is taught at UAM is being able to identify and analyze the linguistic features of an historical text while providing an approximate date for it, the possibility of extensive practice becomes indispensable in a competence not likely to be encountered by students in other subjects. For this reason, the website has become increasingly welcome by students who, after an introductory tour to the website

(and once familiar with the theoretical developments undergone by the language), feel more and more at ease with early English texts and their analysis.

In order to further promote the exploitation of the resources made available by the website, throughout the fourteen-week HEL II course, both theory and practice are dealt with simultaneously, and extra work on commentaries is not only always welcome, but also often mandatory. As the course proceeds and students gain more theoretical knowledge on the subject, more and more commentaries are set for homework and later on revised in class and/on online in the online teaching platform (which also allows students to ask one another for help, hence promoting self-learning and peer-revision under the supervision of the lecturer). It is at the arena of distant, autonomous learning where the website has proved most useful, particularly during the last weeks of instruction and for exam preparation. At the same time, UAM Erasmus students registered for the course but living abroad as well as all other students not attending lectures for whatever reason, have also appreciated the innovative teaching/learning methodology provided by the website.

In the future, reduced contact hours and increasing emphasis being placed on autonomous learning will undoubtedly stress the role of distant learning and students being able to control their own workload without attending in-class sessions as often as in the past but with the novel aid of online tutorials. Against this setting, the website provides a new dynamic tool both for online and online-aided in-class teaching which we hope will be of use not only to UAM students but also to all those who approach it at its URL. In addition, it might be the right time for the website to become the jumping-off point for a unified platform for the teaching/learning

of HEL in Spain.[5] We are all in the same boat, and there are many other websites[6] created by Spanish lecturers of English Historical Linguistics which we all should start sharing for the benefit of our field and students. Let us start doing so—and to this end we remind you of our electronic addresses (clara.molina@uam.es and manuela.romano@uam.es) in the hope that sooner rather than later you take up the glove!

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[5] Suggestion by professor González y Fernández-Corugedo at 19 SELIM (Almagro: October 2007)

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