

Einladung zum Gastvortrag

FB 05 – Department of English and Linguistics – English Linguistics



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Growth and decline: How grammar has been changing in recent English

In studying the history of a language, linguists tend to focus on innovation and increase of frequency as the positive side of change. For example, the process of grammaticalization is associated with increase of frequency - e.g. the increasing use of the progressive aspect in English and semi-modal verbs such as *be going to* and *have to*. However, there is also the neglected, negative side of change: linguistic forms become less frequent, and eventually may disappear. In this talk, I am going to focus on both growth and decline: both increase and decrease in frequency – and their interaction, e.g. the increasing use of semi-modals and the declining use of modal auxiliaries like *must* and *may*, and the increasing use of the relativizer *that* and the declining use of *wh*-relativization. I will also ask why does change (both increase and decrease) happen? In exploring this theme, I will refer to corpus linguistic findings from the "Brown family" of corpora - particularly the British members of the family (BLOB-1931, LOB, FLOB, Paul Baker's BE06, and the unfinished BLOB-1901 corpus).

**Dienstag, 21. Juni 2011, 18-20 Uhr c.t.
Philosophicum, Hörsaal P 5**

Alle Interessierten sind herzlich eingeladen!

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Geoffrey Leech

... was Professor of Linguistics and Modern English Language at Lancaster University from 1974 to 1996, then became Research Professor in English Linguistics and has been Emeritus Professor in the Department of Linguistics and English Language, Lancaster University, since 2002. He has written, co-authored or co-edited 29 books and well over a hundred articles and papers in the areas of English grammar, literary stylistics, semantics, computational linguistics, corpus linguistics and pragmatics. In particular, he has co-authored the standard reference grammars of the English language (Quirk et al. 1972/1985 and Biber et al. 1999).

Over the past forty years, one of his major research interests has been the compilation, annotation and use of computer corpora for the processing and analysis of the English language. He is a pioneer of English corpus linguistics and co-founder of ICAME, the *International Computer Archive of Modern and Medieval English*. Leech was involved in the creation of a large reference corpus of (British) English when from 1991-1995 he was leader of the Lancaster team as part of the consortium which built the *British National Corpus* (BNC). In particular, however, Leech is known for his leading role in the compilation and annotation of a set of comparable corpora of British and American English known as the "Brown family" of corpora that allows to investigate recent changes in the use of English grammar over thirty-year periods, and to make controlled comparisons between American and British English. This began in the 1970s when he started the compilation of the *Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen* (LOB) *Corpus* to match the already existing American English counterpart, the *Brown* corpus. From 1999 to 2008 he worked (among others) on the word-class tagging and grammatical analysis of the *Freiburg-Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen* (FLOB) and *Freiburg-Brown* (Frown) *Corpora* which include British and American written English from the 1990s to match LOB and Brown. Most recently, he has compiled the 'Lancaster-1931 Corpus', more familiarly known as 'BLOB' ('before LOB').

Selected book publications

Corpus Compilation and Annotation

- with R. Garside and A. McEnery (eds.) (1997), *Corpus Annotation: Linguistic Information from Computer Text Corpora*, London: Longman.
- with P. Rayson and A. Wilson (2001), *Word Frequencies in Written and Spoken English*, London: Longman.

(Corpus-based) Study of English Grammar

- (1971), *Meaning and the English Verb*. London: Longman. (2nd ed. 1987)
- with R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, and J. Svartvik (1972), *A Grammar of Contemporary English*, London: Longman.
- with J. Svartvik (1975), *A Communicative Grammar of English*, London: Longman. (2nd and 3rd eds. 1994, 2002)
- with R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, and J. Svartvik (1985), *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, London: Longman.
- with D. Biber, S. Johansson, S. Conrad and E. Finegan (1999), *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, London: Longman.
- with D. Biber and S. Conrad (2002), *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. London: Longman.
- with M. Hundt, C. Mair and N. Smith (2009), *Change in Contemporary English: A Grammatical Study*, Cambridge: CUP.

Semantics and Pragmatics

- (1974), *Semantics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (2nd ed. 1981)
- (1983), *Principles of Pragmatics*, London: Longman.

Stylistics

- with M. Short (1981), *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, London: Longman. (2nd edition 2007)
- (2008) *Language in Literature: Style and Foregrounding*. Harlow: Pearson Longman.