ENGLISH HISTORICAL SYNTAX: APPROACHES AND PROBLEMS

Teresa Fanego
University of Santiago de Compostela

1. THE AIMS OF HISTORICAL SYNTAX

The term *historical syntax*, with which I will be concerned in this lecture today, is a comprehensive one which includes at least the following linguistic enterprises:

a) the study of the syntax of earlier stages of a language;

b) the description of syntactic changes from one stage to another through the history of a language;

c) the explanation or explanations of why such changes have taken place.

Strictly speaking, the first of these, though certainly a sub-field within historical linguistics, is in fact synchronic syntax as applied to languages of the past. B and c, on the contrary, constitute *diachronic syntax*, that is, the study of syntax as related to the time-factor. All three tasks, I repeat, constitute historical syntax, and all three are, in principle, equally important. In recent times, however, there has been a great flourishing of critical work on the third of the tasks mentioned, that is, explanation, which is sometimes regarded as the only true goal of historical syntax, or, to use the words of Weinreich, Labov and Herzog in their classical study of 1968, «the very heart of the matter» (p. 102). There is thus a certain feeling that studies which only manage to accomplish a and b, but not c, are 'unscientific', and not in keeping with the current demands of historical syntax. Yet despite this widespread current of opinion, the importance and interdependence of all three tasks mentioned at the beginning cannot be too strongly emphasized, for, clearly, hypotheses about the causation of syntactic change, important as they are, can only be established after one has described and identified the changes themselves; and, in its turn, the iden-

tification of the changes presupposes the prior description of individual stages of the language or languages under study. In a way, then, as Theodora Bynon (1977:2) wisely observes, «diachronic linguistics may be said to be secondary to synchronic linguistics, since the historical linguist deduces the changes that a language has undergone from the comparison of successive synchronic grammars».

As regards English historical syntax in particular, this is not, strictly speaking, a new discipline. The scholarly study of English syntax goes back to the mid-19th century, when E. Mätzner and C. F. Koch published their partly diachronic works on English grammar (cf. respectively *Englische Grammatik I-III*, Berlin 1860-65, and *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache I-III*, Cassel-Göttingen 1863-69). After these came the grammars of L. Kellner (*Historical Outlines of English Syntax I-II*, London 1892), H. Sweet (*A New English Grammar I-II*, Oxford 1891-98), and various others, in particular the monumental works by O. Jespersen (*A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles I-VII*, Heidelberg and Copenhagen 1909-49) and F.Th. Visser (*An Historical Syntax of the English Language, I-III*, Leiden 1963-73). There is, therefore, a long and important tradition within historical English syntax[1], and much has certainly been accomplished by traditional grammarians, specially in the way of descriptive studies of individual authors or periods. But though this is undeniable, one must bear in mind that historical syntax, like so many other linguistic disciplines involving syntax, has considerably modified its scope and methods, partly as a result of the development of syntactic theory during the present century, and partly, also, as a result of the emergence of sociolinguistic research. As a consequence, research on historical syntax today has little in common with the type of study which was the staple even as late as the 1960s; until then, it must be admitted that historical studies purporting to trace the development of the language generally lacked any theoretical foundation and often achieved results that were little more than mere collections of examples. Such, however, is no longer the case, as I hope to demonstrate in the course of this lecture. In what follows, I will be looking at some of the ways in which historical syntax has benefited from the application of developments within syntactic theory in particular and within linguistic theory in general. Specifically, I will first consider the contribution of sociolinguistics, and, secondly, the application of theories of grammaticalisation to the discipline of historical syntax.

2. SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND HISTORICAL SYNTAX

Sociolinguistic studies, or variationist studies, as they are often called, can be said to start with the research carried out by William Labov in the

1. A useful overview of the long tradition in the study of English historical syntax can be found in Rydén (1979a).

1960s on phonological change in progress in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, and New York City (cf. Labov 1963, 1966, and 1972). Labov's work is well known to all of us, so I will not go over it here and will just restrict myself to summarizing some of the main conclusions he reached in the course of his research, as follows:

a) the normal condition of a speech community is heterogeneity: we can expect to find a wide range of variants, and these are not, or at least not necessarily, in free variation; that is, they do not occur at random, they are orderly and are correlated sometimes with features of the internal environment, and sometimes with exernal characteristics of the speaker and the situation: contextual style, social status, ethnic group, sex, age, etc.

b) for various reasons, a given variant among those found within a speech community may tend to be extended to new linguistic environments, and may eventually spread throughout the whole speech community, thus attaining complete generalization and becoming part of the normal, unmarked inventory of the speech community in question.

In a word, Labov's findings clearly demonstrated that a) the existence of variation and linguistic heterogeneity within a given speech community is in itself a prerequisite, and a constant source, of change, at least at the phonological level; b) many such variants, and language change itself in many cases, are likely to have a social motivation.

Thanks to the work originating among American sociolinguists, and to subsequent contributions by other related approaches such as those of Bailey (1973) and James and Leslie Milroy (1980, 1985, 1992), we are now able to see the interdependence of variation and change much more clearly than earlier generations of scholars were able to do.

Originally, as I have already pointed out, sociolinguistic approaches focused mainly on sound change. Yet almost from the early days of the discipline some of its practitioners suggested that the same methods could provide a general and comprehensive theory for most kinds of linguistic change, including syntactic change. Thus, as early as 1973, Gillian Sankoff suggested, in her analysis of the deletion of the complementizer *que* in Montreal French, that Labovian quantitative methods might be extended to deal with variability in levels of the grammar above the phonological, and concluded by claiming that «the extension of probabilistic considerations from phonology to syntax is not a conceptually difficult jump» (1973:58). A similar attitude was also adopted by Rickford (1975), so that, within a comparatively brief period of time, a good many analyses of syntactic constructions were carried out within a variational framework. Probably one of the best known systematic applications of the variational approach to historical syntax is of course Suzan Romaine's analysis of relative markers in Middle Scots (cf. Romaine 1982). But though Romaine is, to a certain extent, a pioneering work in this respect, it must be admitted that at present the most prominent variationist studies are being done in

the Scandinavian countries and particularly in Finland, by Professor Matti Rissanen of the University of Helsinki and his colleagues there.

The experience gained from their published work has made it clear that, on the whole, despite the confidence permeating the statement of Gillian Sankoff quoted a few minutes ago, the transfer of the methods used in phonology into syntax is not so smooth as one would wish and involves, in fact, a number of problems[2]. Probably the most important relate to the nature of the corpus and to the delimitation of what actually constitutes a syntactic variant.

Variational linguistics, whether it focuses on phonology or on other levels of the grammar, is essentially corpus-based. By definition, the corpus must take into consideration all the possible variants, or, to put it more plainly, all the different ways of saying the same thing, and also all the various constraints controlling such variants. Now, for those working on phonology it is relatively easy to be certain that the corpus in use contains all such variants, and also that all the environments in which each variant can and cannot appear are well represented; after all, the phonological system is almost finite, and its inventory is relatively limited. However, in order to achieve similar results in syntax, it is clear that the corpus has to be much larger and representative both on the diachronic and synchronic dimensions. On the diachronic dimension, the corpus must contain records dating from the various stages of the language, so as to adequately reflect language development through time. From a synchronic point of view, the corpus must include writings reflecting, as closely as possible, both the social and textual variables existing at any given period. Social variables include age, sex, ethnic group, social class, social attitudes, education, occupation, etc., while, in their turn, the textual variables include the type of text (description, narration, exposition, argumentation, instruction), its originality or non originality (whether it is a translation or not), the degree of formality, and so on.

It may well be imagined that the compilation of a corpus with the above characteristics, so comprehensive in scope, would prove an impossible task for any individual; fortunately for those working in the field, this problem has now largely been solved by the appearance of the *Helsinki Corpus*, a computerized corpus compiled at the University of Helsinki which covers the Old, Middle and Early Modern English periods up to the year 1710, and comes to a total of about 1.600.000 words altogether[3]. A number of studies based on it have already been published or are about to be published, and it seems clear that from now on there will be a steady flow of variational studies on the most diverse syntactic problems.

A second problem entailed by the transfer of sociolinguistic methods from phonology to syntax lies in the definition of what actually constitutes

2.   For an overview of these, cf. Raumolin-Brunberg (1988).
3.   For information on the *Helsinki Corpus* in general, see Kÿto and Rissanen (1988).

a syntactic variant. As I have repeatedly mentioned, Labov's quantitative paradigm was designed to account for sound change rather than for change at other grammatical levels such as lexis or syntax. At the level of phonology, it is easy to determine what counts as a phonological variant; for instance, to quote an example from Labov's own work (1966), the variant pronunciations heard in New York City for words like *car*, *four*, *board*, etc., which are sometimes realized with an r-glide and sometimes not. However, when one comes to determine what counts as a syntactic variant, things are complicated by the fact that syntactic units have by definition a meaning, which is not true of phonological units. Thus a preliminary approach could be to maintain that «syntactic variants are simply syntactic units that differ in form but express the same meaning». Yet the problem arises anew when one has to specify what is understood by 'the same meaning': do we have in mind cognitive meaning alone, or also all other kinds of meaning, such as stylistic, connotative, affective and even pragmatic meaning? This issue has been extensively discussed by authors such as Bolinger (1977), Lavandera (1978), Rydén (1979), Romaine (1982:31-37; 1984), and Jacobson (1980, 1986, 1989), among others, and though there is no general consensus as yet, it can be said that, on the whole, the most common approach to syntactic variation is that which sees syntactic variants as involving simply the same cognitive or propositional meaning, but different expressive, stylistic, social or pragmatic meanings; that is, the propositions expressed by the syntactic variants in question must have the same truth value regardless of which variant is used. This position, which is the one adopted by both Rydén and Jacobson, would enable us to treat as syntactic variants constructions such as the following:

> (1a) the corner table = premodification by *corner* implies a permanent or characteristic feature. Witness the ungrammaticality of *the corner girl*.
> (1b) the table in the corner = postmodification implies temporariness or relative impermanence. Cf. *the girl in the corner*.
> (Between 1a and 1b the difference is one of connotative meaning.)
> (2a) John came here YESterday = in a normal reading of the sentence, the adverb *yesterday* would be the focal item.
> (2b) It was JOHN who came here yesterday = the focal item is now *John*[4].
> (Between 2a and 2b the difference is one of communicative or pragmatic intent.)
> (3a) We believe that John is a great scholar.
> (3b) We believe John to be a great scholar.
> (The difference is now stylistic, since, as is well known, the pattern in b has a more formal flavour than that in a; cf. Mair 1990:176.)

4.   Again in the normal reading of the sentence, for *yesterday* might continue to be focal in 2b; (cf. Quirk et al. 1985: 18.26).

Another common approach to the issue of syntactic variation is to require that syntactic variants should simply belong to the same semantic field. In other words, since cognitive or propositional meaning can itself be decomposed into semantic components, this second view widens the concept of syntactic variation even further by considering as syntactic variants expressions that share at least one but not all of the semantic components recognizable in their cognitive meaning. Under this interpretation, it would be possible, for instance, to consider as variants all syntactic constructions sharing the component FUTURE, but differing in their inclusion or non inclusion of other components such as PRE-ARRANGE-MENT, INTENTION, NEARNESS, etc.:

(4a) He will be here in half an hour.
(4b) The match is starting at 2.30 tomorrow.
(4c) I'm going to get married.
(4d) The train is about to leave.

A set of variants or options with some kind of common semantic deno-minator or invariant, such as this one, or, for instance, the set of English relative markers, is usually referred to in the relevant literature as a *syntactic paradigm* (cf. Rydén 1991:344-45). Syntactic paradigms can be catego-rised as primarily relational (e.g. the relative marker system) or primarily notional (e.g. modal systems, expressions of futurity, the alternation be-tween the verbs *be/have* as aspectual markers with mutative intransitive verbs, etc.). Basically, the variational approach to the historical study of syntax consists in an attempt to describe and discuss language develop-ment by examining the changing distribution patterns of the variant forms that make up a specific *syntactic paradigm*. That is, the first task of the linguist involved in variational syntax can be represented by means of a very simple formula such as the following:

(5) Stage X: A = 60%, B = 25%, C= 15% >
     Stage Y: A = 80%, B = 10%, C= 10%

But, needless to say, the analysis of a syntactic paradigm cannot be res-tricted to just enumerating the variants and giving information on their proportion of occurrence. Crucial also to the analysis is the identification of the factors which control the choice of variant, whether such factors be intralinguistic (syntactic context, arrangement of new and given informa-tion, etc.) or extralinguistic (meaning by this factors ranging from style, text-category and medium to social and cultural factors of various sorts).

To illustrate the above points, we may take as a convenient example the binary paradigm involving the verbs *be* and *have* as aspectual markers used to form the perfect of so-called mutative intransitives, i.e. intransitive verbs indicating change of place or state, such as *come, arrive, grow, become*, etc.:

(6) He is/has gone
(7) He is/has grown
(8) thy face is /hath become all pale
(9) God would I were/had arrived in the port.

This particular case of syntactic variation has recently been studied by Rydén and Brorström (1987), Rydén (1991), and Kytö (1992). Basically, in Old English and early Middle English the construction with *be* was the norm, while that with *have* had an average use of less than 10%. Between 1500 and 1700 the incidence of the latter auxiliary increases slowly (it can now be estimated at some 20%), and rises to about 40% by c. 1800, only to more than double again by c. 1900 to 90-95%. The final outcome of the change is the PE situation, in which *have* has become the only perfective auxiliary with all classes of verbs.

The movement away from *be* to *have* was promoted, according to Rydén and Brorström, by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. Among the first they mention, *inter alia*:

a) the aspectual distinction between 'state/result' and 'action'. Thus, verbs of motion or change in place, like *come* and *fall*, with which the stress is on action rather than on state, prove more hospitable to the *have* periphrasis than verbs of change in state like *grow, improve, recover*, etc.

b) the syntactic and semantic environment: iterative contexts like *the letters have come so regularly of late* favour *have* almost universally, and the same is true of certain modal contexts, like hypothetical clauses of rejected condition such as *I should not have been sorry if you had entered a little more into Peninsular politics.*

Among the extra-linguistic factors, significant differences present themselves on the basis of the nature of the text, more rapid change occurr-ing in the comedies than in other types of text. The sex of the writer seems to be another conditioning factor; Rydén and Brorström contrast Dicken's progressive uses with the conservative ones of Jane Austen and other female writers such as Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot; these all reveal conservative usage to be expected «in more 'isolated' social and regional areas, with restricted exposure to the paradigmatic development» (Rydén 1991:351).

Finally, as regards the possible causation of the change, it is suggested that «the functional load of *be*, as copula and as perfective or passive mark-er, was a potential source of ambiguity, which led to functional differentia-tion or disambiguation» (Rydén and Brorström 1987:24; cf. also Rydén 1991:347)[5]. In addition, other scholars, such as Sampson (1989), have

5. But, as Rydén himself (1991:353) points out, some scholars entertain doubts about the relevance of 'function' as an explanatory tool in the analysis of linguistic change; cf. Lass (1980): *On explaining language change*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.

pointed out the possible relevance of the further functional load imposed on *be* by the rise and generalisation of the progressive *be + -ing* form during the Modern English period.

The variational studies carried out so far, such as those on the *be/have* paradigm and others, have already revealed a number of interesting questions concerning syntactic change. For instance, the fact that, normally, syntactic change proceeds very slowly and assumes the form of alterations in the frequency of use of one or another variant, until eventually one of the variants disappears altogether[6]. Thus, in the case of the *be/have* variation with intransitives, the acceptance of *have* as the only perfective marker took about 1.000 years. In yet other cases, however, the loss of one of the variants never takes place; in other words, syntactic variation can remain stable over a long period of time, without actually being subject to change[7]. A well known instance of this second possibility is provided by the set of relative markers in English. As Romaine (1982) has made clear, the constraints on the distribution of *that*, *zero* and the WH- pronouns in Middle Scots are not fundamentally different from those operating in Modern Scots or in Present-day English in general. Another well known case of a syntactic paradigm that has also remained stable through time is, for instance, the variation between finite and nonfinite complement clauses after verbs of saying, thinking and declaring, as illustrated in examples (3a) and (3b) above. As shown by Warner (1982:134 ff) and Fanego (1992:132-39), the factors controlling their distribution in late Middle English and early Modern English are basically identical with those holding in PE (cf. Mair 1990:174 ff). Therefore, it can be concluded that though syntactic change implies prior syntactic variability, variability itself does not necessarily imply change.

As will have been clear from this brief discussion of the variationist approach as applied to the study of historical syntax, practically all of the analyses carried out so far within a variational framework are, essentially, applications of the sociolinguistic model developed by Labov and his associates, a model which is usually referred to as the *quantitative model* of linguistic change. But, as I mentioned at the beginning of this lecture, there are currently other interesting sociolinguistic approaches to language variation and change apart from Labov's himself, most notably the network model developed by James and Lesley Milroy (1980, 1985, 1992), and which the Milroy themselves have illustrated with examples of sound change in the Belfast area. Their main tenet, as is well known, is that language variation and change has to be interpreted as the result of speaker innovations that spread within and between speech communities mainly through weak ties in the social networks. Given its characteristics, it is

6. Cf. on this Rissanen (1986:97), Raumolin-Brunberg (1988-141), and Rydén (1991-352).
7. Cf. Romaine (1982) and Labov (1982:37-8).

easy to imagine that, in the near future, the network model will also prove fruitful for the study of syntactic variation and will thus be successfully used by historical linguists. So far, however, little can be said about it in connection with historical syntax; to my knowledge, only one systematic application of the model to the field of syntax has appeared to date, namely van der Wurff (1992), where he tries to account for the appearance in late ME of structures of the type *this is easy to get results with* by postulating internal borrowing between two networks of ME speakers having numerous weak-tie contacts. Van der Wurff's paper is certainly interesting and suggests that other syntactic changes in the history of English might be explained along similar lines, though it seems to me that, on the whole, his ideas need further refinement.

3. GRAMMATICALISATION AND HISTORICAL SYNTAX

The second recent development in the field of English historical syntax I will be considering today concerns grammaticalisation and its role in linguistic change. The term *grammaticalisation* itself, though very trendy and fashionable today, is in fact an old one; it goes back to Antoine Meillet, who in a celebrated article published in 1912 defined grammaticalisation as the process whereby a *mot autonome*, that is, what we would now call an independent lexical item, develops into a *mot accesoire* and eventually into an *élément grammatical*, such as, for instance, an auxiliary verb, a derivative morpheme, or an inflectional feature. As an illustration of the process he adduced the case of Latin *passus* 'step', which eventually yielded French *pas*; in the course of the process, the original lexical item loses its independent semantic content and comes to be used as a grammatical marker of negation used in the syntactic environment *ne... pas*.

Since the publication of Meillet's paper extensive evidence has been gathered to support the claim that lexical items are indeed apt to become grammatical markers in the course of time, and some instances of grammaticalisation have been thoroughly investigated, specially in connection with the Romance languages. Thus, the derivation of Spanish and Portuguese second-person polite pronouns *usted* and *você* from *Vuessa Merced* and *Vossa Nercê* 'Your Grace' is well known, and the same is true of the grammaticalisation of Latin *habere* «possess» (cf. for instance, Pinkster 1987). This was originally a full transitive verb which could enter into a subcategorization frame in which it was followed by a NP modified by an optional past participle, as in

(10) *habeo litteras scriptas*
      'I have the letters written'

From this it came to be grammaticalised in the Romance languages into an auxiliary verb devoid of its original possessive meaning and transi-

tive function, and expressing only distinctions of tense and aspect, or a combination of both (cf. Spanish *he escrito las cartas*, French *j'ai écrit les lettres*, etc.).

As far as English is concerned, the interest in grammaticalisation processes is relatively recent. Some discussion of the nature of grammaticalisation can be found in, for instance, Givón (1979:207 ff), and Vincent (1980:55-64). However, the most important theoretical contributions to the topic to date are doubtlessly Traugott (1982) and Traugott and Heine (1991); these will shortly be followed by Romaine and Vincent (forthcoming) and Hopper and Traugott (1993). Finally, a few studies focusing on specific instances of grammaticalisation processes in English have already appeared, most notably Goossens (1987), on the English modals and their development from full verbs into auxiliaries, Nevalainen (1990), on the grammaticalisation of the OE place adverb *butan* 'outside', and Brinton (to appear) and Fischer (to appear), both on the quasi-auxiliary *have to*.

Since the study of grammaticalisation is, so to speak, still in its beginnings, it is not surprising that many aspects of it are still only very imperfectly understood. For instance, as Heine and Traugott (1991) themselves note, little is known about the exact conditions under which grammaticalisation takes place, nor about the extent to which the semantics of a lexical item prior to its grammaticalisation determines the specific kind of grammaticalisation process that that item can undergo. However, it seems clear on the whole that, for a lexical item to be syntactised, it must have a certain degree of saliency and frequency. Also, recent research on grammaticalisation suggests that grammaticalisation processes are not autonomous and inexorable; that is, that they cannot take place unless there is a specific syntactic trigger to make them possible. Thus Fischer (forthcoming) puts forward the claim that the grammaticalisation of *have to* in English was made possible by the change from SOV to SVO order that English underwent at the beginning of the Middle English period. At any rate, my concern today is not so much with this aspect of grammaticalisation, on which further research is clearly needed before we can reach any conclusions of general validity, as with the process of grammaticalisation itself, and specifically, the semantic and functional shift which inevitably accompanies such process.

As first suggested by Traugott (1982), it seems that the semantic and functional changes undergone by lexical items when they are syntactised follow a similar line of development across languages. Using the functional framework of Michael Halliday, Traugott distinguishes between:

a) the *ideational function* or component of a language, which involves the resources of the language for expressing the processes (e.g. giving, taking, driving, etc.) that go on in the real world, the participants in those processes (e.g. the Actor, the Senser, the Goal, etc.), and the circumstances attending them (location, time, manner and so forth).

b) the *textual function* or component, which has to do with the resources of the language for creating a cohesive discourse, in the technical sense given to the term *cohesion* within Halliday's framework. Included in the textual component are conjuncts such as *but, therefore, moreover, as a result*, etc., and a number of other items such as relativizers and subordinating conjunctions in general.

c) the *interpersonal component*, which involves, *inter alia*, the resources of a language for expressing personal attitudes to the speech situation and to what is being talked about. Included here are disjuncts such as *of course, unfortunately, evidently, certainly*, and also modalities like *must, will, may, have to, can*, etc.

Apparently, the evidence from processes of grammaticalisation in various languages shows that ideational elements first shift into textual functions, then into the interpersonal component of language, and finally into dummy grammatical markers. All three shifts are of course not obligatory: a given item may be directly syntactised into a dummy, or it may stop at any of the earlier stages of the process (Traugott 1982:256). In order to clarify this evolutionary model, let's take a look at a few examples from the history of English which indeed seem to confirm this suggested line of semantic and functional development:

1. *development of the semi-auxiliary* have to *(after Fischer, forthcoming)*

All the English modal auxiliaries, which have developed from full lexical verbs having an ideational function in OE to auxiliary verbs with an interpersonal function, provide well known instances of grammaticalisation. The same is true of the semi-auxiliary *have to*, as follows:

a) from OE to the eModE period, ideational function as a full verb meaning 'possess':

> (11) Kyng Alisaunder ne hath to gye/ Non foller of chyualerye
>   'King Alexander not has to guide none fuller of chivalry'
>   i.e. 'King Alexander has not under his command anyone more
>   distinguished for knightly virtues'

b) starting in the eModE period, gradual process of grammaticalisation into a semi-auxiliary dependent on the infinitive; it denotes obligation and has thus an interpersonal function, as in PE *the administration has to make unpopular decisions*.

2. *development of the OE place adverb* butan *'outside' (after Nevalainen 1990)*

a) ideational function in OE: *butan* was used as a place adverb meaning 'outside' and also as a local preposition:

(12) Chronicle 893 Besaeton theah thaet geweorc utan sume twegen dagas, and genamon ceapes eall thaet thaer *buton* waes, and tha men ofslogon the hie foran forridan mehton *butan* geweorce

'they besieged the fortress for some two days, and seized all the cattle that was outside, and killed the men whom they could cut off outside the fortress'

b) from OE, *butan* starts to develop uses as a coordinating conjunction (cf. OED *But*, conj. III, 23). In ME, it comes also to be used in the second of two juxtaposed clauses with the meaning 'yet, however' (in this function it replaces earlier *ac*). In either use, *but* serves to promote textual cohesion.

(13) Chaucer *Canterbury Tales* (MED, s.v. *but*, conj. 6d) He herde it wel, *but* he spak right not.

c) the interpersonal function of *but* develops also in ME, for instance, in its use in (14) and (15) (cf. OED *But*, 27 «after an interjection or exclamation [...] expressing some degree of opposition, objection, protest; but also colloquially, mere surprise or recognition of something unexpected; cf. also MED *But*, 7b):

(14) Chaucer, *House of Fame* (MED, s.v. *but*, 7b) Lat me go first! Nay, *but* let me!
(15) Excuse me! *but* your coat is dusty (*OED*, s.v. But, 27).

3. *development of the dummy auxiliary* do:

a) ideational function in Old and Middle English (full lexical verb with the meanings 'put', 'cause'):

(16) *Gen* 37.19 Uton [...] don hyne on thone ealdan pytt
'Let us put him in this old well'
(17) *HomU* 34 (Nap 42) 109 And treowa he deth faerlice blowan and eft rathe asearian
'And trees he causes to bloom suddenly and again to wither quickly'

b) interpersonal function in late ME and eModE: in affirmative statements with perception verbs (*discern, hear, see*) and speech act verbs (*allege, beseech, assure, confess*), *do* + *V* (e.g. I *do assure you*) seems to have been used to assert the truth of the proposition, while the simple V would express uncertainty or noncommitment[8].

---

8. That *do* could be used to vouch for the speaker's truthfulness has been suggested by Traugott (1972:139; 1982:257). Not all scholars, however, concur with her views; cf., for instance, Nevalainen (1991:305-306).

c) from c. 1600 onwards, grammaticalisation of *do* into a dummy syntactic marker used in questions and negatives.

To conclude this brief discussion of recent developments in historical syntax, I would like to bring forward a question for which I have no answer as yet, namely, can the two approaches to the study of syntax I have examined today, the variationist approach and the study of grammaticalisation processes, be harmonized or are they to be kept completely independent of each other? In other words, how can the study of grammaticalisation be integrated in the larger context of linguistic variation? It is still too soon to provide a solution to this, but one will probably be given in the near future. It has already been shown (cf., among others, Hopper 1991:22) that grammaticalisation proceeds gradually and that, as might be expected, the old construction and the new, more grammaticalised, construction coexist in the language for a certain period of time, so giving rise to a pattern of variation that might itself be approached from the perspective of sociolinguistic and variationist research.

REFERENCES

Bailey, Ch. J. (1973): *Variation and linguistic theory*, Arlington, Virginia: Center for Applied Linguistics.
Bolinger, D. (1977): *Meaning and form*, London & New York: Longman.
Brinton, L. (to appear): «The origin and development of quasimodal *have to* in English».
Fanego, T. (1992): *Infinitive complements in Shakespeare's English*, Universidad de Santiago: Servicio de Publicaciones.
Fischer O. (1993): «The development of quasi-auxiliaries in English and changes in word order», to appear in *Dutch Working Papers in English Language and Linguistics*.
Givón, T. (1979): *On understanding grammar*, New York: Academic Press.
Goossens, L. (1987): «The auxiliarization of the English modals: a functional grammar view», in M. Harris & P. Ramat (eds.), 111-43.
Harris, M. & Ramat, P. (eds.) (1987): *Historical development of auxiliaries*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
Hopper, P. J. (1991): «On some principles of grammaticization», in E. C. Traugott & B. Heine (eds.), 17-36.
Hopper, P. J. & Traugott, C. E. (1993, to appear): *Grammaticalization*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.
Jacobson, S. (1980): «Issues in the study of syntactic variation», in S. Jacobson (ed.): *Papers from the Scandinavian Symposium on Syntactic Variation*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 23-36.
— (1986): «Synonymy and hiponymy in syntactic variation», in S. Jacobson (ed.): *Papers from the Third Scandinavian Symposium on Syntactic Variation*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 7-17.
— (1989): «Some approaches to syntactic variation», in R. W. Fasold & D. Schriffin (eds.): *Language change and variation*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 381-94.
Kÿto, M. & Rissanen, M. (1988), «The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts: classifying and coding the diachronic part», in M. Kÿto, O. Ihalainen, & M. Rissanen (eds.): *Corpus*

linguistics, hard and soft. Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on English Language Research on Computerized Corpora, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 169-179.

Kÿto, M. (to appear): «On the use of *be* vs. *have* with intransitives in early Modern English».

Labov, W. (1963): «The social motivation of a sound change», *Word* 19, 273-309.

— (1966): *The social stratification of English in New York City*, Washington D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

— 1972): *Sociolinguistic patterns*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

— (1982), «Building on empirical foundations», in W. P. Lehmann & Y. Malkiel (eds.): *Perspectives on historical linguistics*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 17-92.

Lavandera, B. (1978): «Where does the sociolinguistic variable stop?», *Language in Society* 7, 171-83.

Mair, C. (1990): *Infinitival complement clauses in English*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.

Meillet, A. (1912): «L'evolution des formes grammaticales», *Scientia* 12.

Milroy, L. (1980): *Language and social networks*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Milroy, J. & Milroy, L. (1985), «Linguistic change, social network and speaker innovation», *Journal of Linguistics* 21, 339-84.

Milroy, J. (1992): *Linguistic variation and change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Nevalainen, T. (1990): «Modelling functional differentiation and function loss: the case of *but*», in S. Adamson et al. (eds.): *Papers from the 5th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 337-55.

— (1991): «Motivated archaism: the use of affirmative periphrastic *do* in Early Modern English liturgical prose», in D. Kastovsky (ed.): *Historical English Syntax*, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 303-20.

Pinkster, H. (1987): «The strategy and chronology of the development of future and perfect tense auxiliaries in Latin», in M. Harris & P. Ramat (eds.), 193-223.

Quirk, R., & et al. (1985): *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*, London & New York: Longman.

Raumolin-Brunberg, H. (1988): «Variation and historical linguistics. A survey of methods and concepts», *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 89, 136-54.

Rissanen, M. (1986): «Variation and the study of English historical syntax», in D. Sankoff (ed.): *Diversity and diachrony*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 97-109.

Romaine, S. (1982): *Socio-historical linguistics*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.

— (1984): «On the problem of syntactic variation and pragmatic meaning in sociolinguistic theory», *Folia Linguistica* XVIII, 409-37.

Romaine, S. & Vincent, N. (eds.) forthcoming *Grammaticalisation*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Rydén, M. (1979a): *An introduction to the historical study of English syntax*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.

— (1979b): «On syntactic variability», *Nordic Linguistic Bulletin* 3, 4-15.

— (1991): «The *be/have* variation with intransitives in its crucial phases», in D. Kastovsky (ed.): *Historical English syntax*, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 343-54.

Rydén, M. & Brorström, S. (1987): *The be/have variation with intransitives in English*, *Stockholm*: Almqvist & Wiksell.

Sampson, R. (1989), Review of Rydén and Brorström (1987), *English Studies* 70, pp. 458-9.

Sankoff, G. (1973): «Above and beyond phonology in variable rules», in Ch. J. Bailey & R. Shuy (eds.): *New ways of analyzing variation in English*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown U. P., 42-62.

Traugott, E. C. (1972): *The history of English syntax*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

— (1982), «From propositional to textual and expressive meanings; some semantic-pragmatic aspects of grammaticalization», in W. P. Lehmann & Y. Malkiel (eds.): *Perspectives on historical linguistics*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 245-71.

Traugott, E. C. & Heine, B. (eds.) (1991): *Approaches to grammaticalization*, Vol. I, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Vincent, N. (1980): «Iconic and symbolic aspects of syntax: prospects for reconstruction», in P. Ramat (ed.): *Linguistic reconstruction and Indo-European syntax*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 47-68.

Warner, A. (1982): *Complementation in Middle English*, London & Canberra: Croom Helm.

Weinreich, U., Labov, W., & Herzog, M. (1968) «Empirical foundations for a theory of language change», in W. P. Lehmann & Y. Malkiel (eds.): *Directions for historical linguistics*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 95-189.

Van der Wurff, W. (1992): «Syntactic variability, borrowing and innovation», *Diachronica* 9/1, 61-85.