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The impact of English on Spanish daily life and some pedagogical implications

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Abstract
In applied linguistics, it is far from doubt the prominent role of English as a global language. However, not many studies (Rodríguez 2002; Reichelt 2006) have provided a deep account of the current role of English in Spain. This paper sheds light on the unprecedented prominence of English in almost every single area of Spaniards' daily life. It aims to show the impact of English in various settings such as the Spanish linguistic landscape by analysing shop signs in English; the media, including television, radio, and music; interpersonal communications, which includes the workplace, and the academic setting. The Spanish education system has been given special attention, as this study examines all the educational levels and it discusses, from a pedagogical point of view, the Spaniards' level of proficiency.

KEY WORDS: Spain, anglicisms, ELF, communication, pedagogy

1. Introduction

A considerable volume of literature has been written to discuss the situation of English in the world. Dewey (2007:333) aptly depicts the impact of English on present-day societies:

> English is like no other language in its current role internationally, indeed like no other at any moment of history. Although there are, and have previously been, other international languages, the case of English is different in fundamental ways: for the extent of its diffusion geographically; for the enormous cultural diversity of the speakers who use it; and for the infinitely varied domains in which it is found and purposes it serves.

In Europe, this influence impacts every realm of Europeans' daily life. The role that English plays in Spain is not far from the ones played in other European countries. English has unquestionably become the main vehicle of communication or *lingua franca* among speakers who do not share a common tongue. Consequently, different trends have emerged among scholars as regards the international role of English.

In 1995, Berns[1] adapted Kachru's model within the framework of *World Englishes* to describe the position of English in Europe. At present, as a result of globalisation, and development of technological means that allow interconnectedness, the role of English has become more prominent in many European countries. Its presence is so pervasive in every realm of daily life that we need to consider whether its conventional role as a mere foreign language is now shifting. Modiano (1996; 2001) was one of the first authors to consider the emergence of a European variety of English or "Euro-English".

As the world moves, and does so very quickly, language also moves and evolves. Europeans wish and need to speak English in order to be able to communicate among each other, which is leading to a certain sense of identity with English as it serves the purposes of communication in many different settings.

Spain is an example of this linguistic situation. Even though Castilian is the official language of the whole of Spain, there are other 'minority' languages such as Catalan, Basque or Galician, which have a recognised official status in their specific autonomous communities. Thus, they co-exist with Castilian. Spain is a multilingual country, and in certain communities, Castilian is taught along with these minority (at the national level) languages. Consequently, there are areas where English is not the second language to be learnt, but the third or fourth one. This fact has not prevented many anglicisms from being introduced into Castilian Spanish.

When it comes to the position of Spanish scholars towards this penetration of English words into Spanish, they have traditionally adopted two different positions. Some of them (Lorenzo 1996; Segura 2003) have regarded these English words as unnecessary, since there are Spanish equivalents for most of the concepts they refer to. They consider that these uses are the result of snobbery, modernity and prestige, rather than the real needs of the Spanish language. Two examples are *marketing* instead of *mercadotecnia*, *online* instead of *en línea*.

[1] Berns (1995) adapted Kachru's typology of the three concentric circles to the context of Europe. Kachru's (1992) typology distinguishes three kinds of countries according to the function of English: *Inner circle* (countries whose native language is English); *Outer circle* (countries where English functions as a second language that may have an official status); *Expanding circle* (countries where English is a foreign language with no official status).

The second position is shown by those scholars, among which I personally subscribe, who have merely described the situation of English in Spain without judging these uses in a positive or negative way. Evidence that supports this claim is offered by the following studies which cover different areas: economy and finances (González 2000), the legal domain (Sánchez and Durán 2002), advertising (Durán 2002), music (Olivares 2009), computers and new technologies (Pano 2007; Bolaños and Luján 2010), shop windows (Luján-García 2010b). Special attention has also been paid to the uses of English words by young Spaniards, as they seem to be the most influential section of the population in terms of the way English and Spanish co-exist in contemporary Spanish and with regard to their cultural production (González et al. 2009). The fact that English is present in all these settings in Spain is more evidence of the increasing interconnectedness and mutual influence among languages, largely brought about as a result of globalisation.

In this article, I will provide an overview of the linguistic landscape of Spain by giving photographic evidence of the presence of English; the media (television, radio, and the internet); and an analysis of the use of English in interpersonal communication. To start with, some remarks on the teaching of English in Spanish educational system are offered.

2. English in the educational system

A couple of decades ago, Spanish people learnt French as the first foreign language. Today, English has become the first foreign language studied in all the different educational levels in the Spanish educational system. In Lorenzo's words (1996:17):

> In the 1950s, English was taught as an optional first foreign language in secondary schools to around 5 per cent of the students, whereas French was studied by over 90 per cent of students. At present, the situation is totally different: English is in the first position, and French is in a second place.

2.1. Primary and Secondary education

One of the principles supported by the LOE, or Law on Education in Spain (2006), is the process of learning foreign languages throughout the students' lives (http://www.educacion.es/educacion). This may give a

broad idea of how studying languages, other than Castilian, and especially English, has become essential for Spanish students. English is not an option but an obligation for the youngest generations.

When considering the study of other foreign languages, English is by far the most studied language in Spain. Other foreign languages such as French or German are also offered in most state schools, not as a second but rather, as a third or even fourth language. Young children start studying English from three years old, in an optional way, and when they are six, in a compulsory way. At those levels, they attend two hours of English lessons per week. The exposure to English is increased as the students are at higher levels. At secondary education, which comprises four academic years, Spanish students get four hours of English classes per week. This amount of time varies slightly depending upon each specific autonomous community. In some bilingual communities such as Catalonia, Basque country, Valencia, Galicia and the Balearic Islands, English instruction is provided for two or three hours a week, and for these students English is their third language.

There are also some communities such as the Canary Islands, Andalusia, or Valencia where a new ambitious programme is being run by the educational authorities. It is called CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) programme, and it consists of using English as the medium of instruction for other subjects different from English (for example, arts, sciences, and so on). The different subjects are partially or totally taught in English. Therefore, these students get more English exposure than the followers of the regular curriculum. Students are required to pass an English entrance exam to be eligible for this programme. It is still a new programme but it is becoming quite widespread among primary and secondary schools.

To illustrate, in the Spanish community of the Canary Islands, this programme began in academic year 2004/05 as a pilot in 11 primary educational centres. In 2005/06, the programme was rolled out into 10 secondary schools. For 2010/11, this programme is being implemented in 407 educational centres in the Canary Islands (367 primary schools and 40 secondary schools) (González-Ares 2010:28). Therefore, the number of educational centres involved in this programme has multiplied by thirty seven times in a period of 5 years.

2.2. Official schools of languages

This kind of 'special' school may be considered an alternative way to learn foreign languages. It is basically addressed to people who are 16 years old or more. The curriculum is organised over three different levels, each of which is studied for two years. After the completion of each level, learners are expected to have reached levels A2 (for the first or basic level), B1 (for intermediate level) and B2 (for advanced level) (Ley Orgánica 2/2006 de 3 de mayo, de Educación). These schools offer many different foreign languages to be studied; English, German, French, Italian, and Chinese, which has been recently included in the curriculum of these schools. Spanish is also studied as a foreign language.

In the specific case of English, this is by far the most demanded foreign language, and it may sometimes be quite difficult to find a place in an English classroom. As an example, in the Canary Islands, the most chosen foreign language has traditionally been English. In academic year 2009/10, there were 18,518 students of English. The second most chosen was German with 4,226 students. French was third with 3,292 students and Italian was chosen by 841 students (Dirección General de Formación Profesional y Educación de Adultos de la Consejería de Educación, Universidades, Cultura y Deportes del Gobierno de Canarias). As it may be observed, the number of students of English is not comparable with the rest of the foreign languages studied at this kind of school.

2.3. Higher Education

The Bologna Process was an agreement signed in 1999 that involved a number of European countries. The goal of this project is to harmonise and standardise the European Higher Education system. It is also a way to encourage mobility of students from different countries. As Graddol explains (2006:74), this process uses "a common approach to levels and length of courses" and it follows the lines of the British model. Although the use of English is not a requirement within this process, it is true that English is the most popular choice of foreign language in the European educational systems. The implementation of the Bologna process in different countries of the EU has become a challenge for the educational authorities, teachers and students.

The Bologna declaration of a European Space for Higher Education has been compulsorily implemented in all Spanish universities in the academic year 2010/2011. The great importance of this process in Spain should be highlighted, as it has produced many changes in the Spanish University system. Some of these changes include; curricular redesigning processes, in which English has a more prominent role; the new design of most subjects, which have undergone major changes in terms of assessment and methodology; new organisation in the different colleges and faculties regarding timetables, seminars, and tutorial hours.

As a consequence, the Bologna Process has produced controversial reactions among teachers and students. These protests were based on several reasons such as; the increase of study time outside the classroom, the fear of having to pay higher fees and the increased prominence of English. At present, the situation might be considered to be relieved by the gradual implementation of this process throughout all the Spanish universities. Students to the new system seem to offer a more positive attitude towards Bologna. Most degrees in Spain take four years for students to graduate. Students are expected to get a number of credits for class attendance, work and examinations, with extra credits for out-of-class work. English is included in most of these degrees, where it is taught as a foreign language, whereas in others, English is used as the means of instruction in certain subjects. There are a number of credits which are related to English instruction and which have to be fulfilled by all the students, no matter whether they are attending a humanistic or a scientific degree. In short, English has gained a more prominent role throughout Higher education in Spain.

2.4. International student mobility (ERASMUS)

ERASMUS linguistic programmes are becoming more and more popular in the context of Europe. According to recent estimates, in the academic year 2008/09, 168,200 students received Erasmus support to pursue studies abroad and spent an average of six months at their host university. The most popular destinations were Spain (33,200 students), France (24,600) and Germany (22,000). (http://www.euractiv.com/en/culture/record-numbers-take-part-eu-student-mobility-scheme-news-495478). This is evidence of the growing interconnectedness among young Europeans. What is most significant here is the fact that the most

chosen destinations are not the UK or Ireland, but the language that serves the purposes of communication among these students is, in most cases, English.

3. English in the Spanish linguistic landscape

The interaction of language in society is an indicator of how those societies are breathing and changing. A detailed picture of language in any given social context can be gained from a consideration of a relatively recent field of study, *linguistic landscaping* or *ecology of language*, the purpose of which is to "bring together the micro- and macro- level streams of sociolinguistic research that are necessary to fully grasp all aspects of the social mechanisms involved in multilingualism" (Hult 2009:88). Laundry and Bourhis (in Barni and Bagna 2009:128) assert that "the presence of languages in a given territory can be described by observing their traces within the social communication space". These authors refer to the messages and texts produced in the public contexts of inhabited areas: cities and towns, and within them, streets, squares, etc. This approach to linguistic data allows us to address societal changes, and consequently, linguistic changes in any ecosystem. In present-day Western societies, a number of shifts are taking place in an unprecedentedly quick way. These changes are produced due to the confluence of a series of factors such as; globalisation, migration, the media, language policies, among others.

3.1. Shop-signs

In Spain, the presence of English is very noticeable in the streets, as you look at shop signs. It is very common to see the name of a shop in English, with a mixture of English and Spanish, and with the use of inflected genitive construction. One recent study (Luján-García 2010a) reveals the impact of English on Spanish shop signs. This research, which is focused on the city of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Canary Islands), analysed all the shop signs in English in the two main commercial areas of this town. The study covered 25 streets and two squares of the area of Triana and 19 streets of the area of Mesa y López. The total number of shops in Triana is 695, out of which 132 shop signs contain some English. This means that 18.9% of the shop signs in this

area contain an anglicism. In the examined area of Mesa y López there are 433 shops, out of which 80 display English words in their shop signs, 18.4% of the total. In this study, a distinction between different kinds of uses of the English language in shop signs was carried out; a) English words, b) genitive construction, c) English/Spanish words, and d) hybrid-mixtures of English and Spanish in the same word.

This piece of research sheds some light on the vast volume of shop signs using anglicisms in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. In qualitative terms: English-only shop signs are the most common ones (rather than English-Spanish, as it might be expected in principle). Fashion and communication shops, along with restaurants, are the kinds of shops that use English words and expressions most frequently (Luján-García 2010a). This provides evidence that English is commonly associated with values such as modernity and fashion. In addition, it is the language more frequently employed in the settings of telecommunications and new technologies.

It is also important to highlight the role of tourism in Spain, which is the third most popular tourist destination in the world, with 48 million tourists (Phillipson and Milner 2006:190). Tourism is unquestionably a source of influence, not only for the Spanish culture, but also for the Spanish language. These tourists, in most cases, use English in order to communicate with locals, which creates a need to understand and make yourself understood in English amongst Spaniards.

Figure 1. Example of the presence of English in Spanish shop signs.

Figure 2. Example of English in Spanish shop sign.

These photographs depict some of the current impact of English in Spaniards' daily life. Canary Islanders see these kinds of shop signs on their way to school, work, and so on. The question that remains though, is what are these indicative of? It leads us to wonder whether this increasing familiarity with English is creating a certain sense of identity with the English language amongst Spaniards? We need to consider whether the role of English in Spain is undergoing substantial change. This is one more realm of Spaniards' daily life in which the presence of English is noticeable. Can the prospective Spanish customers understand these shop signs in English? The answer might be related to values such as fashion, modernity and perceptions of 'coolness'. As Goddard (1998) comments, English is commonly used in advertising, as it is perceived as a very fashionable language. Durán (2002) states that English is the most chosen 'foreign' language for advertising products in Spain because it not only appeals to customers as a fashionable language, but it also makes prospective customers feel good when they are able to understand these words in English.

In other parts of Europe, similar studies focusing on the presence of English words in shop signs have been carried out. McArthur (2000) reports on the amount of English in the shop signs of Zürich (Switzerland) and Uppsala (Sweden). Schlick (2002) researches the same issue in three European cities: Klagenfurt (Austria), Udine (Italy) and Ljubljana (Slovenia), and she finds that the most frequently employed foreign language is English. Griffin (2004) reveals the important

presence of English in Rome shop signs. Dimova (2007) points out the increasing use of English in Macedonia. These studies document the increasing impact and familiarity of European citizens with English. Again, it may be questioned whether the role of English in Europe is shifting.

The following section intends to document the importance of English in the media in Spain.

4. English in the media

4.1. Television

In Spain, a number of television channels broadcast in different foreign languages, but mostly in English. The following piece of news describes the easy access to English speaking channels in this country, "If you wish to stay in touch with television in the UK there is absolutely no problem whatsoever as SKY, BBC & ITV and over 200 free to air channels & radio stations can be received all over Spain" (http://thisisspain.info/help-advice/english-and-spanish-television-on-the-costa-blanca/).

With the rapid development of unlimited sources on the internet, the world of telecommunications has been revolutionized. Satellite TV was accessible in Spain a couple of decades ago in many different areas, but only with the use of a special kind of aerial, which was needed in order to see various channels for free. Many of them are English speaking channels: *Eurosports, CNN, Fox*, among others. Technology has given a step forward in the field of television broadcasting, and cable TV is already a reality in most Spanish homes. With this kind of television, the access to more channels is ensured and it also allows us to watch any film in English in its original version. This way of watching TV is a further consequence of the processes of globalisation and increased interconnectedness. It allows Spanish speakers to be in closer contact with the English language than they were a decade ago.

4.2. Internet

The internet has become one of the most important vehicles of communication of present-day society. It is a very useful tool in this

globalised world, where you can contact anybody, anywhere, at any time. When it comes to the most frequently used language on the Internet, according to Graddol (2006:44), it is English, since 32% of Internet websites are in English, followed by Chinese (13%). Once more, English is used as a *lingua franca*, as it serves the purposes of communication of people whose native languages are different.

According to data obtained in September 2010, English is the most chosen language for the largest Spanish companies that want to advertise their products on-line to the rest of the world. For example, the well-known Spanish department store *El Corte Inglés* provides on its website information and services to customers in English, instead of French or German. The same thing happens with the telephone company *Telefónica;* with the Spanish bank *Grupo Santander,* which offers the choice of English and Portuguese; the oil company *Repsol* provides users with the option of the different languages spoken in Spain, Portuguese and *international English*, as it appears on this website; and the oil company *Cepsa,* offers English as the only foreign language in its website. It is also the most widespread foreign language for academic journals published on-line, since the international academic world is dominated by English. The cyber world of the Internet is teeming with English terms. This is evidenced by the number of anglicisms that are used by young Spanish people. A list of words such as *messenger, chat, on-line, e-mail, wifi, bluetooth, router, hacker,* and the very word *internet* are used on a daily basis by any Spanish speaker.

4.3. Radio

English is massively present in Spanish radio stations. This presence can be observed by means of music (current and classic hits) in English, which may be listened to in almost all the different radio stations. But, what is more, there are a number of Spanish radio stations that broadcast programmes solely in English. These programmes range from talk shows to local news. According to data taken from the website *www.listenlive.eu,* in Spain there are a total of 169 radio stations which broadcast on the internet. From this figure, 20 of these radio stations are totally in English (11.8% of the total of Spanish radio stations

broadcasting on the internet). Many of these stations[2] are based in local tourist areas where a number of foreigners, mostly British, are settled.

4.4. Music

There are a number of Spanish singers who choose to compose and perform their songs in English rather than Spanish or any other foreign language. There are different reasons that account for this fact. First, the bands may wish to look fashionable and 'cool', as English is seen as a very trendy language; second, the fact that singing in English you may address a major audience. Some of the Spanish bands that choose English as the language to sing are: *Cat People, The Sunday Drivers, The Blows, Second, The Singletons, The Unfinished Sympathy* or *Mendetz.* Notably, these bands also choose English names instead of Spanish. In recent research, Olivares (2009) has found that a number of English words are frequently used in music magazines addressed to young people. Some examples are *CD, VIP, hip hop, boom, hard rock, making off,* etc.

5. English in interpersonal communication

The current role of English in Europe may represent a challenge to the conventional *World Englishes* framework, which claims that English in Europe is used only as a 'foreign language', i.e. as having no institutional status or performing no culture / identity related functions. By contrast, the situation is shifting, as English has gained a prominent position, and continues to achieve an even more prominent one.

As an effect of globalisation along with the increasing development of communications technologies that allow fast and easy contact among Europeans, English serves these purposes of communication. When doing this, English becomes a pluralised entity, with its different accents, pronunciations, vocabulary and so on. In other words, English is playing the role of *lingua franca* in Europe.

[2] The radio stations which broadcast in English in Spain are: *Ace FM, The Beat, Bay Radio, Central FM, Coast FM, Cool FM, Excite FM, Heart FM, Global Radio, UK Away FM, Torre FM, TKO Gold, TKO Gold, Ocean FM, Hot FM, JFM Radio, Smile FM, Sunshine FM, Spectrum FM, Talk Radio Europe.*

5.1. Academic setting

Spanish Academia is another realm which is gradually being more and more dominated by the English language. Many of the most important academic journals in any field (medicine, computers, engineering, telecommunications, and linguistics) are published by foreign publishers. Thus, the chosen language in these journals is English. It implies that the scholar, engineer, doctor and so on, who reads this kind of journals, needs to have an acceptable mastery of English to read the articles. Furthermore, if these professionals want to publish their own findings at a global level, rather than locally, it has to be done in English. When attendance at international conferences is considered, the situation is not very different, as most presenters and speakers give their talks in English. All this requires a proficient level of English among the qualified professionals in Spain, if they want to be updated with the latest advancements, and findings.

One example is this paper I am writing in English, even though I am writing about the situation of Spain. I wish this paper to be published in an international academic journal, and be read by an international audience. As a result, I have to write in English.

5.2. The workplace

More and more companies in Spain demand from their candidates a proficient level of English if they want to become part of the firm. According to an article by the Spanish distance education institution *Qué cursar* (*www.quecursar.com*), four out of each five Spanish companies, demand a proficient level of English from their candidates in order to get a position in the company.

In Spanish newspaper adverts, there is an increasing tendency to require a proficient level of English from candidates, especially for positions addressed to highly qualified professionals. On one of the most popular websites to find a job in Spain, *www.infojobs.net*, many of the positions posted include a good level of English as a compulsory or, at least, desired requirement. Many employers offer courses to their employees in English in order to address their needs. For example, the local police of many communities in Spain offer courses on English for specific purposes. In some examination processes to get a position for the government, a test in English is part of the process. This exam may be

compulsory or optional (depending on each position), but in all cases, it may be decisive in order to get that position. According to Eurobarometer (2006:32), 73% of Spaniards regard English as the most useful foreign language for personal development and career.

All in all, English is necessary for many different professions. In the service sector: waiters, taxi drivers, hotel receptionists, travel agents, bank employees, they all need to be able to communicate with foreign speakers, not to mention that Spain is a very tourist oriented country, as explained before. Consequently, the contact of Spaniards with tourists is very common. In those cases, English is used as the *lingua franca* which allows communication.

5.3. Levels of proficiency and pedagogical implications

Spain is conventionally classified as an EFL country, where the authorities struggle to improve levels of proficiency in English (Reichelt 2006). Traditionally, Spaniards have been considered to have a relatively low proficiency in English and different reasons have contributed to this fact. In this country, there has not been a co-existence of Spanish with any other foreign language, as in some European countries, especially Northern countries. In the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, people speak their native language along with English. Different reasons explain that fact; for example, in these Northern countries, children are exposed to English from a young age. One example is that films are not dubbed, instead they are subtitled. That is far from the Spanish reality, where each film is dubbed into Spanish. These Northern countries also have a longer tradition of studying English, as there has been a close contact (via trade and commerce) between these countries and the UK. These facts have an effect on present-day Northern European citizens in terms of their mastery of English.

However, in certain realms such as the tourist industry, whose importance in Spain has been highlighted throughout this paper, people have to use English in order to communicate. Many of these users (usually waiters, hotel receptionists, taxi/bus drivers, shop assistants, and so on) are able to understand and make themselves understood with speakers of other foreign languages. Those uses of English are not always ‘grammatically correct’, but they allow communication, and they fit the framework of ELF, as the language is used to enable Spaniards to

communicate with tourists coming from all over the world. Cogo (2008:58) defines ELF as

> [...] an umbrella term that encompasses all types of communication among bilingual users of English in the expanding circle, but allows for local realisations as well as extensive use of accommodation strategies and code switching.

The paradigm of ELF may be regarded as a suitable one for the 21st century communication, and a good one to describe the specific reality of English in many realms (especially the tourist one) in Spain. Seidlhofer (2009:39) points out that the

> Changes in communications brought about by technological advances have accelerated and forced changes in the nature of communication. Where communities are no longer characterized by shared primary socialisation nor by a common native language, the need for a lingua franca is paramount. And for the time being anyway, the only genuinely global lingua franca is ELF.

This paradigm has emerged in response to the need to document and make sense of this type of English communication effective among speakers who do not share a common native language. In Spain, as in most European countries, this is the function of English. This issue leads us to wonder what is the Spaniards' level of proficiency in English. According to Eurobarometer (2006:10), 44% of Spaniards can speak 1 foreign language (English in most cases), 17% can speak 2 languages, and 6% is able to communicate in 3 languages.

In Spain, there is a tendency to believe that native teachers are better models to teach than non-native ones. However, that is far from appropriate, since these misbeliefs respond to traditional views of English language teaching strongly supported by numerous interests (mostly economic) and / or lack of sociolinguistic awareness.

In this paper, it is claimed that the levels of English proficiency among Spanish speakers might be more successful if the conventional attachment to NS (native speaker) norms of language practitioners and teachers were diminished, and new possibilities were considered. Most of the materials employed by English teachers in Spain come from English speaking countries (UK or USA basically), and these books, recordings, and so on, do not consider the specific requirements of Spanish learners, as they have been created in a foreign context to address students from all over the globe. The acquisition of knowledge

should be a local issue rather than a global one, as we have traditionally been told.

Canagarajah (2005:13) states that the difference is that although we previously adopted a position based on Western or modernist paradigms that were imposed on everybody, we are now going to think from the alternate position of our own locality, which is more relevant for our community life. Blommaert (2010:95) also highlights the positive effects of a "realistic local normativity" rather than a "purnitive, external, perceived universal normativity".

Materials for English teaching/learning thus need to be generated at the local level, as these should meet the specific needs and interests of each country's students. To illustrate the point, Spanish students most probably do not have the same interests and they do not live the same reality that say Mongolian students do. However, in terms of current conventional practice in ELT, they may well be using the same kind of materials created in the UK or US. Therefore, it might be questioned whether these materials really address the needs of such distant and different students. This rationale leads to highlight the 'burden' of NS models on NNS, and the need to get rid of this 'burden'. As Jenkins asserts (2007:33):

> ELF speakers are deeply affected by the standard language ideology that has resulted from these historical processes by virtue of the fact that their Englishes are (still) designated as 'performance' varieties that should look to Britain or North America for their norms.

By standard language ideology, Jenkins refers to the traditional consideration of native models as the 'desirable' models to learn English, which do not consider the specific features, needs, realities of the NNS. English in Spain is going through a fundamental qualitative as well as quantitative shift. Its status is changing, as the exposure to English is gradually increasing. The current situation of English in Spain is not the same than just two decades ago, as our parents could hardly understand a word in English. The young generations are not only very familiar with the presence of English in every corner, but they also like to see such a presence, and they commonly use English words in their Spanish discourse (Luján-García 2003). The positive attitudes of Spaniards towards the English language and Anglo-American culture are closely related. This relationship is another issue that needs to be taken into

account, since it has a direct impact on Spaniards' sense of identity towards English. This topic, though of great interest, is beyond the scope of this paper.

I am asserting that from the increasing appreciation of NNS teachers, as most of them are from Spain, to the gradual exposure of people to English, means that research on this field may be regarded as essential for the improvement in the levels of proficiency of English in Spain. It is this line of research that will be able to improve Spaniards' mastery of English.

My point is not based on the creation of many different varieties of English; Dutch-English, Spanish-English, Finnish-English, and so on, but it is based on the natural (i.e. not forced by native norms and models) use and function of English, which allows mutual understanding and allows communication among non-native speakers from all over the world. In doing that, certain local features (phonological, grammatical, lexical levels) have to be considered and respected, as long as communication takes place. In Jenkins' words (2009:200), "ELF is a question of mutual negotiation involving efforts and adjustments from all parties […] ELF involves both common ground and local variation". The traditional belief that the native models are the 'desirable' ones to imitate must stop being the cause of frustration to non-native speakers of English in Spain.

6. Discussion and conclusions

After having documented the situation of English in Spain, it is unquestionable that English is playing an increasingly substantial role in present-day Spanish society. It is doing so to the extent that we now need to reconsider the situation of English in Spain. Some decades ago, Spanish people were not very concerned about English learning and the use of English words in so many different settings. As Pennycook (2010:61) argues,

> Yet the sociolinguistic study of the multidimensional distribution of languages and varieties in urbanized settings is only useful if it takes on board a dynamic account of that relationship, an account of how urban spaces are given meaning through local language practices.

This unprecedented influence of the English language and Anglo-American culture in Spain is increasing, and it responds to the dynamism of current societies. English is finding its way, and is adapting to the context of Spain.

This influence affects, to a certain extent, almost every single area of Spaniards' daily life. This current role of English leads one to wonder whether the traditional paradigm of Spain as an EFL (English as a foreign language) country should be kept or whether it should be considered some other way. As explained before, the current situation of English seems to be undergoing a change, especially in the case of the youngest generations. Spanish teenagers are surrounded by the English language and Anglo-American values. The current status of English in Spain is unprecedented and we should not turn back to this fact.

From a pedagogical perspective, this paper questions whether the conventional beliefs that address native speakers and native English teaching materials as the models to follow are the most appropriate, in every context. New and well founded approaches focus on the uses of English that serve international purposes of communication and which are not tied to native grammatical rules, but aim at making communication effective. Many Spanish speakers working in tourism subscribe to these uses in order to be effective when talking to other foreign speakers. Spain might be regarded a country which, in certain contexts and with a specific accent, uses English as a *lingua franca* in order to communicate with other English speakers. As Jenkins (2009) comments,

> In many contexts that would conventionally be described as EFL, the role of English is shifting, with widespread growth in the number of domains in which the language is spoken, and an expansion in terms of intranational functions, especially in institutional settings such as higher education.

Teachers of English in Spain should have a better consideration of non-native accents, as the final goal of teaching students English is that they can communicate with their English rather than with a native English accent. Most of their Spanish teachers of English do not have this accent, nor will they be able to achieve it, unless they spend many years in an English native speaking country. This fact should not be a source of frustration, neither for English teachers nor for students in Spain.

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Facts, *ideas*, *questions*, *problems*, and *issues* in advanced learners' English[1]

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Abstract
Recurrent word combinations containing the nouns *fact, idea, question, problem* and *issue* are explored in three corpora of advanced learner English and a corpus of native speaker English, focusing on the comparison between Norwegian learners and native speakers. Native speakers use the nouns in recurrent word combinations more frequently than learners. Norwegian learners underuse *idea* and *issue*, whose use in English cannot be easily related to any structure in their L1. They also underuse combinations that reflect extended noun phrases, e.g. *the* NOUN *of/that*, and favour simple phrases such as *this* NOUN and *the* NOUN *is*.

1 Introduction

The present study explores the use of a small set of abstract nouns in advanced learner English, namely *fact, idea, question, problem,* and *issue*. A particular point of interest is the phraseology of these words. Abstract nouns such as *fact* and *question* acquire much of their meaning from the context; "Words mean things in the context of other words" (Ellis 2008: 1), because "the complete meaning of a word is always contextual" (Firth 1957: 7). The focus of this study will thus be on recurrent word combinations containing one of the nouns *fact, idea, question, problem* and *issue*. These nouns, though somewhat randomly chosen, have in common that they can be used as *shell nouns* (Hunston & Francis 1999, Schmid 2000), i.e. "they have, to varying degrees, the potential for being used as conceptual shells for complex, proposition-like pieces of information" (Schmid 2000: 4). An example is *the fact that*, where *fact* refers cataphorically to the projected *that*-clause and labels its content as 'fact'. The shell noun function is associated with lexical cohesion, though often using different terms, e.g. 'signalling nouns' (Flowerdew 2006), and 'labels' (Francis 1994). The use of shell

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nouns thus has a textual function. At the same time as the labelling of something as 'fact', as against e.g. 'idea', involves some degree of evaluation (cf. Schmid 2000: 8), thus also assuming an interpersonal function. Finally, the words may have a primarily referential function, as when *question* refers to a question that has been asked, or *idea* is used in the sense of "a thought that you have about how to do something or how to deal with something" (Macmillan). The textual and interpersonal uses of these nouns may belong to relatively advanced language mastery, and are thus of particular interest in a study of learner language.

Previous studies (e.g. Nesselhauf 2005, Paquot 2010) have shown that learners do not always use collocations in native-like fashion, even if their language may be grammatically correct (see also Pawley & Syder 1983). The main questions to be explored here are the following: How do Norwegian learners use the nouns *fact, question, issue, problem,* and *idea* compared to native speakers and to other learner groups? Do learners and native speakers use the same recurrent word combinations? Do the learners use the word combinations in appropriate contexts and with appropriate discourse functions?

2 Material and method

The investigation is based on the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) and the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS). Three subcorpora of ICLE have been used, viz. those where the learners have Norwegian (ICLE-NO), German (ICLE-GE) or French (ICLE-FR) as their first language. The three learner groups were chosen to represent both Germanic and Romance language backgrounds. The essays in the ICLE subcorpora are all written by university students of English, and most of them are argumentative. The LOCNESS essays are more varied, representing more genres (though mainly expository and argumentative) and a wider range of topics and being written by both university and secondary school students. Supplementary data have been drawn from the British National Corpus (BNC) and the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus (ENPC).[2]

[2] For more information on the corpora, see the websites cited at the end of this paper.

The ICLE subcorpora have been accessed from the ICLEv2 CD-ROM. To identify recurrent word combinations, the selected subcorpora were downloaded for analysis with the corpus tool AntConc.[3] The 'cluster' function of this tool allows searches for word combinations of any length containing a specified word. The length of the cluster was set to 2-4 since Altenberg's investigation (1998: 102) showed that most recurrent word combinations lie within this band. Longer recurrent word combinations will be discussed as extended patterns of 2-4-word clusters. The units studied are thus not collocations in the statistical sense of the word or phraseological units in the sense of Gläser (1998: 127 f.), but simply combinations of words that recur in identical form (Altenberg 1998: 101) and may therefore be viewed as "routinized and more or less prefabricated expressions" (ibid.: 120).

More precisely, recurrent word combinations containing the relevant nouns were selected according to the following principles: (i) they should have a minimum frequency of 5 in at least one of the learner corpora or 7 in LOCNESS due to the larger size of the corpus; (ii) they should overlap as little as possible. Thus for instance the bigram *fact that* was excluded because it almost always overlaps with either *the fact that* or *it is a fact*. Some recurrent 4-grams containing more frequent 3-grams have been regarded as collocation patterns of the 3-gram (an example is *to the fact that*, which is discussed as a collocation pattern of *the fact that*). The pattern *a/the* + NOUN was not considered phraseologically interesting and thus excluded.[4] No normative criteria were applied in selecting the material; the reason why no unidiomatic word combinations occur in the surveys presented below is simply that they did not occur above the frequency threshold of 5, unlike Paquot's findings (2010: 160 ff) in her study of *conclusion*. The core material consists of uninterrupted sequences, but variations on the most frequent phrases have been searched for and studied separately.

The investigation is both qualitative and quantitative. The patterns and meanings of the most frequent clusters will be studied in some detail with a view to finding differences and similarities between learner and native-speaker usage and identifying any learner problems. The focus on

[3] For information on AntConc, see www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc_index.html.

[4] See Altenberg (1998: 102 f.) for a similar discussion of inclusion criteria.

the investigation is the comparison of patterns found in ICLE-NO and LOCNESS. The backdrop of patterns in ICLE-FR and ICLE-GE is, however, interesting for distinguishing "the phraseological features common to several categories of learners from the L1-dependent features" (Granger 1998: 159).

3 Some overall frequencies

Table 1 shows the overall frequencies of the investigated words across the corpora. Results from each learner corpus have been compared to LOCNESS correlating raw frequencies with corpus size and using the chi square test (df =1). The use of bold type in Table 1 indicates that the difference between the learner corpus and LOCNESS is statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$. Figure 1 gives frequencies of the nouns per 100,000 words.

Table 1. Raw frequencies of *fact, question, issue, problem,* and *idea* across corpora

	fact	*idea*	*question*	*problem*	*issue*	Corpus size[5]
ICLE-NO	232	**54**	**131**	**121**	**58**	213,940
ICLE-FR	**250**	122	**149**	179	**22**	206,194
ICLE-GE	233	**91**	135	**144**	**10**	240,917
LOCNESS	306	205	147	271	157	326,089

Table 1 and Figure 1 show that most of the nouns are more frequent in ICLE-FR than in the other learner corpora; *fact, question* and *problem* are also more frequent than in LOCNESS.[6] Compared to LOCNESS, all

[5] The numbers of words in the ICLE subcorpora differ from those given on the ICLEv2 CD. However, as AntConc was used for analysing LOCNESS, this tool was used to calculate ICLE size too, to ensure that all the subcorpora were counted in the same way.

[6] In a study of shell nouns in research papers by international graduate students compared to published research papers Aktas & Cortes (2008: 7) found *problem* and *issue* to be more frequent in the student corpus than in the published writing, while *fact* was marginally more frequent in the published writing. However, Aktas & Cortes's figures include only the uses of the nouns that have shell functions.

the learner groups overuse *fact*, though the overuse is significant only in ICLE-FR. Likewise, all the learners use *question* more frequently than native speakers; the overuse is significant in both ICLE-FR and ICLE-NO. *Problem* and *idea* are significantly underused by Norwegian and German learners while French learners use them about as frequently as native speakers. *Issue* is significantly underused by all learner groups. Norwegian learners use it more than the others, but rather less frequently than native speakers.

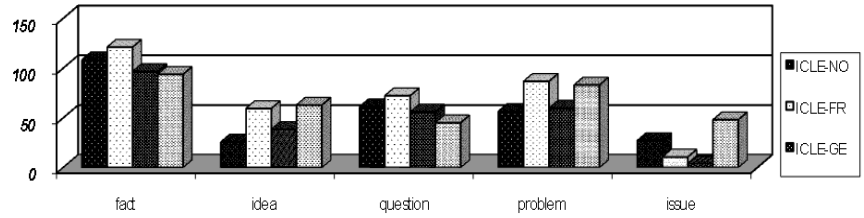

Figure 1. Relative frequencies of *fact, idea, question, problem,* and *issue* across corpora (per 100,000 words)

The general underuse of *issue* may reflect a lack of any direct equivalent in the first languages of the learners, which may also be a source of misuse of this word (see further section 4.5). However, equivalents of the other nouns exist in all three L1 backgrounds concerned, so that differences in usage may be due to phraseological differences between English and the learners' L1. Unfortunately, contrastive phraseological investigations are outside the scope of the present study. However, discrepancies between learners and native speakers may also be due to imperfect mastery of the rhetorical potential of these words in learner English, for example in marking such clause relations as 'problem–solution' (Hoey 1983).

4 Discussion of individual words in recurrent word combinations

The present section discusses each noun in turn, exploring the recurrent word combinations they enter into and the discourse functions served by the combinations. Only the most frequent clusters will be given more detailed attention, since a handful of examples cannot reveal patterns of use. Overuse and underuse of patterns have been calculated correlating

the frequency of the word combination with the total frequency of the relevant noun in each corpus.[7] This has been done in order to study the relative distribution of patterns in the learner corpora independently of the overall frequency of the node noun. The overall distribution of the nouns shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 should, however, be borne in mind.

4.1 Fact

Table 2 shows the patterns for *fact*. The top row gives the total frequency of the word in each corpus, and the last two rows show the number of times *fact* enters into the recurrent combinations and a percentage of the total. Bold type signals a significant difference between the learner corpus and LOCNESS at $p \leq 0.05$ (df=1). It is noteworthy that *fact* occurs in recurrent word combinations between 79 and 92% of the times it is used; this gives evidence of the strong constructional tendency of *fact*. The Norwegian learners have the lowest percentage of recurrent word combinations with *fact*.

Table 2. Recurrent word combinations containing *fact* across corpora: raw frequencies and frequencies per 100,000 words.

FACT	ICLE-NO (232)		ICLE-FR (250)		ICLE-GE (233)		LOCNESS (306)	
	raw	relative	raw	relative	raw	relative	raw	Relative
the fact that	115	53.8	**95**	46.1	97	40.3	162	49.7
in fact	**36**	16.8	93	45.1	63	26.2	93	28.5
it is (it's) a fact	15	7.0	7	3.4	7	2.9	1	0.3
matter of fact	5	2.3	25	12.1	13	5.4	0	0
the fact is	8	3.7	4	1.9	4	1.7	7	2.1
this fact	4	1.9	6	2.9	12	5.0	8	2.5
total	183	85.5	230	111.5	196	81.4	271	83.1
% in recurrent combinations	78.9		92.0		84.1		88.6	

As expected, *the fact that* tops the list of recurrent combinations with *fact* across the board. It is most frequent in ICLE-NO in terms of relative frequencies and least in ICLE-GE. In terms of the distribution of patterns relative to the frequency of the noun in each subcorpus, *the fact that* is

[7] Note that the chi square test could only be carried out on the most frequent combinations.

underused in ICLE-FR; this is partly because of the large proportion of *in fact*, as shown below. *It is (it's) a fact* is most frequent in ICLE-NO and least in LOCNESS.

Quantitatively, Norwegian learners differ from native speakers mainly in their underuse of *in fact*. The underuse of *in fact* is significant also in relation to the other learner groups. French learners stand out in their frequent use of *in fact* and *matter of fact* (see further below). German learners have a smaller proportion of *the fact that* than the other groups, as mentioned above, and a higher proportion of *this fact*, though the frequencies are too low to show significant differences.

4.1.1 The fact that

In the expression *the fact that*, *fact* has "some kind of expansion in the surrounding text, indicating what the … fact is" (Hunston & Francis 1999: 185) and is thus a shell noun. In this expression, *fact* is an advance label, representing the proposition in the *that*-clause as factual. LOCNESS and ICLE-NO are relatively similar as regards the syntactic patterns *the fact that* occurs in. The expression functions as the complement of a preposition in 44% of the cases in LOCNESS and 42% in ICLE-NO; see example (1).[8] It functions as direct object in 27% vs. 32%, as in example (2), and subject in 28% vs. 24%, see example (3).

(1) Few of them had any education at all, due to *the fact that* they got children at an early age ... (ICLE-NO)
(2) Men and women today need to understand and respect *the fact that* they are different. (LOCNESS)
(3) Here, he has even placed a god "on earth" as it were, as if to prove that they are in fact no greater than us and *the fact that* they can produce miracles, has no bearing on their power over us... (LOCNESS)

The pattern shown in (1) was expected to be overused by Norwegian learners since it is often suggested as a correspondence of the Norwegian construction 'preposition + infinitive or *that*-clause' (e.g. Hasselgård et

[8] All examples are rendered as they occur in the corpora.

al. 1998: 349).[9] However, this was not the case. The preposition most frequently preceding *the fact that* in LOCNESS is *due to*; it occurs 21 times, reflecting the extended pattern *due to the fact that*. This pattern is less frequent in ICLE-NO, although with eight occurrences, it the most common pattern with PREP + *the fact that*. (There were also eight other occurrences of *to* + *the fact that* in ICLE-NO.)

Interestingly, the second most common preposition to precede *the fact that* is *by*, with 10 occurrences in LOCNESS and 7 in ICLE-NO. With one exception in ICLE-NO and two in LOCNESS, *by the fact that...* functions as an agent adjunct in a passive construction, as exemplified by (4), thus mirroring the relatively frequent use of this word combination as subject.

(4) This is explained *by the fact that* everyone is free and can make choices for his or herself... (LOCNESS)

However, some of the uses of PREP + *the fact that* in ICLE-NO are dissonant,[10] because of a wrong choice of preposition (5).

(5) This is a contradiction to *the fact that* we support the human rights. (ICLE-NO)
(6) ... they ignore *the fact that* it is not right that this discrepancy exists. (LOCNESS)

The verbs occurring to the immediate left of *the fact that* are a mixed lot; only *be* occurs above two or three times. However, the verbs can be grouped according to meaning. A striking group in LOCNESS is made up by *ignore/overlook/mask/reject/resent*; i.e. what people do with objectionable facts (6). A second group shows a more positive attitude: *amplify, express, give, mention, point out, present, respect, state, support*; see example (2). The smallest group is made up by *address* and

[9] Norwegian allows prepositions in front of clauses corresponding to English *that*-clauses, as in *De profitterte* på at *politimennene gjorde en dårlig jobb*. (ENPC: KA1). Literal translation: "You profited *on that* the policemen did a bad job." The published translation uses *fact*: *You benefited* from the fact that *the police did a poor job*.

[10] The term 'dissonant' comes from Hasselgren (1994) and covers everything from ungrammatical to stylistically inappropriate (1994: 242 f.).

challenge. The same verb meanings were found in ICLE-NO, with *face* as an addition to the *address/challenge* group. Some verbs preceding *the fact that* in ICLE-NO, however, appear to be infelicitous collocates, e.g. *agree on* and *underestimate* in (7) and (8).

(7) Most of us agree on *the fact that* we all are born equal and deserve and have the right to the same things. (ICLE-NO)
(8) … you can not underestimate *the fact that* many college degrees also need a practical side. (ICLE-NO)

In both cases the verb would suggest that the following proposition is *not* a fact. On the other hand, it is also questionable whether the proposition in the *that*-clause is really a fact. Thus (7) could be improved by omitting *the fact* together with the preposition, or *fact* might be replaced by *idea*. In (8) the label could be avoided by rephrasing the proposition, e.g. by using nominalization: ... *underestimate the need for a practical component*. Both examples give an impression of verbosity; for the latter point, see Granger (1998: 155). Note, however, that the type of dissonance shown in (8) can also occur in native English, particularly in informal registers.

When *the fact* is the head of a subject NP, as in example (3), it typically functions as clause theme and thus the entity that the proposition is about. As shown in (3), these subject NPs may be preceded by a conjunction or an adverbial. The conjunctions before *the fact that* are almost always co-ordinating. The tendency to verbosity also shows up when *the fact that* is in subject position, as in (9), where *the fact that* is superfluous (and a construction with extraposition would have been more natural).

(9) *The fact that* the child needs to be taken care of after birth is obvious. (ICLE-NO)

The dissonant use in (9) may be a case of hypercorrection, i.e. the learner avoids a 'bare' *that*-clause even in contexts where it might be acceptable, or more likely, she uses *the fact that* as an equivalent of the Norwegian *det at* ('that $_{dem}$ that $_{conj}$'), which is typically used in sentence-initial subject position. This correspondence is also found in the ENPC:

(10) *Det at* han så så "ung" ut vekket plutselig en uro i meg ... (KF2)
The fact that he looked so young suddenly aroused a certain unease in me… (KF2T)

It seems that *the fact* is sometimes used in front of a *that*-clause to fit it more smoothly into a nominal position, as is evidenced by (11), in which *the fact that* is co-ordinated with a noun phrase. This use is found both in ICLE-NO and in LOCNESS.

(11) That has a lot to do with equality of status, and *the fact that* women's sexuality no longer is something shameful and embarrassing. (ICLE-NO)

There is evidence in both ICLE-NO and LOCNESS that the shell noun *fact* does not always refer to a factual situation, as in (12) and (13), where what is labelled as 'fact' is rather an opinion and possibility, respectively (see also (7) and (8) above).

(12) With this essay I have tried to share my feelings about abortion, and *the fact that* it can be right in some situations and wrong in other. (ICLE-NO)
(13) One of the most important benefits of drug legalization is *the fact that* the prices of drugs would decrease and there would not be as much drug trade. (LOCNESS)

A likely explanation for this type of dissonance could be that the high frequency of *the fact that* leads to overgeneralization and semantic bleaching. Schmid (2000: 99) observes on the basis of native speaker data that "the construction *the fact that* seems to have lost a considerable part of its 'original' meaning and has come to be used as *the* general-purpose shelling device", thus it does not necessarily refer to a factual state of affairs. "What counts is simply that the construction *the fact that* is a very handy means of shelling events and abstract relations together" (ibid: 100).

4.1.2 In fact

In fact is the second most frequent expression with *fact* across the corpora. As the expression can be said to be a lexicalized adverbial expression, where *fact* does not have the potential of functioning as a shell noun, it will be dealt with only briefly here. Compared to LOCNESS, Norwegian learners underuse *in fact*, even though Norwegian has the cognate expression *faktisk*. However, contrastive studies have shown that the uses and meanings of the cognates overlap only partially: *faktisk* is less frequent than *in fact*, and more importantly, *in fact* is used predominantly as a connector and *faktisk* as an evidentiality marker ('in truth/reality'); cf. Hasselgård (2009: 257 ff) and Johansson (2007: 85 ff). The meanings of *in fact* correlate systematically with placement: the connector occurs predominantly in initial position, as in (14) and the evidentiality marker in medial position, as in (15), where the meaning of 'in reality' is predominant.

(14) He repeats this like a child all the way through. *In fact* he is very much the child. (LOCNESS)
(15) My final comment about Marx is that I *in fact* agree with him. It may sound like a paradox … (ICLE-NO)

Faktisk does not show a similar correlation (Hasselgård 2009: 262); the evidentiality marker and the more bleached connective both typically occur medially (Hasselgård 2009: 260). Considering the differences between *in fact* and *faktisk*, Norwegian learners were expected to overuse *in fact* as an evidentiality marker, to overuse medial position for *in fact*, and to be unaware of the correlation between the meaning and position of *in fact*. It was indeed found that the Norwegian learners overuse the evidentiality marker. However, when *in fact* is used as a connector, it is placed in initial position. An apparent overuse of medial position for *in fact* in ICLE-NO is thus due to a slight overuse of the evidentiality meaning rather than to the wrong placement of the connector.

The French overuse of *in fact* along with *(as a) matter of fact* has often been commented on (see e.g. Granger & Tyson 1996: 22) and related to the more frequent French *en effet*. In the present material, the French overuse of *in fact* is not significant in relation to the number of times *fact* occurs (cf. Table 2), but it is highly significant relative to the number of words in ICLE-FR vs. LOCNESS (χ^2=19.9, p=0.000). The

expression is used both as an evidentiality marker and a connector. In the latter function it can be semantically bleached, carrying practically no overtones of 'contrary to expectation' that was suggested by Oh (2000) as the core meaning of *in fact*; see (16).

(16) As far as the military aspect is concerned we can see that the unification of the twelve nations will also be problematic. *In fact* there are different reasons accounting for this: (ICLE-FR)

4.1.3 It is a fact

The sequence *it is a fact* is frequent in ICLE-NO, but not in LOCNESS, cf. Table 2. The sequence is invariably followed by *that*, as shown in (17). Thus, like *the fact that*, this expression contains *fact* as an advance label with its lexicalization in a *that*-clause.

(17) *It is a fact* that those who shout out loud get more attention. For centuries, women had been taught to keep quiet and to mind their own business, and those who first started to shout to get attention were first looked upon as a disgrace to their gender. (ICLE-NO)

A striking number of the *it is a fact that*-constructions occur paragraph-initially and are accompanied by some kind of contrast or comparison, as evidenced by (17). Incidentally, this contrastive feature is also present in the only example of the word combination in LOCNESS; cf. (18), which, however, is not paragraph-initial.

(18) However, *it is a fact* that most of the recipients of welfare are white. (LOCNESS)

4.1.3 Phrase variability and learner problems

Both *the fact that* and *in fact* allow modification of *fact*. The BNC offers *the very/mere/simple fact that* and *in actual fact* as the most frequent variations. ICLE-NO and LOCNESS have three examples each of *the* ADJ. *fact that*, but there are no recurrent patterns (ICLE-NO has *cruel*,

scientific, simple and LOCNESS has *mere, only, very*).[11] *In fact* does not occur with modification in either ICLE-NO or LOCNESS. *It is a fact* occurs with an adverb after the verb; twice in ICLE-NO and once in LOCNESS (*obviously, also, still*). It also occurs five times in ICLE-NO and twice in LOCNESS with an adjective modifying *fact* (e.g. *hard, known, common, unfortunate, undeniable*); cf. (19).

(19) *It is a known fact* that for most people, the biggest fear in life is the fear of death. (LOCNESS)

Norwegian learners have few problems with *in fact*. As regards *the fact that*, dissonant uses are mainly of the following types: (i) the shell noun does not label a 'fact', as in (12); (ii) *the fact* is superfluous, as in (6); (iii) *the fact that* is preceded by the wrong preposition, as in (2). Types (i) and (ii) occur in LOCNESS too, as shown by (13). *It is a fact* is overused by Norwegian learners, but there were no examples of dissonant use of *fact* as a shell noun in this construction.

4.2 Idea

Table 3 shows the distribution of recurrent combinations with *idea* across the corpora, selected according to the same criteria as those outlined for *fact* (see 4.1). It occurs in recurrent combinations most often in LOCNESS (76%) and least in ICLE-NO (57%). The patterns *the idea of* and *the idea that* are most frequent among native speakers, closely followed by the French learners, whose use of *idea* in general seems to be fairly close to the native speakers. The German and Norwegian learners underuse *idea* on the whole (see Figure 1), though ICLE-GE has more occurrences of *idea* as well as a higher proportion of recurrent combinations than ICLE-NO; in particular *the idea of* is more frequent. However, the Norwegian learners overuse *good idea* (relative to the total occurrences of *idea*), a combination shown in the BNC to be more frequent in speech than in writing.

[11] The variations on the recurrent combinations discussed here and in other sections on phrase variability were identified in separate searches using wildcards, e.g. <the * fact that>.

Table 3. Recurrent word combinations containing *idea* across corpora: raw frequencies and frequencies per 100,000 words.

IDEA	ICLE-NO (54)		ICLE-FR (122)		ICLE-GE (91)		LOCNESS (205)	
	raw	relative	raw	relative	raw	relative	raw	relative
the idea of	**5**	2.3	43	20.9	29	12.0	77	23.6
this idea	2	0.9	14	6.8	9	3.7	17	5.2
the idea that	5	2.3	9	4.4	4	1.7	22	6.7
idea is	7	3.3	3	1.5	5	2.1	15	4.6
good idea	**8**	3.7	6	2.9	6	2.5	9	2.8
idea to *	3	1.4	6	2.9	6	2.5	4	1.2
no idea	0	0	1	0.5	5	2.1	6	1.8
total	30	14.0	82	39.8	64	26.6	150	46.0
% in recurrent combinations	57.4		67.2		71.4		75.6	

* *Idea to* often overlaps with *good idea*.

The Norwegian underuse of *idea* is surprising in view of the existence of a Norwegian cognate (*idé*). However, searches in the ENPC show that *idea* is almost twice as frequent as *idé*, and moreover, that the cognates do not totally overlap in meaning. The fact that the lemma *idea* is translated into *idé* only 40% of the time, while *idé* is translated into *idea* 72% of the time, indicates that *idea* covers some meanings not shared by *idé*. The typical meaning of Norwegian *idé* is 'thought that you have about how to do something or how to deal with something' (*Macmillan*), which shows up in the most frequent cluster with *idea* in ICLE-NO, *good idea*. Other meanings of *idea* are 'information/knowledge', 'purpose/intention' and 'principle' (ibid.), which are present in Norwegian *idé* too, but typically belong to a relatively formal register. However, Norwegian learners do use them in the top four clusters in Table 3.

The patterns of *idea* in ICLE-GE are not significantly different from LOCNESS in spite of the general underuse of the noun. German has a cognate noun *Idee*, though searches in the English-German part of the Oslo Multilingual Corpus show that the two words do not have the same frequencies and distribution. In contrast to the Norwegian learners, the Germans have acquired *the idea of*, but they use *the idea that* as infrequently as the Norwegians.

4.2.1 The idea of

The idea of is the most frequent expression with *idea* in LOCNESS. *The idea of* functions with fairly equal frequencies as complement of preposition (20), subject (21) and verbal complement (object or predicative). *The idea of* something can for instance be addressed, attacked, believed in, discussed, endorsed, evoked, liked, preferred, rejected and supported. The prepositions preceding the cluster may be part of a prepositional verb or introduce a prepositional phrase, as in (20). Whether or not *idea* is a shell noun in this expression depends on its complement; a noun phrase complement, as in (20), cannot be said to lexicalize the content of *idea*, in contrast to a clausal complement, as in (22).

(20) There seems also to be some ambiguity in *the idea of* innocence too. (LOCNESS)
(21) *The idea of* a nuclear war is practically non-existent today. (LOCNESS)
(22) ... some feminists focus on *the idea of* changing society into a more "womanly" one, ... (ICLE-NO)

While *the idea of* is underused by Norwegian learners, it is usually used correctly, as in (22). The only example of dissonance is found in (23), where the problem lies with the collocation of *fear* and *the idea of* rather than with *idea* itself.

(23) Why doesn't criminals fear *the idea of* going to prison for several years. (ICLE-NO)

4.2.2 The idea that

Like *the idea of*, *the idea that* is most frequent in LOCNESS, but is also used by Norwegian learners. Syntactically, *the idea that* is also similar to *the idea of*, with a close to equal distribution between subject, complement of preposition and verbal complement in LOCNESS, while it takes subject function only once (out of 5) in ICLE-NO. As object, it most commonly follows verbs such as *develop, establish, come up with* or *point to, focus on*, see (24) Another, less frequent, group is made up by the verb phrases *stem from* and *be based on*.

(24) Over the years society has established *the idea that* violence influences other modes of violence. (LOCNESS)

The Norwegian learners underuse *the idea that*, but they do use it correctly. The underuse may be partly related to the overuse of *the fact that*. Example (25) is one where *idea* might be a more fortunate choice of shell noun than *fact*.

(25) In Norway we find some resistance against immigration. This is a contradiction to *the fact that* we support the human rights. (ICLE-NO)

4.2.3 This idea

This idea may function as a double marker of cohesion through the demonstrative reference of the determiner (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 57 ff) plus the retrospective labelling function provided by the (shell) noun (Francis 1994). This is demonstrated in (26), which is text-initial, and where *this* provides a referential link to the title of the essay ('Money is the root of all evil'); *idea* shows the writer's conceptualization of that proposition along with his/her explicit evaluation of it.

(26) *This idea* is completely erroneous. (LOCNESS)

However, the cohesive link provided by *idea* may also consist in lexical repetition (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 278) rather than labelling, as exemplified by (27).

(27) Most nations support *the idea that* everyone is born equal, and that there should not be ill treatment of people on any grounds; whether religious, racial, sexist or ethnic. *This idea* is also backed up by the nations legislation which prohibit discrimination, racism etc. (ICLE-NO)

4.2.4 Phrase variability and learner problems

The idea that, *this idea* and *the idea of* all allow modification of the noun. The only expression that was found to recur (twice in LOCNESS

and once in ICLE-NO and ICLE-GE) was *the whole idea of*, which is also the most frequent realisation of the pattern *the* + ADJ + *idea of* in the BNC. We may note the pattern '*X's*/POSS DET *idea of*', which is clearly related to *the idea of*. It occurred 4 times in ICLE-NO and 6 in LOCNESS and was thus too infrequent to be included in Table 3. Meanings of *idea* in these clusters are 'principle' and 'understanding'.

(28) Is keeping scared-to-death prisoners in coffin sized boxes *their idea of* humane convict treatment? (ICLE-NO)

There are few cases of dissonant labelling with *idea* in either ICLE-NO or LOCNESS. As mentioned above, the Norwegian learners' underuse of *idea* may be partly due to the differences in frequency and semantic coverage of the cognates *idea* and *idé*. In the ENPC, *idea* was found to have a range of Norwegian correspondences. The most frequent nouns were *tanke* ('thought') and *anelse* ('feeling'/'hunch'), but interestingly correspondences with mental verbs such as *tenke* ('think') and *ane* ('feel'/'sense') are also quite common. There are indeed some instances of *thought* in ICLE-NO where *idea* could have been used instead, e.g. (29). Furthermore, wildcard searches in ICLE-NO for patterns in which *idea* is used in LOCNESS (e.g. <support the * that/of>) suggested that Norwegian learners may be using *fact* and *statement* in contexts where *idea* would be a better choice; see (25) above and (30).

(29) My guess is that it has to do with *the thought that* the more efficient the society is, the more time we will gain to do whatever it is that we are dreaming of doing. (ICLE-NO)
(30) A totalitarian system of government could be said to support *the statement that* some are more equal than others. (ICLE-NO)

Interestingly, *statement* is greatly overused in ICLE-NO, with 57 occurrences per 100,000 words as against 17 in LOCNESS and similar frequencies in the other corpora. Norwegian learners use *statement* almost exclusively to refer to the essay prompt, i.e. the issue they are asked to discuss.

4.3 Question

Question can be a shell noun, but it can also refer to a concrete question being asked; sometimes to the essay question itself. Table 4 surveys the recurrent word combinations with *question* in the corpora. A first observation is that *question* occurs in recurrent phrases much less frequently than both *fact* and *idea* in all the corpora. LOCNESS has the highest proportion of *question* in recurrent combinations (50%), while the learner corpora have similar proportions of 43-44%. The most frequent combination overall is *the question of*. Note, however, that LOCNESS accounts for about half of its uses;[12] it is significantly underused ($p \leq 0.01$) in all the learner corpora, most clearly so in ICLE-NO and ICLE-GE. By contrast, *the question is* is overused in ICLE-NO and ICLE-GE. *This question* is overused in ICLE-FR, while frequencies in the other corpora are similar and well below that of ICLE-FR.

Table 4. Recurrent word combinations containing *question* across corpora: raw frequencies and frequencies per 100,000 words.

QUESTION	ICLE-NO (131)		ICLE-FR (149)		ICLE-GE (135)		LOCNESS (147)	
	raw	relative	raw	relative	raw	relative	raw	relative
the question of	**14**	6.5	**17**	8.2	**9**	3.7	41	12.6
the question is	**17**	7.9	10	4.8	**17**	7.1	5	1.5
this question	8	3.7	**21**	10.2	7	2.9	10	3.1
a question of	5	2.3	6	2.9	9	3.7	5	1.5
question whether	4	1.9	4	1.9	8	3.3	5	1.5
in question	5	2.3	2	1.0	2	0.8	6	1.8
question that arises	0	0	6	2.9	1	0.4	2	0.6
question if	4	1.9	0	0	5	2.1	0	0
total	57	26.6	66	32.0	58	24.1	74	22.7
% in recurrent combinations	43.5		44.3		43.0		50.3	

4.3.1 The question of *and* question if/whether

The question of can be followed by a noun phrase or a nominal clause, as in (31) and (32), respectively. When *the question of* is followed by a noun phrase, *question* is not a shell noun; i.e. the question is not

[12]LOCNESS has 12 instances of *the question of philosophical optimism*, probably reflecting an essay prompt.

lexicalized, but the labelling function may still be present, construing something as for example more debatable than an idea or less problematic than a problem.

(31) Voltaire has tackled *the question of* philosophical optimism in a very successful way, in Candide. (LOCNESS)
(32) For supporters of a single Europe *the question of* whether it will entail a loss of British sovereignty is not a primary issue. (LOCNESS)

The clauses lexicalizing the question are typically introduced by *whether*, which occurs ten times in LOCNESS; see (32), or by *what* and *where* (three occurrences in LOCNESS).

In ICLE-NO, *the question of* occurs before a *wh*-clause seven times (introduced by *how, what, whether* and *which*) and once erroneously before an indirect question introduced by *if*; see (33). The writer may have transferred the interchangeability of *if/whether* from the related expression *the question if* (*whether*), shown in (34).

(33) In my opinion, *the question of if* there is place enough for both science technology and imagination, I would say that the question is quite irrelevant. (ICLE-NO)
(34) In *the question if* abortion can be both right and wrong, I would say that it depends. (ICLE-NO)

Question if occurs 4 times in ICLE-NO and 5 in ICLE-GE but is not used in ICLE-FR and LOCNESS, which seem to prefer *question whether*. Searches in the BNC show that the expression *question whether* has a distinct peak in academic prose, while *question if* is most frequent in spoken English; thus its use in the ICLE corpora shows the familiar influence of speech on learner writing (see e.g. Gilquin & Paquot 2008). Another difference, apparent from the concordances, is that *question* is a verb in all five cases of *question whether* in LOCNESS, but a noun in all four instances in ICLE-NO. The same applies to all instances of *question whether* in ICLE-GE and three out of the four occurrences in ICLE-FR. In LOCNESS, the noun *question* is not followed directly by *whether*, but instead has an intervening preposition in *the question of whether* (see above).

4.3.2 The question is *and* this question

The question is is far more frequent in the learner corpora than in LOCNESS, and more frequent in ICLE-NO than in the other learner corpora. The combination may refer to the essay prompt, as in (35).[13] This is a metatextual function (i.e. the writer's comment on his/her text; cf. Ädel 2006). This function of *the question is* was found only in ICLE-NO. *The question is* may also be used rhetorically to preface a question posed by the writer, a function that is found both in ICLE-NO and LOCNESS. In (36) it contributes to text structure by marking a stage in a line of reasoning and also signalling the start of a problem-solution pattern (cf. Hoey 1983). *The question* functions as an advance (cataphoric) label (cf. Francis (1994) with the lexicalization of the shell noun in the predicative clause.

(35) I also think *the question is* too extensive to simply answer yes or no. (ICLE-NO)

(36) Mostly, we agree on the fact that people should be protected against criminal actions, *the question is*, however, how we can do that in a satisfactory way. (ICLE-NO)

The shell function of the noun can also be apparent in *this question*. In contrast to *the question is* (as well as *the question (of) whether*), *this question* functions as a retrospective (anaphoric) label; it typically follows a question that has been lexicalized in the text, as in (37). However, *this question* is also found to refer to the essay prompt in many cases in ICLE-NO, as shown in (38). Similar cases were found across the corpora, typically at the opening or end of the essay.

(37) So who was the true number 1 and true national champion in the 1993-94 college football season, Florida State or Notre Dame. Again, the only way to answer *this question* fairly is to have a playoff system. (LOCNESS)

(38) The subject of "Abortion - right and wrong" is a delicate and difficult matter that must be handled accordingly. You can get

[13] The prompt was 'Most university degrees are theoretical and do not prepare students for the real world. They are therefore of very little value.' (http://www.uclouvain.be/en-317607.html)

professional help before and after your decision is made. But it can never completely heal the pain and scars left in your soul. Therefore, no one can ever answer *this question*. (ICLE-NO)

4.3.3 Phrase variability and problems of use

The BNC contains numerous examples of premodified *question* in the top four phrases in Table 4. However, the phrases do not show much variability in ICLE-NO or LOCNESS. *The question of* occurs with a premodifier twice in each corpus (*philosophical*/*whole* in ICLE-NO; *ethical*/*growing* in LOCNESS), while *this* PREMODIFIER *question* occurred twice in LOCNESS only (*this ethical/whole question*). ICLE-NO contained no variations on *the question is*, *this question* or *a question of*. LOCNESS gives one or two examples of each: *the real question is*; *this ethical/whole question*; and *a major question of*.

As a shell noun, *question* seems to be easier to handle for the learners than *fact*. The only example in ICLE-NO where the use of *question* was dissonant was (39), where *description* would be a better collocate of *fit*. However, the underused pattern *the* NOUN *of* seems to be a stylistic problem for the Norwegian learners; the corpus contains some stylistically awkward examples such as (40).

(39) What kind of food is it so that results in a good and healthy breakfast? There is of course several provisions that fit *this question*. (ICLE-NO)

(40) *The question of* equality has drawn more to *the question of* races the last decades. (ICLE-NO)

4.4 Problem

Problem was found to be significantly underused in ICLE-NO and ICLE-GE (cf. Figure 1), which may be surprising in view of the fact that a cognate word exists in both Norwegian and German. However, relative to the total frequency of *problem* in each corpus, most differences between learners and native speakers in the distribution of recurrent combinations are not significant, the exception being the overuse of *the problem is* in ICLE-FR. Table 5 shows that *problem* occurs in recurrent combinations between 39% and 47% of the time. Like *question* it is used

more frequently in recurrent combinations by native speakers than by learners.[14] The pattern *the* NOUN *of* is frequent in LOCNESS, and equally so in ICLE-FR, no doubt inspired by the equivalent *le problème de*. Norwegian learners use this pattern least frequently, and the underuse is highly significant when calculated relative to corpus size ($p<0.001$).

Table 5. Recurrent word combinations containing *problem* across corpora: raw frequencies and frequencies per 100,000 words.

PROBLEM	ICLE-NO (121)		ICLE-FR (179)		ICLE-GE (144)		LOCNESS (271)	
	raw	relative	raw	relative	raw	relative	raw	relative
the problem is	9	4.2	**25**	12.1	8	3.3	19	5.8
the problem of	6	2.8	15	7.3	11	4.6	22	6.7
this problem	9	4.2	6	2.9	16	6.6	21	6.4
problem with	5	2.3	5	2.4	4	1.7	17	5.2
another problem	4	1.9	9	4.4	3	1.2	12	3.7
problem that	3	1.4	4	1.9	4	1.7	14	4.3
of the problem	6	2.8	7	3.4	6	2.5	4	1.2
main problem	3	1.4	5	2.4	0	0	5	1.5
major problem	0	0	4	1.9	0	0	9	2.8
big problem	2	0.9	3	1.5	7	2.9	0	0
solution to the problem	0	0	0	0	5	2.1	5	1.5
total	47	22.0	83	40.3	64	26.6	128	39.3
% in recurrent combination	38.8		46.4		44.4		47.2	

Most of the recurrent combinations with *problem* are not frequent enough to show clear patterns. We may, however, note *problem that*, which is more frequent in LOCNESS than in the learner corpora. In most cases this word combination is part of the pattern *the* NOUN *that*, which is generally disfavoured by learners. The slightly dissonant *big problem* is recurrent chiefly in ICLE-GE. It does not occur in LOCNESS (which instead has *major problem*), and would not normally be considered an elegant collocation in academic writing. In the BNC it occurs predominantly in speech and very rarely in the written registers.

[14] LOCNESS had 14 instances of *social problem*, but this was not included in the study as it seemed to be related to a specific essay topic and was also scarce in the learner corpora (1 in ICLE-NO and 2 in ICLE-GE).

4.4.1 The problem is

The problem is can be a shell noun signalling a problem-solution pattern and preceding its lexicalization. In LOCNESS *the problem* typically functions as a subject, as in (41), but also as the complement of a preposition in an extended noun phrase, such as *the solution to the problem* or *the extent of the problem*. With one single exception, *is* functions as the main verb in this sequence in LOCNESS. The predicatives are realized by clauses in 11 cases (6 *that*-clauses, 2 infinitive clauses, 2 *wh*-clauses, and one *ing* participle), noun phrases and adjective phrases three times each. In one case the predicative is a deleted quotation.

(41) As stated, *the problem is* how these two desires are to be reconciled … (LOCNESS)
(42) *The problem is* that the word "feminism" has a number of negative connotations. (ICLE-NO)

In ICLE-NO *the problem is* constitutes subject and (main) verb in all nine cases. It is followed by a clause in seven cases (six *that-clauses*, as in (42), and one infinitive clause), and an adjective phrase in two. Clausal predicatives thus dominate in both corpora, but the native speakers use a greater variety of clause types. There were no examples of *the* NOUN PREP *the problem is* in ICLE-NO or ICLE-FR, and only one in ICLE-GE).

4.4.2 The problem of

The problem of differs markedly in frequency between LOCNESS and ICLE-NO. Interestingly, it also differs markedly in the lexical and syntactic patterns it enters into. In LOCNESS, *the problem of X* is clause subject in seven cases, notional subject in existential clauses in three, object of transitive verbs in 11 (*address, ease, examine, face, make, solve, tackle, understand*), and prepositional complement in one. In ICLE-NO it functions as notional subject in an existential clause once, object twice (*face, avoid*), and prepositional complement three times; see (43). Two transitive verbs take *the problem of* … as object more than once in LOCNESS, namely *solve* and *tackle*, exemplified by (44).

(43) In addition to *the problem of* overcrowding, there is a lot of abuse. (ICLE-NO)
(44) … Voltaire tackles *the problem of* thoughtless optimism. (LOCNESS)

In contrast to *the idea of*, *the problem of* is invariably followed by noun phrase complements. The noun phrases chiefly denote phenomena that would normally be regarded as negative anyway, as in (43). However, the expression may also signal the writer's negative evaluation of something, as in (45).

(45) It is obvious that Mr Gingrich does not understand *the problem of* Welfare Reform at all. (LOCNESS)

4.4.3 This problem

LOCNESS and ICLE-NO alike use *this problem* predominantly as object or prepositional complement. *This problem* thus typically functions as a retrospective label and also contributes to cohesion through demonstrative reference (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 57 ff). In LOCNESS *this problem* is most commonly the object of a verb referring to a way of dealing with it: *combat, curb, eliminate, solve, get round, put an end to*, and *deal with*, or a way of relating to it: *examine, look at*. *Solve* and *deal with* are also found in ICLE-NO, together with *do something with*; see (46).

(46) …but today psychiatrists and other experts seem to deal with *this problem* in another way. (ICLE-NO)
(47) *This problem* could easily be curtailed by lowering the drinking age from twenty-one to eighteen. (LOCNESS)
(48) *This problem* I have met in several subjects at the different colleges I have attended. (ICLE-NO)

This problem also functions as subject (in four out of 21 occurrences in LOCNESS and one out of nine in ICLE-NO). Three of the sentences in LOCNESS with *this problem* as subject are passive constructions; see (47). Such passive constructions are not found in ICLE-NO, but there is a case of *this problem* as a fronted object (48). While *this problem*

functions adequately as a retrospective label in (48), the word order signals a contrast which was probably not intended by the writer, and which may be due to transfer of the somewhat freer word order of Norwegian.

4.4.4 Phrase variability and learner problems

All the combinations discussed in this section allow premodification of *problem*. *The problem is* occurs with a premodifier three times in LOCNESS (*only* and *other*) and four in ICLE-NO (*biggest, major, only, other*). *The problem of* has an intervening adjective only in LOCNESS (seven times); the adjectives are *common, major, mounting, perpetual,* and *social*. ICLE-NO has two examples of *this* + ADJ. + *problem* (*complex* and *particular*), while LOCNESS only has one (*this same problem*).

The use of *problem* as a label or a shell noun does not seem difficult for learners; no cases of dissonant labelling were found. Any 'foreign accent' in the phraseology of *problem* in ICLE-NO is rather caused by the differences in overall frequencies of some constructions and in the lexical and syntactic environments of the combinations, as outlined above.

4.5 Issue

As was shown in Figure 1 above, *issue* is underused by all learner groups, and recurrent patterns are therefore scarce. The frequencies are too low for significance testing to be meaningful: Table 6 shows that recurrent combinations with *issue* are frequent only in LOCNESS, and notably quite absent from ICLE-GE.

Table 6. Recurrent word combinations containing *issue* across corpora: raw frequencies and frequencies per 100,000 words.

ISSUE	ICLE-NO (58)		ICLE-FR (22)		ICLE-GE (10)		LOCNESS (157)	
	raw	relative	raw	relative	raw	relative	raw	relative
this issue	7	3.3	5	2.4	0	0	25	7.7
the issue of	6	2.8	2	1.0	0	0	26	8.0
of the issue	2	0.9	0	0	0	0	12	3.7
important issue	7	3.3	1	0.5	0	0	4	1.2
issue that	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	7	2.1
total	23	10.8	8	3.9	0	0	74	22.7
% in recurrent combinations	39.7		36.4		0		47.1	

The most frequent phrases in LOCNESS are *this issue, the issue of* and *of the issue*. The latter two overlap in (49):

(49) The Ethnic American Authors' addressing *of the issue of* self understanding. (LOCNESS)

It may be noted that the combination *issue that* in LOCNESS does not reflect the pattern *the* NOUN *that*; *that* is a relative pronoun in this combination and thus does not preface a lexicalization of the noun. (*Issue* followed by a nominal *that*-clause providing a lexicalization was, however, found in the BNC.) In addition to the two patterns discussed below, ICLE-NO has seven instances of *important issue*. Four of them are preceded by *an* or *one*, and thus resemble the only pattern that can be identified in ICLE-GE, namely *a(n)* ADJ. *issue*.

4.5.1 The issue of

In LOCNESS, *the issue of* is often part of a subject noun phrase, either clause-initially or as notional subject in an existential clause. Alternatively it is the object of the same type of verb that tends to precede *problem*: *address, attack, bring up, confront, discuss, tackle,* and *relate*. Occurrences in ICLE-NO do not reveal any patterns, but it may be noted some of the examples reveal usage problems; see (50) and (51).

(50) One could question *the issue of* whether nations really need infantry, or foot soldiers at all. (ICLE-NO)

(51) Another aspect which may seem more and more important is *the issue of* prevention. (ICLE-NO)

The collocation of the verb *question* with the object *issue* in (50) is unfortunate; the sentence might be improved by replacing *question* with *discuss* or simply omitting *the issue of*. In example (51) the word *issue* is used correctly; however, the sentence is clumsy because the writer has used *aspect* and *issue* synonymously. The example shows the verbosity described by Granger (1998) as typical of learner style and would benefit from some pruning, e.g. *The issue of prevention may seem more and more important*.[15]

4.5.2 This issue

This issue can function as a retrospective label. In LOCNESS it is typically an object following verbs such as *address*, *discuss* and *surround*, as in (52), as well as prepositions in phrases like *part/side of this issue*. It functions as subject only once. Again ICLE-NO has too few examples to reveal patterns, but there are dissonant uses, as in (53).

(52) There are numerous debates surrounding *this issue* leaving people to wonder, what is the right thing to do? (LOCNESS)
(53) Lastly *this issue* leads us to yet another argument against the prison system… (ICLE-NO)

Example (53) contains a clear attempt at creating text structure, but it is unclear what *this issue* refers to. The sentence is paragraph-initial, and what is described in the preceding context seems to be a *situation* rather than an *issue*.

4.5.3 Phrase variability and learner problems

The BNC contains examples of noun modification in *this issue*, e.g. *this important/ particular/whole issue*, but the phrase does not show any

[15] Incidentally, the writer probably means *contraception* rather than *prevention* here, and has stumbled over a false friend (Norwegian *prevensjon* = 'contraception').

variability in either LOCNESS or ICLE-NO. *The issue of* occurs in the BNC with premodifiers of *issue* denoting importance, complexity, difficulty or specificity (e.g. *central, complex, difficult, thorny, particular, whole*). The two examples of an extended phrase in LOCNESS reflect this tendency: *the whole/thorny issue of*. ICLE-NO does not have any variation of the phrase.

The underuse of *issue* in ICLE-NO, along with a relatively large proportion of dissonant examples, shows that *issue* is not well-established in the vocabulary of most Norwegian learners. The learners seem to have trouble with the semantics as well as the pragmatics of *issue*. The learning problem seems to be widespread, as *issue* is one of the words discussed in the 'Improve your writing skills' section in the *Macmillan English Dictionary*: "If you want to present the topic as an important subject that people discuss and have opposing views about, use the nouns *issue* or *question*." (*Macmillan* 2007: IW21) Learners are also advised on how to avoid confusing *problem* and *issue*. While Norwegian learners seem to have little trouble using *question* and *problem*, there is at least one example where *issue* has been used in lieu of *question*; see (54).

(54) … *the issue whether* abortion is right or wrong has turned into a great discussion. (ICLE-NO)

Moreover, a search for contexts typical of *issue* showed that Norwegian learners sometimes use *aspect* instead, as shown in (55). The sentence is paragraph-initial and brings up revenge as a topic for discussion; precisely the type of context where native speakers use *issue*.

(55) Then there is *the aspect of* revenge. (ICLE-NO)

As mentioned above, Norwegian does not have a direct equivalent of *issue*, which will make it difficult for Norwegian learners to conceptualize the term. In the ENPC *issue* is translated by *spørsmål* ('question'), *problem*, and *tema* ('topic'). Thus, some of the instances of *question* and *problem* could probably be replaced by *issue*, for instance in (56).

(56) In addition to the short sighted and politically motivated slant in favor of "irrelevant" studies, there is *the problem of* the actual content of higher education. (ICLE-NO)
(57) *The issue of* the open market therefore continues to be problematical … (LOCNESS)
(58) The [*issue of*] 'everyday-racism' is very much in the spotlight in Norway these days. (ICLE-NO)

Another reason why learners underuse *the issue of* may be that it is often syntactically omissible, as in (57), which would be grammatical without it. However, what is lost by such omission is the rhetorical function of flagging a topic as up for discussion. Example (58) is one that might be improved by such a rhetorical use of *issue*, as indicated in brackets.

5 Concluding remarks

This paper set out to explore the use of the nouns *fact, idea, question, problem* and *issue* and the ways they habitually combine with other words in native English and three varieties of learner English. The recurrent word combinations in ICLE-NO and LOCNESS received special attention. The nouns differ markedly in frequency across the corpora as does their tendency to occur in recurrent word combinations. As shown in section 3, most of these nouns tend to be underused by most of the learner groups; the exceptions are *question* and the frequent use of *fact* and *problem* in ICLE-FR. The noun that is most markedly underused by all learner groups is *issue*. Clearly, in a study of learner language, quantitative observations need to be supplemented with qualitative analysis. Closer scrutiny thus revealed that Norwegian learners sometimes misuse this word. A possible reason for the underuse, besides the lack of an equivalent Norwegian word, might be that the function of *issue* is mainly rhetorical; i.e. signalling a topic for discussion.

All the learner corpora contained examples of these nouns used as shell nouns. Norwegian learners were shown to have problems with *issue* in this function, but also with *idea*, due to semantic differences from the Norwegian cognate. The expression *the fact that* deserves special mention. All the corpora, including LOCNESS, had examples of *fact* labelling propositions that would not normally be considered facts.

Similar uses were noted by Schmid (2000). This indicates that *the fact that* may be on its way to becoming an extended conjunction that helps accommodate a *that*-clause in nominal positions. Even so, Norwegian learners seem to exaggerate the need for *the fact* as a preface to *that*-clauses, and moreover, they may be unaware of more appropriate alternatives to *fact* to label non-facts.

Tables 2–6 show the way and extent to which the nouns occur in recurrent combinations across the corpora. An interesting observation is that the percentage of the time each noun occurs in recurrent combinations is almost consistently higher in LOCNESS than in the learner corpora. This seems to indicate a higher degree of routinization of the phrases among native speakers. Of the learner corpora, ICLE-FR has the highest proportion of recurrent word combinations. The percentage is generally lowest in ICLE-NO, but ICLE-GE has lower proportions of recurrent word combinations with *question* and *issue*.

The pattern where native speakers differ most markedly from learners is *the* NOUN *of/that*. This pattern belongs to syntactically complex phrases, which may be a reason why learners underuse it (disregarding *the fact that*). French learners, however, use the pattern more than German and Norwegian learners, possibly due to the frequent use of similar constructions in French (e.g. *l'idée de/que*). Simpler combinations are more popular with the learners, such as *the* NOUN *is* and *this* NOUN. The question of phrase complexity in learner language must, however, await further study. Another question worthy of further investigation concerns the extent to which the use of shell nouns depends on writing experience as well as language proficiency. Since both LOCNESS and ICLE represent novice writing, it would be interesting to compare the results of the present study to more skilled writing, such as press editorials or published academic papers.

This paper has shown that Norwegian learners use most of the nouns investigated in a different manner from native speakers. The learners do not seem fully aware of the semantics and pragmatics of *idea* and *issue*, which leads to underuse as well as misuse. However, even with words that are more firmly established in their vocabulary, they tend to prefer simple patterns, in particular avoiding *the* NOUN *of/that*. Learners could usefully be made aware of the rhetorical and text-structuring potential of phrases involving shell nouns. Moreover, some focus on syntactically

complex phrases would bring the learners further from the stylistic ideals of Norwegian and closer to a style that is valued in academic English.

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Corpora used

Oslo Multilingual Corpus (OMC): www.hf.uio.no/ilos/english/services/omc/

The International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE): www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-icle.html

The Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS): www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-locness.html
The British National Corpus (BNC): www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/ and http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/
The English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus (ENPC): www.hf.uio.no/ilos/english/services/omc/enpc/

A corpus-based analysis of two crucial steps in Business Management research articles: The creation of a research space and the statement of limitations[1]

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Abstract
English has been established as the Language for Research Publication Purposes in many disciplinary fields. Many scholars worldwide, therefore, face linguistic and rhetorical difficulties when writing their academic texts for publication in an L2. This paper focuses on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of two key steps of the research article: the creation of a gap in the Introduction and the statement of limitations in the Discussion. A corpus of 24 research articles in the field of Business Management are analysed in terms of the frequency of use, length and type of metadiscoursal language most commonly used in the phrasing of these two key moments of this academic genre in which authors clearly need to "market" their research. The results may be useful for designing materials and offering informed guidance to (novice) non-native writers when drafting their RAs in English in this discipline.

1. Introduction

English has become a global lingua franca in many domains, and the academic one is no exception. Throughout Europe at least, academics are now required to master the use of English for teaching, research, and even administrative purposes at their institutions. This is even more

[1] This research has been carried out within the framework of the InterLAE research team (www.interlae.com), funded by the local educational authories (*Diputación General de Aragón*), and is a contribution to the national research project "La integridad genérica en la comunicación académica y profesional: los géneros y su correlación con las prácticas discursivas y con la cultura de distintas comunidades profesionales" (FFI2009-09792). I am also indebted to the School of Education at the University of Leeds (UK), since part of this research was conducted during a research stay at this institution, and to the *Caja de Ahorros de la Inmaculada de Aragón* which financed this stay. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 5th EATAW (European Association of Teachers of Academic Writing) "The Roles of Writing Development in Higher Education and Beyond" held from 30th June to 2nd July 2009 at Coventry University (England).

evident in certain areas of knowledge, such as Business Management, in which the work activity of academics is fully determined by their English language competence, which "acts as a career enabler or inhibitor" (Tietze 2008:382).

In this context the research to be presented in this paper focuses on English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP, Cargill and Burgess 2008), and more particularly on the genre of the research article (RA) published in international journals in the field of Business Management. Taking an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach to its analysis and drawing on previous move analysis of the RA (e.g. Swales 1990, 2004; Nwogu 1997; Lewin et al. 2001; Holmes 2007), the paper aims to explore the more or less conventionalised realization of two particularly significant steps in international research publications in English: creating a research gap in the Introduction section and stating limitations in the Discussion section. These two steps can be considered major rhetorical options to convincingly justify the worthiness of the research presented as well as to situate it within the field. The ultimate objective is to provide data which can be used to design materials and offer informed guidance to (novice) L2 writers to help them succeed in turning their research into a publishable article in English, by drawing their attention to these strategic and conventionalised ways of presenting and evaluating one's research in this writing context.

In a previous study of the macro and microstructure of Business Management RAs in English and in Spanish, it was found that the step 'Indicating a gap' in the Introduction appeared in all Introductions of the RAs in English, while it was only included in 66% of the Introductions in the RAs in Spanish (Mur-Dueñas 2010a). This indicates a significant difference in the prevailing rhetorical strategies in the RAs of this discipline in the two linguistic/cultural contexts. Other previous cross-cultural research has also reported differences on the RA Introduction move structure in different languages and contexts of publication (e.g. Burgess 2002; Árvay and Tankó 2004; Hirano 2009). Similarly, a significant intercultural rhetorical difference was found in the microstructure of discussion sections in the two sets of RAs. Whereas limitations were stated in 92% of the Business Management English RAs, this step was included in just 42% of the Spanish RAs (Mur-Dueñas 2010a). Therefore, the analysis presented here focuses on the two steps which were most significantly different in the two contexts of

publication (i.e. the English-medium international one and the Spanish-medium local one).

From these rhetorical intercultural differences it can be inferred that non-native authors (or authors who are used to other academic rhetorical styles) within a particular disciplinary domain wishing to publish their research internationally in English may find it difficult to adjust to differing writing rhetorical conventions in the new publishing context and language. This difficulty may be two-fold: first, they may lack some genre-specific awareness; thus, they need to be made aware of the importance of certain rhetorical structure commonalities which may not be conventional in their own local context of publication; second, even if they are aware of the importance of these two steps, they may lack the linguistic/discursive competence to realise them.

Most previous studies in English for Academic Purposes have focused on either the rhetorical structure of a given academic genre—mainly RAs (Nwogu 1997; Holmes 1997; Posteguillo 1999; Williams 1999; Hwa Lim 2006) and abstracts (Martín Martín 2003; Lorés 2004)—or the characteristic features of such genres: hedging (Lewin 2005; Vassileva 2001; Lafuente-Millán 2008), writer presence (Vassileva 1998; Kuo 1999; Hyland 2001, 2002a; Breivega *et al*. 2002; Martínez 2005; Harwood 2005a, 2005b, Fløttum *et al*. 2006; Lorés-Sanz 2006; Mur-Dueñas 2007; Lafuente-Millán 2010), engagement markers (Hyland 2002b; Giltrow 2005) or evaluative markers (Swales and Burke 2003; Stotesbury 2003; Mur-Dueñas 2010b). This paper, however, aims at combining both types of analysis, using a top-down perspective. That is, two crucial steps will first be identified in a corpus of RAs and then explored in terms of their characteristic interpersonal lexico-grammatical realizations. Special attention will be paid to salient metadiscoursal features in the realization of the aforementioned steps. Once the lexical profile of the steps is analysed, it is intended to determine possible "genre-functional formulaic sequences" based on the most common lexico-grammatical features as "used by speakers or writers to signal that communicative purposes of the genre are being answered in particular stretches of text" (Hüttner 2007: 288). In this way, it is believed that more significant pedagogical implications and applications will be obtained.

2. Corpus and methodology

The analysis is based on a corpus of RAs in Business Management published between 2002 and 2006. It contains 24 RAs (197,922 words) published in three international high-impact journals (*Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management* and *Strategic Management Journal*) and written in English by scholars based at North American institutions (who happen to be the vast majority of authors in these top academic publications).[2] This corpus forms part of a broader corpus, SERAC (Spanish-English Research Article Corpus), compiled by the InterLAE research group and which contains a total of 576 RAs in 8 disciplines, 72 RAs per discipline divided according to the language, context of publication and author's affiliation into the following three sections: (1) RAs written in English by authors affiliated to Anglophone universities (i.e. ENG); (2) RAs written in English by authors affiliated to Spanish universities (i.e. SPENG); and (3) RAs written in Spanish by authors affiliated to Spanish universities (i.e. SP).[3]

The RAs in the corpus used for this study were analysed in terms of their microstructure, determining the two steps under research. Once the steps were defined, their lexico-grammatical realization was analysed. Key features were then signalled and special attention was paid to the phraseological units used to render these communicative functions.

3. Results and discussion

In this section results obtained from the analysis of the 24 RAs in English published in international high-impact journals in relation to the two specific steps will be summarised and the implications and applications that can be drawn from them highlighted.

3.1. Creating a research gap: key lexico-grammatical features and phraseology

Twenty out of the 24 RAs in the corpus were found to include the "Creating a gap" step in the Introduction. This gap tends to contain the following characteristic features:

[2] A list of the RAs in the corpus can be found in the Appendix.
[3] For a full description of this corpus see Pérez-Llantada (2008).

- at least one contrastive logical marker

(1) International market entry is an important topic in the management literature (Dess, Gupta, Hennart, & Hill, 1995; Peng, 2001; Tallman, 1992). However, there is a lack of empirical research focusing on the internationalization of entrepreneurial firms (Zahra, Ireland, & Hitt, 2000). (ENGBM15)[4]

(2) But although many studies have examined the relationship of control to stress-related outcomes in the workplace, there are still few studies that evaluate attempts to increase workplace control (Terry &Jimmieson, 1999). (ENGBM13)

- attitudinal language (especially positive adjectives associated with the research to be presented later and/or negative adjectives associated with the research previously carried out by other researchers)

(3) Although considerable research has examined organizational politics, a serious omission has been the failure to evaluate the political skill of the influencer, leaving us ill-informed about why influence efforts are (or are not) successful. (ENGBM12)

- and hedges and boosters modulating attitudinal language and reducing or expanding the gap in the literature:

(4) Case reports suggest that some companies do realize these benefits, but these assumptions are largely untested empirically. (ENGBM14)

(5) Most of the research exploring what factors drive dominant design selection has focused on network externalities (e.g., Choi, 1994; Cottrell, 1998; Katz & Shapiro, 1986; Khazam & Mowery, 1994; Kristianson, 1998; Shurmer, 1993). [...]. (ENGBM1)

It is interesting to note that personal pronouns are hardly used in this step. Authors do not include self-mentions in this part of the Introductions; they do not display their authorial voice when creating a gap in the literature, but rather they resort to passive constructions or abstract rhetors. Neither do they create rapport with their readers in the presentation of this type of information through the use of engagement markers (such as directives, questions or imperatives) (Hyland 2005). This can be explained by bearing in mind the potential face-threatening

[4] The information between brackets refers to the particular RA within the corpus from which the example was extracted.

act that stating a gap implies. Authors need to argue against previous research, which sometimes entails reviewing past research in rather negative terms. Thus, authors try to mitigate this not only through the inclusion of certain hedges or boosters, but also by concealing their authorial voice and distancing themselves from their readers.

The extent of use of the key features mentioned above is indicated in Table 1:

Table 1. Extent of inclusion of characteristic features in the "Creating a gap" step.

	Number of occurrences	Number of RAs
Contrastive logical markers	29	17/20
Attitude markers	36	17/20
Hedges /Boosters	32	14/20

According to the results in the table some RAs present more than one contrastive clause to phrase the "Create a gap" step and, as pointed out earlier, scholars commonly modulate the dimension of the gap and/or the evaluation of previous literature, which authors use to justify their own research.

Another interesting observation in the analysis of the corpus is that the RAs taken from the two journals with the highest impact factor (*Academy of Management Journa*l and *Strategic Management Journal*) have longer, more elaborate "Create a gap" steps. Three out of the four RAs not including this step belong to the journal with the lowest impact factor (*Journal of Management*). This stresses the importance of scholars wishing to publish in these top international journals to master the drafting of their RAs, including this key sub-function of the Introductory section.

The following table includes the particular linguistic exponents of the rhetorical function of establishing a niche in the literature:

Table 2. Particular lexico-grammatical features in the realisation of the "gap creation" step.

	Linguistic realization	Number of occurrences
Contrastive logical markers	*although*	7
	but	2
	despite	4
	even though	1
	however	5
	though	4
	while	2
	yet	1
Attitude markers	*accumulating*	1
	broaden	1
	complementary	1
	critically	1
	dearth	1
	deepen	1
	developed	1
	emergent	1
	failure	1
	ignore	2
	ill-informed	1
	important	4
	inconsistent	1
	in the early stages of maturation	1
	lack	1
	limited	2
	not enough	1
	not tested	1
	omission	1
	primary	1
	rare	1
	refinement	1
	serious	1
	short of	1
	sufficient	1
	supported	1
	unexplored	1
	unfortunate	1
	untested	1

Hedges / boosters	*a great deal of*	2
	appear to	1
	assumptions	1
	considerable	2
	considerably	1
	extensively	1
	few(er)	3
	fully	1
	largely	4
	little	5
	many	1
	most	1
	mostly	1
	much	1
	no	1
	ought to	1
	particularly	2
	rarely	1
	tend to suggest	1
	typically	1

One of the most striking findings is the linguistic diversity in the phrasing of the establishment of a gap. Whereas similar interpersonal language categories are observed, the realisations of these are extremely varied. This variability in the realisation of the step can be explained by considering the status of the authors whose writing is being explored. As Hüttner (2007: 188) claims, "the more secure writers are, the more linguistic variety is available to them and the less bound they are to adhere to particular genre-functional formulaic sequences". The corpus consists of RAs published in international journals by authors affiliated to North-American institutions, which would explain the lack of fixed formulaic statements. These scholars can be considered to have fully mastered the genre-discipline specific uses of the language; hence, their ability to use different formulae. If the writing of L2 writers had been analysed, results might have been different.

The two linguistic tokens most recurrently used in this step of the RAs in the corpus are *largely* and *little*, which make clear reference to previous research. *Largely* is used twice in combination with Present Perfect verbal phrases and twice in copulative sentences. The following could be considered genre-functional formulaic sequences in that they can be considered conventionalised and pragmatically functional instances of language (Hüttner 2007) realising the communicative

purpose of the step under analysis[5]. However, they have not been found repeatedly[6] in the corpus, since, as mentioned above, variability rather than formulaicness seems to characterise the linguistic rendering of this step.

... have largely concentrated on...
... have largely been assumed...
... is as yet largely unexplored.
These assumptions are largely untested.

Little was used in the corpus both as a noun and as an adjective collocating with different research-based nouns:

... little is known about (2)
... little guidance exists about...
There has been little research on...
... little attention has been paid to...

Similarly, the following could be seen as genre-functional sequences given their pragmatic function of answering the communicative function of the particular step, although they are not recurrent. In any case, they can function as "building blocks" or "stepping stones" (Hüttner 2007) when non-native writers aim at drafting their papers in English for an international audience:

- *Though considerable theoretical work has been done on, … is much more limited.* (ENGBM1)
- *Though a number of researchers have examined…, … has received considerably less attention.* (ENGBM1)
- *Though most researchers…, … has not typically been considered …* (ENGBM1)
- *However, it is not yet fully understood why….* (ENGBM2)
- *Whereas understanding of … has deepened, understanding of … remains less developed. This is unfortunate.* (ENGBM4)
- *Yet little guidance exists about ….* (ENGBM4)
- *much of the work on … has been limited by ….* (ENGBM5)

[5] In line with Lewin et al. (2001) common communicative purposes are found on semantic grounds, but no common lexico-grammatical realizations are discerned.

[6] No sequence has been found three or more times in the corpus, a number which is established by Hüttner (2007) as the minimum for a formulaic sequence to qualify as such.

- *However, no research to date has introduced ….* (ENGBM6)
- *Despite these facts, there has been little research on ….* (ENGBM8)
- *… demands empirical attention.* (ENGBM9)
- *Although considerable research has examined …, a serious omission has been the failure to….* (ENGBM12)
- *However, it is not enough to study …. We also need to critically examine ….* (ENGBM12)
- *But although many studies have examined X, there are still few studies that …* (ENGBM13)
- *X is an important topic in the management literature* [references]. *However, there is a lack of empirical research focusing on .....* (ENGBM15)
- *although .... have been observed, researchers have stopped short of uncovering ...* (ENGBM16)
- *Although ... has been extensively studied by various researchers (see* [references] *for reviews of this literature), a great deal of emphasis has been given to …* (ENGBM19)
- *Interest in this topic has mostly revolved around .... As such, the primary focus of the literature on... has been on X. In the process, little attention has been paid to ...* (ENGBM19)
- *However, even these have largely concentrated on ....* (ENGBM19)
- *While prior research has pointed to the importance of ...., most studies in this area evaluate ... and ignore ...* (ENGBM21)
- *Rarely has ... research focused on ..... This dearth of research on ... is particularly apparent in the context of...* (ENGBM22)

3.2. Stating limitations: key lexico-grammatical features and phraseology

All the RAs in the corpus present a discussion section and 22 RAs include a presentation of limitations of their studies of varied lengths and using different rhetorical strategies. It is assumed that by being overt about possible shortcomings of their research or raising potential counterclaims authors will ward off potential criticism (Lewin et al. 2001) and will as a result gain credibility. Fourteen out of the total 22 RAs presenting limitations do so in combination with the proposal of future avenues for research with the aim of fostering the progression and advancement of the disciplinary field and as a way of responding to the overcoming of potential shortcomings under a specific sub-section with varied headings (e.g. “Limitations”, “Limitations and Future Research”, “Limitation and Conclusion(s)”, “Limitations and (Directions for) Future Research”, “Limitations and Future Directions”, “Strengths/Limitations”).

In some cases (6 RAs) the statement of limitations is accompanied by a justification of why these potential problems could not be overcome, which contributes to highlighting the validity of the research presented regardless of any deficiencies or possible flaws; that is, the potential loss of scholars' face is redressed. This justification tends to be introduced by means of a contrastive logical marker, as in the following examples:

> (6) These data are not immune to the possibility of common method bias—always a concern when single-source, self-report data are used. However, a key predictor of work group aggression did not include information from the focal individual. In addition, the difierential relations are counter to what might be generated by common method bias. Further, many of the relationships are consistent with prior empirical and theoretical work on aggression. (ENGBM5)

> (7) Another limitation is related to external validity. Because the sample was drawn from acute-care hospitals in a southwestern state, the generalizability of our findings for other states or other types of health care providers or other industries may not be valid. We are hopeful that our sample does, nevertheless, represent organizations operating in a highly complex industry setting. (ENGBM10)

In a higher number of cases (9 RAs) at least one cause-effect logical marker is introduced to make clear the reason(s) for the limitation(s) to be presented:

> (8) Given our use of a single industry, caution should be used in generalizing beyond the financial sector. (ENGBM8)

> (9) Because the sample was drawn from acute-care hospitals in a southwestern state, the generalizability of our findings for other states or other types of health care providers or other industries may not be valid. (ENGBM10)

Hedges are also sometimes used to mitigate the force of the limitation, as in the following example:

> (10) Regarding the sample, this study controlled for industry effects through selection of one 2-digit SIC code. It is possible that results would not be generalizable to other industry contexts. (ENGBM9)

Also, very frequently sequencers are used to structure the presentation of limitations. The following is a clear example of the sequencing strategy in this particular step:

> (11) We emphasize three limitations of the present study. First, replication is needed. While our sample size is similar in size or larger than the single samples of some previous studies examining relationships of personality or emotional exhaustion with work-related outcomes (e.g., Wright & Cropanzano, 1998), we urge caution, given our small and single sample. Second, Arthur et al. (2001) pointed out the role of personality-based self-selection into specified jobs and the resultant range restriction on the personality dimension of interest. Thus, our conscientiousness-call volume performance validity coefficient may have been artificially restricted by a certain personality type of individuals seeking employment in the call center. Third, our measure of customer service quality was comprised of only one item. Researchers pursuing work in this area might find it useful to employ multi-item measures, which would not only better assess the criterion space but also permit assessment of reliability. (ENGBM11)

Finally, the statement of limitations entails the use of abundant attitude markers:

> (12) though significant results were obtained here, this work remains exploratory; The research here was constrained by ... (ENGBM1)

Table 3. Extent of inclusion of characteristic features in the "Stating limitations" step.

	Number of occurrences	Number of RAs
Contrastive logical markers	8	6/22
Cause-effect logical markers	11	8/22
Sequencing markers	8	8/22
Attitude markers	81	17/22
Hedges	33	15/22

Boosters are not commonly used in the statement of the studies' limitations; an exception is the one presented in the example below:

(13) Clearly, then, the model presented here is underspecified and future work should incorporate additional potentially meaningful variables when appropriate and available given the sample. (ENGBM10)

Although limitations are frequently explicitly stated, these are not emphasised but rather mitigated or attenuated and duly justified to redress the potential loss of credibility that may result from them.

Another feature worth pointing out is that, in contrast to what happens in the drafting of the "Creating a research gap" step, personal references are commonly used. Sixteen RAs include the use of a personal pronoun or possessive adjective. Limitations concern the scholars' own study and they tend to highlight their own authorial voice here.

(14) First, in this study we only examined focal firms' decisions… (ENGBM6)

(15) First, although our theory revolves around extraorganizational signaling, we are not able to definitively refute the possibility that… (ENGBM22)

The particular linguistic exponents of each category of typical features in this particular step are listed in Table 4:

Table 4. Particular lexico-grammatical features in the realisation of the "statement of limitations" step.

	Linguistic realization	Number of occurrences
Contrastive logical markers	*however*	7
	nevertheless	1
Cause-effect logical markers	*because*	2
	by the fact that	1
	consequently	1
	due to	1
	given	3
	since	1
	thus	2

Sequencers	*... Another potential concern …, A third potential concern is...*	1
	First… Second… Third... Fourth… Finally	1
	First… Next… A final avenue	1
	… Moreover, … Finally	1
	First … Second... Third	1
	First…. …. are also… A third potential limitation	1
	One limitation is that … Further… Finally	1
	First… Second… Further	1
Attitude markers	*bias*	3
	broad	2
	cannot	2
	caution	2
	concern	4
	constrained	1
	criticize	1
	difficult	2
	exploratory	1
	fail to	1
	immune to	1
	inflated	1
	insufficient	1
	limit (v.)	8
	limitation(s)	17
	limited	2
	not able to	2
	not explore	1
	not gather	1
	not generizable	2
	not specific	1
	not test	1
	not valid	1
	only	5
	opportunities	1
	restricted	1
	significant	1
	small	7
	tempered	1
	unable to	3
	underspecified	1
	undoubtedly	1
	unexamined	1
	unexplored	1
	unfortunately	1

Hedges	*a few*	1
	appear	1
	can	1
	certain	2
	could	1
	for the most part	1
	may	4
	might	2
	perhaps	1
	possibility	2
	possible	3
	potential	5
	quite	1
	reasonably	1
	relatively	4
	seem	1
	somewhat	1
	would	1

As in the case of the previously analysed step, a great variety has been found here in the lexico-grammatical realization of this strategic communicative purpose. Some of the most common attitude markers were *limitation(s)* (12 tokens) and *limit* (8 tokens). The plural noun was frequently used to introduce this particular piece of information in the discussion section (13 RAs). Again, although the formulaic nature of the following genre-functional sequences is not attested by their recurrence in the corpus, they can be considered as such on the basis of their pragmatic function (i.e. responding to the particular communicative purpose of the step):

The results must be assessed in the context of the study's limitations.(ENGBM3)
This empirical research is marked by a few limitations that should be addressed in future studies. (ENGBM4)
We should point out additional limitations inherent in our study. (ENGBM8)
While efforts were made to minimize …., limitations along these lines remain. (ENGBM9)
Our study has several limitations (ENGBM10)
We emphasize three limitations of the present study. (ENGBM11)
As with any empirical study, there are limitations regarding this research that should be mentioned. (ENGBM12)
The limitations of this study should be addressed in future research. (ENGBM14)
This study contains several limitations, which in turn provide opportunities for future research. (ENGBM15)
This review has several limitations. (ENGBM16)

Finally, there are limitations to this study. (ENGBM20)
This study, like any other, has several limitations that open avenues for future research. (ENGBM22)

In the singular form it was used in these combinations:

One (potential) limitation is ... (2)
Another limitation is related to ...
A third potential limitation is the...
Another limitation of this study is that ...

... limits the generalizability of ... (2)
the use of .... limited... (3)
Exploration of... is limited by ...
.... limited our ability ...

Another common attitude marker is *small* (7 tokens) found in this combination:

a relatively small number of / amount of /sample(size)

Finally, *only* (5 tokens) is also a frequent evaluative marker in the expression of limitations:

We only examined ... (2)
We only considered...
... was comprised of only ...
We examined ... only during....

Three hedges were found to recur in the statement of limitations in the Business Management RA discussion sections under analysis: *potential* (5 tokens), *relatively* (4 tokens)—which was found to collocate mainly with *small*, as highlighted above—and *may* (4 tokens):

Another / A third potential concern is... (2)
One / A third potential limitation is ... (2)
a potential explanation for

..... may not be valid
may have been restricted by ...
results may only apply to ...
results may not be...

4. Final remarks

As Hüttner (2007: 112) states, "learners of particular genres, be they native or non-native need to become familiar not only with generic structures, but also with accepted and required formulaic patterns within these". This paper has attempted to carry out a corpus-based analysis of the linguistic peculiarities of two crucial steps in RAs in a particular discipline—the creation of a research gap in the Introduction and the statement of limitations in the Discussion—to cater for these particular needs of writing scholars. These two steps are particularly relevant for authors to convince first gatekeepers (i.e. editors and reviewers) and then peer readers of the validity of their research; that is, they perform key rhetorical functions in promoting the authors' research. Also, intercultural differences in the inclusion of these rhetorical steps in RAs had been uncovered previously by past research, which rendered the analysis of their specific linguistic and discursive realisation of special importance.

The top-down approach to the study of these two steps in RAs from the Business Management discipline has revealed particular lexico-grammatical features as being characteristic in their particular realization. This proves the importance of linking analyses of the organizational structure of academic genres with analyses of their particular lexico-grammatical encoding. The study should be expanded to include RA Introductions and Discussion sections from other disciplines in order to analyse whether the steps under study are realised to the same extent in other fields, to explore to what extent the lexico-grammatical rendering of the steps is disciplinary-dependant, and also to determine the possible formulaicness nature of the genre-functional sequences highlighted here.

The results could be used for pedagogical purposes to design materials aimed at raising scholars' awareness of the importance of these rhetorical strategies but also at focusing on the linguistic resources to be used so that the disciplinary members' expectations are met in the international context of publication in English. It is believed that ESP or ERPP materials should be based on corpus-based genre research results, such as the ones presented here. Following Hyland (2005), the results could be the first step to create "tasks which sensitize students to the rhetorical effects and features that tend to recur in particular genres and communities" (2005: 181). As such, scholars interested in becoming

familiar with the prevailing rhetorical conventions in international publications in English in their fields should be asked to: (1) observe the structural patterns which were the basis of the analysis in this paper together with key metadiscoursal elements in their lexico-grammatical rendering as extracted from a relevant corpus; (2) practice those elements in particular contexts, making scholars aware of the effect their linguistic and pragmatic choices may have on the readership; and (3) carry out writing tasks which involve introducing the structural patterns and using the features previously observed and practiced, and also critically approach previous own written texts as well as texts written for other contexts of publication (in English or the mother tongue). This proposal to turn the results of the research into pedagogical materials and informed guidance can be considered as taking a critical pragmatic approach, which "acknowledges that students should be exposed to dominant discourse norms […but] stresses that students have choices and should be free to adopt or subvert the dominant practices as they wish" (Harwood and Hadley 2004: 357) or as they are allowed to.

These materials could be of special use for junior English L1 researchers as well as junior or experienced English L2 scholars who may wish to start publishing their research in top international journals in their disciplines. By familiarising (non-) native (novice) scholars with the common lexico-grammatical realisation of these steps, they will become aware of the importance of presenting their research in the light of a previously determined niche and concluding their papers by pointing out certain limitations in English RAs aimed at high-impact factor sites for publication. As pointed out above, they may not be used to these rhetorical conventions in their own languages and national contexts of publication. Making them observe, analyse and produce them following the "building blocks" or "stepping stones" (Hüttner 2007) outlined may further help them frame their research neatly and be able to "market" it more successfully in the competitive sphere of international publications in English, which in this field are largely dominated by Anglo-American scholars.

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Appendix: List of RAs in the corpus

ENGBM1
SCHILLING, M. A. 2002. "Technology success and failure in winner-take-all markets: the impact of learning orientation, timing and network externalities." *Academy of Management Journal* 45 (2): 387-398.
ENGBM2
BUCHHOLTZ, A. K. et al. 2003. "The Role of Human Capital in Postacquisition of CEO departure." *Academy of Management Journal* 46 (4), pp. 506-514.
ENGBM3
COMBS, J. G. and SKILL, M. S. 2003. "Managerialist and Human Capital explanations for key executive pay premiums: a contingency perspective." *Academy of Management Journal* 46 (1): 63-73.
ENGBM4
Fynn, Francis. 2003. "How much should I give and how often? The effects of generostiy and frequency of favor exchange on social status and productivity." *Academy of Management Journal* 46 (5): 539-553.
ENGBM5
Glomb, Theresa M and Hui Liao. 2003. "Interpersonal aggression in work groups: social influence, reciprocal, and individual effects." *Academy of Management Journal* 46 (4): 486-496.
ENGBM6
Williamson, I.O. and Cable, D.M. 2003. "Organizational hiring patterns, interfirm network ties, and iterorganizational imitation." *Academy of Management Journal* 46 (5): 349-358.
ENGBM7
DIETZ, J. et al. 2004. "Service climate effects on customer attitudes: an examination of boundary conditions." *Academy of Management Journal* 47 (1): 81-92.
ENGBM8
RICHARDS, O. C. et al. 2004. "Cultural diversity in management, firm performance and the moderating role of entrepreneurial orientation dimensions." *Academy of Management Journal* 47 (2): 255-266.
ENGBM9
Saxon, Todd and Dollinger Marc. 2004. "Target reputation and appropriability: picking and deploying resources in acquisitions." *Journal of Management* 30 (1): 123-147.
ENGBM10
Walters, B. A. and Bhuian S.A. 2004. "Complexity absorption and performance: a structural analysis of acute-care hospitals." *Journal of Management* 30 (1): 97-121.

ENGBM11
Witt, L.A. Martha C. Andrews and Dawn S. Carlson. 2004. "When conscientiousness isn't enough: emotional exhaustion and performance among call center customer service representatives." *Journal of Management* 30 (1): 149-160.
ENGBM12
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ENGBM13
Logan, Mary S. and Daniel C. Ganster. 2005. "An experimental evaluation of a control intervention to alleviate job-related stress." *Journal of Management* 31 (1): 90-107.
ENGBM14
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ENGBM15
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ENGBM16
Stewart, Greg L. 2006. "A meta-analytic review of relationships between team design features and team performance." *Journal of Management* 32 (1): 29-54.
ENGBM17
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ENGBM18
Sanders, Gerard W.M. and Steven Boivie. 2004. "Sorting things out: valuation of new firms in uncertain markets." *Strategic Management Journal* 25: 167-186.
ENGBM19
Shamsie, Jamal, Corey Phelps and Jerome Kuperman. 2004. "Better late than never: a study of late entrants in household electrical equipment." *Strategic Management Journal* 25: 69-84.
ENGBM20
Berry, Heater. 2006. "Leaders, laggards and the pursuit of foreign knowledge." *Strategic Management Journal* 27: 151-168.

ENGBM21
Darnall, Nicole and Daniel Edwards Jr. 2006. "Predicting the cost of environmental management system adoption: the role of capabilities, resources and ownership structure." *Strategic Management Journal* 27: 301-320.
ENGBM22
Higgins, Monica G. and Ranjay Gulati. 2006. "Stacking the deck: The effects of top management backgrounds on investor decisions." *Strategic Management Journal* 27: 1-25.
ENGBM23
Hoekter, Glenn. 2006. "Do modular products lead to modular organizations?" *Strategic Management Journal* 27: 501-518.
ENGBM24
Whestphal, James, Steven Boivie and Daniel Han Ming Chng. 2006. "The strategic impetus for social network ties: Reconstituting broken CEO friendship ties." *Strategic Management Journal* 425-445.

The consolidation of *þat* as an invariable relativizer in the history of English[1]

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Two different invariable relative markers were in use in early English, *þe* and *þat/that*. This paper aims to answer the question of how and why *þat* replaced *þe* as an invariable relativizer in Middle English. To this end I analyse the distribution of invariable relativizers in the relevant periods of the English language (from Old English to late Middle English) as represented in *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*. The following variables are examined: (i) the syntactic function of the relativizer, which determines the progression and recession of relativization strategies, following the Accessibility Hierarchy proposed by Keenan and Comrie (1977); (ii) the type of relative clause (whether restrictive or non-restrictive), which conditions the distribution of relativization strategies in particular; (iii) the type of NP antecedent, which also plays a role in the selection of relativizer; (iv) the text type; and (v) dialect. The analysis reveals that *þat/that* starts to replace *þe* very slowly, occupying the environments less favoured by *þe*, that is, those of object and resuming inanimate antecedents. Moreover, I will show that this slow, progressive introduction suddenly evolves into a dramatic change, with *þat* quickly becoming the only invariable relativizer available.

1. Introduction

Different relativization strategies have coexisted over the course of the English language. These include the pronominal relativization strategy, the zero relativization strategy and the invariable relativization strategy.

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The most frequently used of these has been the invariable relativizer, represented in early English (Old and early Middle English) by *þe* (example (1)), which from Middle English was wholly replaced by *þat*[2] (example (2)), precursor of Present-day English *that*, as in (3), which was itself already in existence in Old English, but used with considerable less frequency.

(1) Gemunon we symle þæt we þa god don [rc þe us Godes bec lærað]
Remind we ever that we the good things do rel us God's books teach
"Let us be always mindful that we do those good things that God's books teach us"
[Q O2/3 IR HOM BLICK 6: 139]

(2) Morgan wolde haue hade alle þe lande fram bigende Humber, [rc þat
Morgan would have had all the land from beyond Humber that
Conedag helde]
Coneday held
'Morgan wanted to have had all the land from beyond de River which Coneday held.'
[Q M3 NN HIST BRUT3 21]

(3) I am reading the book [rc that I've always wanted to read].

Much previous work in this area has focussed on the distribution of relativization strategies in different periods of English (Quirk 1957; Jack 1975, 1978; Dekeyser 1984, 1986; Rissanen 1991; Aarts 1993; Yamashita 1994; Guy and Bayley 1995; Ball 1996; Stein 1998 to mention a few) and different varieties of the language (Ihalainen 1980; Van den Eynden 1993; Sigley 1997; Tottie and Rey 1997; Alsagoff and Lick 1998; Gisborne 2000; Tottie and Harvie 2000; Geisler, 2002; Peitsara, 2002; Tagliamonte, Smith and Lawrence 2005; among many others), as well as on the expansion of *wh-* pronominal relativizers from late Middle English onwards at the expense of Old English pronominal relativizers *se/seo/þæt* (Meier 1967; Rydén 1983; Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2002; Suárez 2008a; etc.). Less often addressed has been the consolidation of *that* as the only invariable relativizer in late Middle English, ousting *þe*, the favourite relativizer in Old English, from the relativization system (McIntosh 1947-48; Kivimaa 1966).

[2] The invariable relativizer of early English will be spelled *þat* throughout the paper, although it was recorded with many different spellings throughout the history of English.

From Old English onwards, *þat* existed as an invariable relativizer but was very sporadically used as such. A common view is that relativizer *þe* was phonologically weaker than the already existing *þat*, and this led to its disappearance from the system earlier (Fischer et al. 2000: 91). Additionally, the displacement of *þe* by *þat* as the invariable relativizer has been linked to the use of *þat* as the general subordinator of the English language, already used in OE as a subordinating particle in non-relative dependent clauses (especially complement or content clauses and clauses of purpose and result) (Fischer 1992: 294; Rissanen 1997).

My purpose here is to shed light on the consolidation of *that* as the only invariable relativizer in English and to provide an answer to the question of how the consolidation of *þat* as an invariable relativizer proceeded. In order to answer this question, I report here on a study set up to investigate the use and evolution of *þe* and *þat/that* as invariable relativizers, from Old English to late Middle English (1420), when *that* had become the only invariable relativizer available in the English language. I will analyze the distribution of these relativizers, taking into account a number of linguistic factors (both internal and external) that have been reported in the literature to influence the choice of the relative word. The ultimate goal of this paper is to reconstruct the conditions under which *þe* came to be replaced by *þat/that* in the history of English.

2. Data and methods

The elements under examination here are invariable relativizers in Old and Middle English. During these periods, two relative words were used in this context, namely *þe*, as in (1) and *þat* as in (2), their distribution resulting from personal choice and/or linguistic factors which may have influenced the selection of one over the other. In this study I will consider the two elements as variants of the same relativization strategy, since both fulfil the requisites expected of invariant relativizers.

The ‘invariable relativization strategy’, also known as ‘relative subordinator strategy’ (Comrie 1981: 151, Givón 1993, Comrie 1998), represents one of the major relativization strategies typologically speaking, since it is among the most frequent means of marking

relativization cross-linguistically.[3] Items used for this relativization strategy are characterized by being indeclinable, and not marked for gender, number or case. Unlike pronominal relativizers, they lack genitive forms (*contra* Seppänen and Kjellmer (1995) who report examples such as *The dog that's leg was run over* as examples of *that* explicitly marked for the genitive) and are not marked for animacy. Additionally, these elements are usually found as complementizers or subordinators in the language, as is the case with *that* and also *þe* in earlier English, the former used to introduce complement clauses throughout the history of the language and as a pleonastic marker of subordination up to early Modern English (Rissanen 1997) and the latter frequently used to mark complement clauses and subordinate clauses of purpose and result in Old English (Fischer 1992: 294).

The data used in the present study have been extracted from the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*. As Table 1 shows, the sample is taken from texts from Old English (950-1150) (O3, O4) and Middle English (1150-1420) (M1, M2 and M3).

Table 1. Description of the corpus

Period	Sub-periods	No of words	No of tokens
OE	O3 (950-1050)	36,630	539
	O4 (1050-1150)	47,445	576
ME	M1 (1150-1250)	75,800	1,184
	M2 (1250-1350)	4,489[4]	81
	M3 (1350-1420)	57,774	741
TOTAL		222,238	3,121

[3] The other major types of relativization strategies include the 'non-reduction stratety', 'anaphoric pronoun' or 'pronoun-retention strategy', 'relative pronoun strategy' and 'gap strategy' (see Keenan 1985, Comrie 1998).

[4] The low number of words in this period has to do with how the little material has been preserved from early Middle English. In the *The Helsinki Corpus* only 3 texts (*Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, *The Bee and the Stork* and the *Kentish Sermons*) from this period are classified as non-translations. Also, one of these (the *Kentish Sermons*), although not classified as a translation in *The Helsinki Corpus*, is considered in the literature to be a translation from French.

The corpus comprises approximately 222,000 words and has rendered 3,121 examples of relative clauses introduced by an invariable relativizer. The last period included in the analysis is late Middle English (M3), since by then (1350-1420) the relativizer *þat/that* was the only remaining invariable relativizer in use, thus removing the need to examine texts dating from any later than this time. In order to keep the corpus as homogeneous as possible, only original prose texts have been selected. Translations (as classified in the *Helsinki Corpus*) were discarded, so as to avoid any potential influences from language contact.[5] This same selection criterion, however, had the additional effect of upsetting the balance between sub-samples, a problem which I have corrected by normalizing the frequencies per one-thousand words.

Invariable relativizers have always been present in the English language and have in general been used more frequently than any other relativization strategy, as Figure 1 below (based on Table 2) illustrates.

Table 2. Distribution of relativizers (adapted from Suárez 2004: 216, 224, 226)

	950-1050	1150-1250	1420-1500
Invariable	539 (81.2%)	1184 (95.1%)	741 (83.4%)
Pronominal	124 (18.7%)	54 (4.3%)	143 (16.1%)
Zero	1 (0.1%)	7 (0.6%)	4 (0.4%)
TOTAL	664	1245	888

[5] See Taylor (2008) for a recent analysis on the effects of translation on Old English texts.

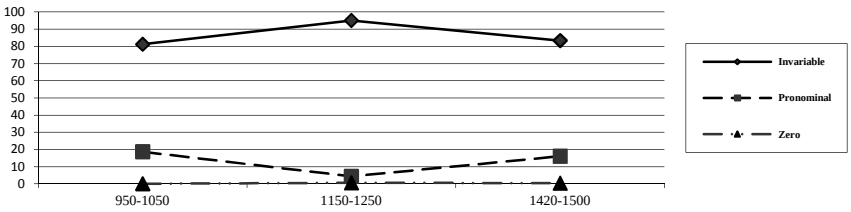

Figure 1. Distribution of relativizers

Recent studies on the distribution of relativizers in different British dialects (Herrman 2005: 24-28) confirm that this is still the norm, and is also becoming the trend in New Englishes, particularly in spoken language, as reported by Gut (2009) with respect to Kenyan, Jamaican and Singapore Englishes.

Table 3 presents the distribution of invariable relativizers in the corpus under analysis: it includes raw numbers and their normalized frequencies per one thousand words.

Table 3. Chronological distribution of pronominal relativizers (normalized frequencies per 1000 words)

	O3 (950-1050)	O4 (1050-1150)	M1 (1150-1250)	M2 (1250-1350)	M3 (1350-1420)	TOTAL
Þe	526 (14.3)	551 (11.6)	846 (11.2)	1 (0.2)	–	1924
Þat	13 (0.3)	25 (0.5)	338 (4.5)	80 (17.8)	741 (12.8)	1197
TOTAL	539	576	1184	81	741	3,121

(χ^2, p <.0001, in the comparison between Old English and M1)

Þe-relative clauses are by far the most numerous group of relative clauses in late Old English (O3, O4) and early Middle English (M1). Nevertheless, by early Middle English (M1), there were already signs of a decrease in the frequency of *þe* relative clauses in favour of

relative clauses introduced by *þat* (the same tendency is also found sporadically in English earlier than this). By early Middle English, the frequency with which *þat* was used as an invariant relativizer had increased considerably (Kivimaa 1966: 133-136), an increase that was to become dramatic in late Middle English (1150-1250), when *þat* was by far the more important relativizer (McIntosh 1947-1948: 73; Kivimaa 1966: 134; Fischer 1992: 196; Fischer et al. 2000: 93). This sudden increase is depicted in Figure 2 (based on Table 3), which demonstrates graphically the progress of *þat* to become the most important relativizer from the second half of the thirteenth century on; and, similarly, how *þe*, in recession from the twelfth century onwards, became almost invisible. By the fifteenth century, *þat* was the only invariable relativizer.

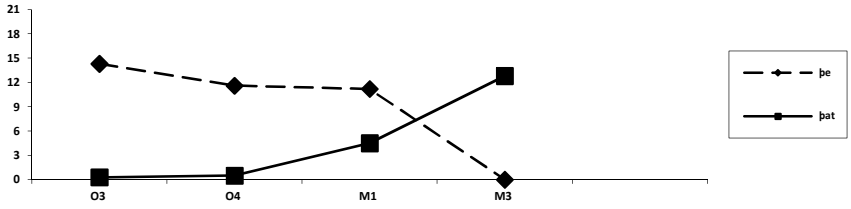

Figure 2. Competition between *þe* and *þat* in the history of English (normalized frequencies per 1000 words)[6]

Here the use of an innovative invariable relativizer in the English language—in this case *þat*—grew in frequency and progressively pushed *þe* away, as demonstrated by the decline of *þe* in the 12th century, being compensated by the increase of *þat*. As happened in the case of *wh*-relative pronouns, the use of which rose as that of the demonstrative relative pronouns receded (Suárez 2008a), the gap left here by the declining invariable relativizer *þe* started to be occupied by *þat* in early Middle English, eventually becoming the only invariant

[6] M2 has been excluded from the graphs because the low number of examples—related to the scarcity of available material—hides the clear competition between the two relativizers (see footnote 4).

relativizer by late Middle English. This ultimately led to the complete disappearance of *þe* as a relativizer and hence the prevailing state-of-affairs in Modern Standard English. Around the thirteenth century, invariant *þat* was the norm everywhere, potentially occurring with any kind of antecedent and in any context, in most dialectal areas, with both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, and with both animate and inanimate antecedents. The specialization of invariant *that* in restrictive relative clauses did not take place until around the fourteenth century, when *wh*-relative pronouns began to occur in the English language with some frequency (Mustanoja 1960: 197; Fischer 1992: 297; Fischer et al. 2000: 93). Before this consolidation, there existed variation between *þe* and *þat*; the factors which may have conditioned this variation will be addressed in the following section.

3. Factors conditioning variation

3.1. Syntactic function of the relativizer

The syntactic function of the relativizer has generally been considered one of the main factors governing the choice of relativizer. Syntactic function, in fact, is the variable most frequently mentioned in the literature on the expansion of *wh*- relativizers to occupy the space left by pronominal relativizers in earlier English (Suárez 2008a: 345-346) and may also be of importance in the case of invariant relativizers. For my analysis I have adopted (and adapted) Keenan and Comrie's 'Accessibility Hierarchy' (1977) so that three different categories are distinguished. The 'Accessibility Hierarchy' is a hierarchical ordering of noun phrase positions illustrated as follows (Keenan and Comrie 1977: 66):

SU > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > OCOMP
(where SU stands for ''subject'', DO for ''direct object'', IO for ''indirect object'', OBL for ''oblique'', GEN for ''genitive'' and OCOMP for ''object of comparison'')

The syntactic positions included in the hierarchy are ordered from the most to the least accessible, that is, the easiest and hence most

frequently relativized on the left, and the most difficult and less frequently relativized syntactic functions on the right.

For the present paper, the Accessibility Hierarchy was simplified and the following syntactic functions were distinguished: subject (S), as in example (4), object (examples (1), repeated here as (5)), and oblique (Obl), which refers to relativizers that function as prepositional phrases (all of which are stranded, as must be the case with invariable relativizers in the periods under analysis), as in example (6). The categories GEN and OCOMP were not included since no examples were found of invariable relativizers being used in either of these types of positions.

(4) se [$_{RC}$ þe ne can þa beorhtnesse þæs ecan leohtes], se bið blind
he rel neg knows the brightness of the eternal light he is blind
'he who does not knows the brightness of the eternal light is blind'
[Q O2/3 IR HOM BLICK 2: 62]

(5) Gemunon we symle þæt we þa god don [$_{RC}$ þe us Godes bec lærað]
Remember we ever that we the good things do rel us God's books teach
"Let us be always mindful that we do those good things that God's books teach us"
[Q O2/3 IR HOM BLICK 6: 139]

(6) We agen to understonden hwer boð þe wepne [$_{RC}$ þet adam wes mide forwunded]
We ought to understand what are the weapons rel adam was with wounded
"We ought to understand what the weapons are that Adam has been wounded with."
[Q M1 IR HOM LAMB8: 83]

The question of which positions in a language may be subjected to relativization is closely linked to the degree of explicitness of the relativization strategy. Relative clauses which are introduced by

invariable relativizers allow a narrower range of positions to be relativized in comparison with those introduced by pronominal relativizers. With this in mind, we would expect invariable relativizers to be able to relativize only the most accessible positions in the hierarchy. Table 4 shows the distribution of invariable relativizers in the periods under analysis:

Table 4. Invariable relativizers and syntactic function (normalized frequencies per 1000 words)

		S	O	Obl	TOTAL
O3 (950-1050)	*þe*	369 (10.1)	133 (3.6)	24 (0.7)	526
	þat	8 (0.2)	1 (0.02)	4 (0.1)	13
O4 (1050-1150)	*þe*	352 (7.4)	138 (2.9)	61 (1.3)	551
	þat	11 (0.2)	11 (0.2)	3 (0.02)	25
M1 (1150-1250)	*þe*	593 (7.8)	183 (2.4)	71 (0.9)	846
	þat	173 (2.4)	135 (1.8)	30 (0.4)	338
M2 (1250-1350)	*þe*	1 (0.2)	-	-	1
	þat	58 (12.9)	19 (4.2)	3 (0.7)	80
M3 (1350-1420)	*þat*	487 (8.4)	191 (3.3)	63 (1.1)	741
TOTAL		2,051 (9.2)	811 (3.6)	259 (1.2)	3,121

S=subject; O=object; Obl=oblique.

The results show that, with respect to late Old English, the indeclinable relativizer *þe* is most frequently used when it appears as the subject or the object of the relative clause, as Traugott (1992: 226) and Kivimaa (1966: 28) have previously shown. In other words, the most frequently relativized positions are those which correspond to the roles highest on the 'Accessibility Hierarchy', as the behaviour of *þe* demonstrates. The

same situation is observed in the distribution of *þat* (subjects and objects being the most commonly relativized positions), although the number of examples in this case is extremely low.[7] The most notable aspect of *þat*'s behaviour, however, is that the expected hierarchy is not respected: objects are as frequently relativized as subjects. In relation to early Middle English, Kivimaa (1966: 135) and Jack (1975[8]: 104; 1988[9]: 49) have observed that the invariable relativizer *þe* is used almost exclusively in the subject slot; such exclusivity was not observed in the case of *þat*. The correlation between the syntactic function of the relativizer and the choice of relativizer has also produced some interesting and significant results (χ^2, $p < .0001$) in relation to my corpus of early Middle English (see Table 4). All syntactic roles are more frequently performed by the invariable relativizer *þe*, in particular, though not exclusively, that of the subject (just as Kivimaa and Jack had previously found). The most notable development in this period (1150-1250) involves *þat* whose importance as an invariable relativizer rises and which, although more commonly used as subject, also achieves an extremely high frequency as an object (in comparison with the other periods).

In its expansion *þat* is stronger—and ousts *þe* earlier—as object, a position in which *þe* is proportionally less frequent, as illustrated in O4 and M1, illustrating a similar process to that observed in the substitution of *se* pronominal relativizers by *wh-* words. The unavailability of relevant data from M2 noted above does not allow us to confirm this tentative hypothesis.

3.2. Restrictiveness of the relative clause

Another important variable affecting the distribution of relativizers is that of the restrictiveness of the relative clause, according to which relative clauses are divided into restrictive and non-restrictive types. The hypothesis being examined here is whether the distribution of invariable relativizers correlates significantly with the distinction

[7] No significance tests were applied to Old English due to the low number of examples in some of the *þat* cells.

[8] The conclusions are based on an analysis of only one text, the *Ancrene Wisse*.

[9] The conclusions are based on an analysis of only one text, *Layamon*.

between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses. The distribution of relativizers in Present-day English changes depending on this variable: restrictive relative clauses can be introduced by any of the available items, namely *zero*, *that* and *wh-* pronouns, and non-restrictive relative clauses favour (indeed almost require) a *wh-* word; only very rarely are they introduced by the relativizer *that* (Jacobsson 1994; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1059),[10] and never by the relativizer *zero*. Throughout the history of the English language, invariable relativizers (as well as other relativization strategies) have been used to introduce both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, though more commonly in relation to restrictive relative clauses. Scholars such as McIntosh (1947-1948: 79 fn. 19), Mitchell (1985: §2283) and Traugott (1992: 223) are not as categorical on this point but, broadly speaking, are of much the same opinion. Jack (1975: 106-107, 1988: 52-53), on the other hand, denies that the choice between the two major relativizers—*þe* and *þat*—is a function of the type of relative clause; nonetheless, his analysis still indicates a higher proportion of invariable *þe* in non-restrictive relative clauses, and the prevalence of *þat* in restrictive relative clauses (Jack 1988: 53). Table 5 sets out the distribution of relativizers according to the type of relative clause.

[10] See example "He wants less freedom, that he always thought was outward motion, turns out to be this inner dwindling" (Jacobsson 1994: 186).

Table 5. Invariable relativizers and type of relative clause (normalized frequencies per 1000 words)

		RRC	NRRC	TOTAL
O3 (950-1050)	*þe*	422 (11.5)	104 (2.6)	526
	þat	5 (0.1)	8 (0.2)	112
O4 (1050-1150)	*þe*	360 (7.6)	191 (4.0)	551
	þat	23 (0.5)	2 (0.04)	25
M1 (1150-1250)	*þe*	694 (9.1)	279 (3.7)	973
	þat	152 (2.0)	59 (0.8)	211
M2 (1250-1350)	*þe*	1 (0.2)	-	1
	þat	66 (14.7)	14 (3.1)	80
M3 (1350-1420)	*þat*	587 (10.2)	154 (2.7)	741
TOTAL		2,310 (10.4)	811 (3.6)	3,121

The results show that the choice of *þe* does not relate to any type of relative clause in particular, but is simply a reflection of the general distribution of higher frequency in restrictive than in non-restrictive relative clauses across all the periods, and especially in late Old and early Middle English. During these periods of coexistence, *þat* exhibits a higher tendency to introduce restrictive relative clauses, and this is statisticially significant in Old English (χ^2, p <.0001). However, from M2 onwards, when *þat* becomes the only invariable relativizer, it inherits the behaviour of *þe* in O4 and M1, so that the number of non-restrictive relative clauses introduced by *þat* also increases. This new distribution leads us to the tentative conclusion that when *þat* substituted *þe*, it adopted *þe*'s distribution in relation to the type of relative clause, thereby reinforcing the substitution process already observed in terms of syntactic function.

3.3. The NP antecedent

One of the most complex variables hypothesized to affect the distribution of relativizers is the NP antecedent. According to Jack, the preference of a relativizer, in particular *þe* and *þat* in early Middle English, is to be interpreted in light of the nature of the antecedent (Jack 1988: 53). The influence of the antecedent on the distribution of relativization strategies, however, is denied by Romaine, who states that "the effect of different types of antecedent (grouped according to certain characteristics or features of the modification which precedes the head noun) is in most cases negligible" (Romaine 1982: 143), at least in her investigation of relative clauses in Middle Scots (c. 1530-1550).

In the current study, NP antecedents have been analyzed for the following two characteristics:

- Category/form of antecedent
- Type of antecedent: animate vs inanimate

Regarding the category of the NP antecedent, the aim is to observe whether there exists any correlation between the category of the NP antecedent and the selection of *þe* and *þat* in the periods under analysis. For the analysis of this variable I reduced the form of the NP antecedent to the following six categories: count nouns in the singular (example 7), count nouns in the plural (example 6), non-count nouns (example 8), pronominal items (example 4), proper names (example 9) and a miscellaneous category which would comprise every other antecedent (basically nominalized adjectives (example 5) and coordinate NPs (example 10).

(7) þis is þe miracle [$_{RC}$ þet þet godspel of te dai us telþ]
this is the miracle rel the gospel of today us tells
"This is the Miracle that today's gospel tells us."
[Q M2 IR HOM KSERM: 218]

(8) Þis sceal wyð eagena dymnysse, [rc þt grecas nemniað glaucomata]
This schall against eyes dimness rel Greeks call glaucomata
'This shall be used against the eyes' dimness, which Greeks call *glaucomata*.'
[Q MX/1 IS HANDM PERI 96]

(9) Iohannes eac, se fulluhtere, [rc þe Crist gefullode]
John also the Baptist rel Christ baptized
'Also John the Baptist, who baptized Christ.'
[Q O3 IR RELT LSIGEF 20]

(10) Somtyme hym þink þat it is paradis or heuen, for diuerse wonderful
Sometimes him seems that it is paradise or heaven for diverse wonderful
swetnes and counfortes, ioyes & blessid vertewes [rc þat he findeþ þer-in]
sweetness and comforts joys & blessed virtues rel he finds therein
'Sometimes it seems to him that it is paradise or heaven because of the diverse wonderful sweet things and comforts, joys and blessed virtues which he finds in it.'
[Q M3 IR RELT CLOUD 68: 123]

The bearing of the antecedent on the choice of relativizer in Old English has been studied by Kivimaa (1966), Mitchell (1985) and Traugott (1992), and among the few descriptive notes we find that the invariable relativizer *þe* is favoured when the antecedent is modified by a pronominal element (Kivimaa 1966: 44; Mitchell 1985: §2270, §2270; Traugott 1992: 226), especially in the singular (Traugott 1992: 226) (with the exception of the indefinite pronoun *eall*, which when modified by a relative clause, is invariably introduced by *þat* (see Mitchell 1985: §2263)). The distribution of relativizers *þe* and *þat* according to the antecedent they resume is shown in Table 6:

Table 6. Invariable relativizers and category of NP antecedent (normalized frequencies per 1000 words)

		Count (sg)	Pronoun	Count (pl)	Non-count	Proper name	Other	TOTAL
O3 (950-1050)	*þe*	130 (35.5)	202 (55.1)	145 (39.6)	26 (7.1)	16 (4.4)	7 (1.9)	526
	þat	6 (4.0)	2 (0.5)	1 (0.3)	4 (1.1)	-	-	13
O4 (1050-1150)	*þe*	188 (39.6)	90 (19.0)	159 (33.5)	61 (12.8)	47 (9.9)	6 1.3)	551
	þat	4 (0.8)	16 (3.4)	2 (0.4)	2 (0.4)	1 (0.2)	-	25
M1 (1150-1250)	*þe*	364 (48.0)	214 (28.2)	180 (23.7)	58 (7.6)	21 (2.8)	9 (1.2)	846
	þat	178 (23.5)	94 (12.4)	36 (4.7)	22 (2.9)	4 (0.5)	4 (0.5)	338
M2 (1250-1350)	*þe*	-	1 (2.2)	-	-	-	-	1
	þat	18 (40.1)	25 (55.7)	23 (51.2)	12 (26.7)	1 (2.2)	1 (2.2)	80
M3 (1350-1420)	*þat*	355 (61.4)	172 (29.8)	111 (19.2)	56 (9.7)	40 (6.9)	7 (1.2)	741
TOTAL		1,243 (55.9)	816 (36.7)	657 (29.6)	241 (10.8)	130 (5.8)	34 (1.5)	3,121

The results in Table 6 show those differences in the two periods of Old English and early Middle English (M1). In O3 (950-1050), although invariable relativizer *þe* is used in all environments, it is clearly favoured when it resumes pronominal items and count nouns in the plural. Relativizer *þat* is preferred in combination with count nouns in the singular (either masculine or feminine),[11] but we must bear in mind that the low number of examples here does not allow us for definite conclusions. Regarding O4 (1050-1150), relevant differences are also

[11] Otherwise it could be considered a pronominal relativizer gender-agreeing with the antecedent.

observed (χ^2, p <.0001). *Þe* is favoured with count nouns, both in the singular and in the plural, and is much less frequently used with pronominal items, which becomes the favourite NP antecedent of the emergent *þat*. This is reinforced by the results shown for *þat* in M2 (1250-1350). Regarding M1 (1150-1250), a very similar distribution is observed in *þe* and *þat*, both favoured with count nouns in the singular and with pronouns, thus mirroring the general distribution of the category of antecedents in the whole corpus. The distribution in this case is also significant (χ^2, p <.0001).

In terms of the animacy of the antecedent, in the codification of the results from my corpus, 'animate' (example 9) and 'inanimate' (example 7) antecedents were distinguished.

There is no consensus in the literature as to the influence of the animacy of the NP antecedent on the choice of relativizer. As noted above, from the results of her analysis of relativizers in Middle Scots (c. 1530-1550), Romaine concludes that the influence of the antecedent "is in most cases negligible" (1982: 143), and, more categorically, that "the animacy of the antecedent has virtually no effect in determining which form of the relative will occur" (1982: 142).

Table 7. Invariable relativizers and animacy of the antecedent (normalized frequencies per 1000 words)

		Animate	Inanimate	TOTAL
O3 (950-1050)	*þe*	321 (8.8)	205 (6.0)	526
	þat	1 (0.03)	12 (0.3)	13
O4 (1050-1150)	*þe*	323 (6.8)	228 (4.8)	551
	þat	4 (0.8)	21 (0.4)	25
M1 (1150-1250)	*þe*	429 (5.6)	417 (5.5)	846
	þat	117 (1.5)	221 (2.9)	338
M2 (1250-1350)	*þe*	1 (0.2)	-	1
	þat	42 (9.3)	38 (8.5)	80
M3 (1350-1420)	*þat*	329 (5.7)	412 (7.1)	741
TOTAL		1,567 (7.1)	1,554 (7.0)	3,121

The results from Table 7 demonstrate that at least some relativizers are sensitive to the animacy of the antecedent. The results show that *þat* is preferred with inanimate antecedents both in Old English and early Middle English; less frequently, it is also found resuming animate ones in O4 and M2 (the latter somehow reflecting the general distribution of animate vs inanimate antecedents). By contrast, no such clear preference regarding the animacy of the antecedent has been observed with invariable *þe*. It is used as frequently with animate as with inanimate antecedents, contra McIntosh (1947-48: 74), Kivimaa (1966: 135) and Jack (1975: 101; 1988: 58), who all observed a preference for *þe* to be used with animate antecedents. The distribution in M1, the most representative period, confirms that, when relativizer *þat* becomes the favoured relativizer, it tends to be used with animate antecedents, occupying the space dominated by *þe* (Fischer 1992: 295), and also behaving as the only invariable relativizer used with both animate and inanimate antecedents.

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the findings discussed. Invariable relativizer *þe* shows a clear preference for combining with animate antecedents, while *þat* favours inanimate ones. This could be related to the fact that the pronominal relativizer *þat* in Old English was used with nouns marked for the neuter gender, and these are very frequently inanimate.[12]

Figures from Table 7 above confirm that the choice of *þe* and *þat* is sensitive to the animacy of the antecedent, both in Old English and in early Middle English (χ^2, p <.0001): *þe* is more frequently used with animate antecedents than with inanimate ones and *þat* is more frequently used with inanimate antecedents than with animate nouns. However, when *þat* becomes the only invariable relativizer it is used very frequently both with animate and inanimate antecedents, adopting the roles covered earlier by *þe*.

In sum, interesting tendencies emerge from the analysis of the NP antecedent. In Old English, the influence of the antecedent on the relativizer's choice has to do with the form. It is concluded that the use of the invariable relativizer *þe* is favoured when the antecedent is pronominal or singular. In early Middle English, animacy seems to be

[12] As opposed to the majority of male and female referent nouns which belong to the masculine and feminine gender groups.

the most relevant factor. On these grounds we can conclude that *þe* is mostly found with animate and inanimate plural antecedents and *þat* with inanimate antecedents and some very specific animate nouns.

3.4. Position of the relative clause

The last intralinguistic variable analyzed to explain the distribution of invariable relativizers is the position of the relative clause with respect to the antecedent. Unlike Present-day English, this variable is of relevance in earlier English because there was a strong tendency in the language to avoid non-clause-final embedded structures (Carkeet 1976). Therefore, relative clauses were usually separated from the antecedent they depend on.

Relative clauses have been coded as 'intraposed' (if the antecedent and the relativizer were adjoined), as illustrated by example (11), or 'non-intraposed' (if the antecedent and the relativizer were separate), represented by so-called 'extraposed' (example 5) and 'left-dislocated' (example 4) relative clauses. An important aspect that needs to be clarified in relation to this variable is that it is only relevant for a reduced number of examples, that is, only those instances in which the separation of the antecedent is possible. Instances such as (2) and (7), in which the entire NP antecedent is clause-final, were excluded from the analysis.

(11) Forþon þære burge nama [rc þe is nemned Gerusalem] is gereht sibbe
Because the city name rel is called Gerusalem means of peace
gesyhþ, forþon þe halige sawla þær restæþ.
sight because holy soul there rest
'For the name of the city which is called Jerusalem signifies 'sight of peace', because the holy souls rest there.'
[Q O2/3 IR HOM BLICK 6: 25]

The results are included in Table 8:

Table 8. Invariable relativizers and position of the antecedent (normalized frequencies per 1000 words)

		[+ intraposed]	[- intraposed]	TOTAL
O3 (950-1050)	*þe*	127 (3.5)	53 (1.4)	180
	Þat	-	-	-
O4 (1050-1150)	*þe*	64 (1.3)	115 (2.4)	179
	þat	1 (0.03)	3 (0.06)	4
M1 (1150-1250)	*þe*	131 (1.7)	75 (1.0)	206
	þat	24 (0.3)	5 (0.06)	29
M2 (1250-1350)	*þe*	-	1 (0.2)	1
	þat	9 (2.0)	15 (3.3)	24
M3 (1350-1420)	*þat*	178 (3.1)	25 (0.4)	203
TOTAL		534 (2.4)	292 (1.3)	826

The data from Table 8 show that, with the exception of O4 (1050-1150), both *þe* and *þat* show a strong preference for adjacency, which might lend support to the hypothesis that *þat* enters the language to occupy the slots left empty by *þe*.[13] The data of M3 (1350-1420) are irrelevant not only because it is the period when *þat* consolidates as the only invariable relativizer, but also because by this time the language had already fixed the word-order and intraposition was the norm in the case of adnominal relative clauses.

3.5. Type of text

In addition to the intralinguistic variables, two extralinguistic variables were analysed, namely the type of text and the dialect. Although four types of texts were initially included (medicine handbooks, history, religious treatises and homilies), in the end only religious treatises,

[13] No significance tests were applied here due to the low number of examples in some of the cells.

homiletic texts[14] and history were analysed, since these text types were available for all the different periods covered by the corpus. The relevance of this variable lies in the fact that the choice of relativizer can be stylistically determined, as demonstrated by Romaine (1982) in her study of relative markers in Middle Scots. Similarly, in the present study the label 'style' will be used to compare the distribution of the invariable relativizer used to introduce the relative clause. Taking into account that *þe* is earlier than *þat*, it is then expected that, when coexisting, a higher presence of *þe* would render a more conservative text type and, on the contrary, a higher presence of *þat* a more innovative text type. The question under investigation here is whether the text types show a different distribution of invariant relativizers. Table 9 includes the distribution of *þe* and *þat* in religious treatises, history and homiletic texts in the different periods covered in the present study.

Table 9. Invariable relativizers and text type (normalized frequencies per 1000 words)

		Religious Treatises	History	Homiletic Texts	TOTAL
O3 (950-1050)	*þe*	178 (19.2)	17 (8.6)	292 (10.3)	487
	þat	8 (0.9)	-	5 (0.2)	13
O4 (1050-1150)	*þe*	208 (10.4)	151 (7.7)	75 (12.8)	434
	þat	4 (0.01)	12 (0.6)	4 (0.7)	20
M1 (1150-1250)	*þe*	494 (14)	11 (4.2)	280 (9.2)	785
	þat	168 (4.8)	11 (4.2)	149 (4.9)	328
M3[15] (1350-1420)	*þat*	207 (10.4)	187 (13.2)	280 (15.8)	674
TOTAL		1267	389	1085	2741[16]

[14] Under the label 'homiletic texts', I included texts classified as 'homily', 'rule' and 'sermon' in the corresponding COCOA header.

[15] M2 has been excluded because there was no variation in terms of text type.

The comparison of different text types in Table 9 shows a significant correlation between the choice of invariable relativizer and text type, especially in early Middle English (χ^2, p <.005). The general trend shows a decrease of relative clauses introduced by *þe* from Old English to Middle English in all text types. In Old English, *þat* is clearly disfavoured. Diachronically, however, history shows a different distribution from religious treatises and homiletic texts, in that it evinces an important earlier increase of *þat*. In homiletic texts, the consolidation of *þat* takes place later, indicating that these texts are more conservative texts in nature than in the case of history texts.

3.6. Dialect

The final variable included in the analysis is the dialect. Since Old English texts are mostly in the West-Saxon dialect, texts are very homogeneous in terms of dialect, making an analysis of variation pointless. In Middle English, however, geographic diversity is the norm and thus it is from this period that dialectal variation was analyzed (1150-1250), and indeed the significance of this variable will be seen clearly in Middle English. Although five main dialects are distinguished in Middle English, the most revealing regional indicators group them into two macro-dialects: (i) Northern, which comprises the inheritors of Old English Northumbrian and Mercian, namely, Middle English Northern, East-Midland, and West-Midland; and (ii) Southern, which comprises the descendants of Old English West-Saxon and Kentish, namely Middle English Southwestern and Southeastern (or Kentish). Table 10 shows the distribution of invariant relativizers in early Middle English:

[16] The total number of tokens differs from that of other tables because only those text types that are represented in all periods are included.

Table 10. Invariable relativizers and dialect in early Middle English (1150-1250) (normalized frequencies per 1000 words)

	Þe	*Þat*	TOTAL
West-Midlands	236 (6.7)	252 (7.1)	488
East-Midlands	354 (10)	50 (1.4)	404
South	226 (6.4)	31 (0.9)	257
Kentish	30 (0.8)	5 (0.1)	35
TOTAL	846	338	1184

The distribution of invariable relativizers in early Middle English is highly significant (χ^2, p <.0001). Invariable *þe*, the favourite relativizer in late Old English and in early Middle English, turns out to be preferred in the South and Kent, the areas which were less affected by the Scandinavian invasions, and therefore more conservative linguistically speaking (Milroy 1992: 181). More surprisingly, it is also favoured in the East-Midlands, showing an even higher frequency than in the other two areas. This contradicts Kivimaa's claim that this relativizer levelled out first in this dialectal area (and the North). Taking into account that the southern dialect is the direct inheritor of Old English West-Saxon, the overuse of *þe* looks like a conscious strategy by the scribes in order to preserve this early form and resist the loss of a tradition which had already been lost in other areas. Much more difficult is to account for the high frequency of this relativizer in the East-Midlands, a linguistically advanced area which, accordingly, should integrate the innovations and abandon the old traditions earlier. The West-Midlands warrants special notice, for it is here that invariable *þat* has become the preferred relativizer, being even more frequent than invariable *þe*, and thus becoming an innovation. As mentioned before, this invariable relativizer was already present in late Old English, but it was very rarely used. It is important to remember that invariable *þat* scores higher in all dialects from early Middle English than in Old English, but the West-Midlands dialect warrants special notice, for it is here that invariable *þat* has become the preferred relativizer, more

frequent even than invariable *þe*, and thus becoming an innovative feature.

4. Summary and conclusions

Invariable relativizer *þe* was the predominant relativizer in late Old and early Middle English, but was replaced by *þat* in Middle English. Early Middle English marks the turning point in the status of *þat*, as its use expanded into a growing number of contexts, irrespective of its agreement with the antecedent. Emerging in late Old English, its frequency then rose slightly in early Middle English, before increasing still further until, by Middle English, it had become the only remaining invariable relativizer (13th century). In the 13th century, there is a (weak) tendency for *þat* to be used more frequently as subject and object, introducing intraposed restrictive relative clauses and resuming inanimate antecedents, mostly realized by singular count nouns in the West-Midlands and in history writing, that is, in most of the environments where *þe* is less prevalent. However, the notion of a complementary distribution is unsustainable; instead, *þat*'s emergence is one of almost immediate substitution (from c. 1150, where *þe* was favoured, to c. 1200, where *þat* was almost the only choice). By the end, it had become possible for *þat* to be used with any kind of antecedent and in any kind of context. In response to the question posed at the beginning of this paper, then, it can be concluded that *that* spreads by occupying the gaps occupied by *þe*, and as a consequence finally ousts it from the system of the invariable relativizers.

Why? The weakening and disappearance of inflectional markers which took place in the English language from late Old English onwards and the progressive levelling of declensions which was completed by Middle English may well account for the sudden nature of the substitution. The overuse of *þe* probably favoured the introduction of, or rather the preference for, an already existing, if yet infrequent, element in the paradigm. Though initially occupying the environments less favoured by *þe*, *þat* rapidly became the only choice in all environments. The replacement of *þe*, likewise, coincides to some extent with the period during which *þat* was gaining ground as the general subordinator. The critical period of analysis in this regard is

probably M2, but with so little material available from early Middle English, such hypotheses are no more than tentative.

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Why Phaedrus? Plato in Virginia Woolf's novel *Jacob's Room*

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Abstract
Recent criticism has addressed the Platonic and ancient Greek influences on Virginia Woolf's writings generally, and her novel *Jacob's Room* specifically, but there has been no accounting of the motivation for the specific use of Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus* in the latter novel. This essay will address how *Jacob's Room* engages closely with this dialogue not only with regard to thematic focal points of love and rhetoric, but also in terms of more encompassing structures of space and literary form. In the process, a less ironic approach to Plato and his philosophy than that argued for in much recent criticism comes to light in Woolf's complex negotiations with the precedent of Victorian Hellenism.

Virginia Woolf was a long-term admirer of the Greeks. She started studying Greek when she was seventeen, and later she read most of Plato's dialogues, six of them—including the *Phaedrus*—in the original.[1] This devotion to the Greeks can and should be contextualised in terms of the pervading Hellenism of the time, yet this does not mean that it does not constitute an interpretative challenge to critics of Woolf's work. Terry Eagleton homes in on this challenge when he quotes Woolf's claim, in *The Common Reader*, that Greek tragedy shows us "'the stable, the permanent, the original human being'": this displays, he claims, "a robust essentialism which might disconcert some of her devotees" (Eagleton 2003: 27). Such pronouncements need to be squared with an evident scepticism, in Woolf's works, regarding just how universal the patriarchal culture of the Greeks really was.

Are the most distinguished accomplishments of ancient Greece really valid for Everyman? And do they address, in a satisfying way, the aspirations and experiences of every woman, too? Contrary to what one might be led to infer from Eagleton's dismissive glee, scholars have in fact in recent years shown an admirable pertinacity in grappling with how Woolf faced up to these questions. Many have paid particular attention to the English novelist's response to Plato. Over the last fifteen

[1] For an overview of Woolf's literary use of Greece, see Fowler 1999.

years there have been several fruitful discussions of the importance of either this Greek philosopher or Greek culture or language in general for Woolf (see Fowler 1999 and Nagel 2002). None of these try to argue away Woolf's very obvious admiration for Plato: Linden Peach, for instance, circumspectly points out that *Jacob's Room* "draws attention not to Greek culture as monolithic but to an interpretation of Greek art and culture as monolithic" (Peach 2000: 74).

Woolf's investment in questions relating to Greek culture is certainly evident in the novel *Jacob's Room*, and yet one question still remains unanswered: contemporary criticism has not really established why Woolf refers specifically to Plato's *Phaedrus* dialogue in this novel. Critics have conscientiously addressed questions such as "Why a Greek philosopher?" and "Why Plato?", but largely bypassed the query "Why *Phaedrus*?" Interpreters of Woolf have also frequently been tempted to simplify both modern literature and classical philosophy, for the sake of establishing rather straightforward contrasts between the two activities. Brenda Lyons, for instance, interprets the novel as an expression of "Woolf's longing for, yet mistrust of, Platonic verities" (Lyons 1994: 293). She claims "there is a kind of parody of the Platonic ascent from body to mind, as Jacob is transformed during the course of the novel from experience to idea" (ibid., 294). Here Lyons seems to be taking for granted a dogmatic understanding of Plato's dialogues as centred solidly around immutable ideas, setting aside the more sceptical kinds of readings that have not only characterised recent philosophical approaches to Plato (cf. Zuckert 1996), but which also were evident in Victorians such as George Grote, Walter Pater, and John Stuart Mill. She claims that "Woolf inserts the *Phaedrus* as a metaphorical touchstone by which to measure twentieth-century definitions of love, the soul, knowledge, identity and idealism" (Lyons 1994: 294). This provides a useful suggestion of thematic parallels between the two texts, but arguably overlooks how Woolf was not immune to what Frank M. Turner has described as the Victorian use of "Plato's moral and political philosophy to provide a more or less idealist surrogate for Christian social and political values" (Turner 1991: 374). It neither faces up to the overlap between Woolf and predecessors such as Benjamin Jowett, Richard Nettleship, Bernard Bosanquet and Ernest Baker, nor takes into account how "problems of skepticism and solipsism are [...] ingrained in the

Phaedrus' account of the knowledge available to the human soul" (Griswold 1996: 108).

A similar emphasis is evident in an impressive study by Emily Dalgarno, where the novel is read in light of Woolf's Greek studies. Dalgarno claims that *Jacob's Room* represents the beginning of "the critical examination of an ideology of beauty that the male who has been educated in Greek history and literature associates with female passivity" (Dalgarno 2001: 56). She agrees with Lyons when she states that Woolf's writings "do not engage with Platonic arguments but rather draw from the dialogs to inspire, complicate, and support her own aesthetic ends" (ibid: 59). Here one might counter that fiction seldom presents an argumentative structure like that found in a philosophical text, even while one queries whether literature's ends can be effectively summarised as being exclusively "aesthetic" ones. In addition, Dalgarno's tendency to see the Platonic dialogue as a solely argumentative entity eschews a more literary or dramatic understanding of Plato, of a kind that was already coming to the fore in the nineteenth century.

Jane de Gay's reading of how *Jacob's Room* relates to the literary past in general rectifies this bias, insofar as it places *Phaedrus* in the company of other intertexts—including works by Shakespeare and Plato's *Republic*—that are understood to constitute a literary heritage. Her interpretation, which combines a feminist emphasis on Jacob's patriarchal shortcomings with an acknowledgement of Woolf's respect for the Greeks, argues that "allusions to *Phaedrus* are carried over into the wider context of the book in a way that fulfils the elegiac function of suggesting that something of Jacob survives in others" (de Gay 2006: 81). Although it leads to a sensitively perceptive reading of the novel, de Gay's focus on isolated allusions remains, however, both piecemeal and removed from formal issues. A more broadly encompassing approach to the relationship between these two texts, involving both their aesthetic and argumentative dimensions, is required if one seeks to justify why Woolf makes use of *Phaedrus* rather than any other Platonic dialogue. It is especially important to establish why she does not utilise the *Symposium*—instead of the *Phaedrus* dialogue—given that there are thematic similarities between these two dialogues and Woolf had an expressed predilection for the *Symposium*.

The *Phaedrus* dialogue is named after Socrates' interlocutor in the text. At the outset there is an unusually detailed description of how the two of them encounter each other by accident outside Athens' city walls, and they sit down in the shade of a plane tree on the banks of the river Illisus in order for Phaedrus to recite the sophist Lysias' speech on the nature of love. Taking its bearings in an assymmetrical relationship where one person courts a beloved, his speech claims that "favours of love should be granted rather to the one who is not in love than to the lover" (Plato 1914: 415; 227c), due to the irrationality and jealousy of the lover. Unimpressed by Lysias' eloquence, Socrates first comes up with another speech based on the same premise of rational rather than passionate relationships. He soon repents what he believes to be an impious transgression against the god of Love, though, and the result is a recantation. In the third extended speech of the dialogue, a lengthy defence of love, Socrates' recantation defends love as a form of "inspired madness" that is provided for "our greatest happiness" (ibid.: 469; 245b). As part of a more encompassing allegory, he compares the soul to a charioteer with a pair of winged horses: a white one that leads one up to the heavens and spiritual truths, and a dark one that pulls the soul down to earth. For humans the struggle with the horses is an imposing one, and thus there is only limited access to the heights of heaven. Subsequently in the dialogue, Socrates and Phaedrus discuss methods for the writing of speeches. Using the preceding speeches on love as examples, the second half of the dialogue turns to rhetoric, or the art of speech. Socrates convinces his interlocutor that knowledge of truth, rather than mere opinion, is necessary for a command of the art of speech. He also insists that a speech should have an inner cohesion "like a living being, with a body of its own" (ibid.: 529; 264c) and that the speaker can only persuade souls if he knows the nature of the soul. Towards the end of the dialogue, Socrates uses a mythical story about the god Theuth to indict writing, comparing it unfavourably to the living word of speech. We are not told what consequence this indictment should have for the status of the written text in which it features.

In order to establish the broad relevance of the *Phaedrus* to Woolf's concerns in *Jacob's Room*, this reading will address not only the two main thematic focal points of love and rhetoric, but also the use of space and literary form in Woolf's novel. The one specific reference made to the *Phaedrus* is to be found at a crucial juncture a little over halfway

through *Jacob's Room*, where Jacob Flanders visits the British Museum Reading Room. Here several criticis have drawn a relevant parallel to Woolf's feminist classic, *A Room of One's Own*—published in 1929, seven years after *Jacob's Room*—facilitating an interpretation of the novel on the basis of the later book's critique of the patriarchal basis of British culture. When the narrator of *Jacob's Room* evokes the privileged status of "Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, and Shakespeare" (Woolf 1992a: 93) in the reading room—as part of one collective, "enormous mind" (ibid.)—the absence of female figures in this canon is perhaps meant to be conspicuous. Yet Woolf greatly respected all the mentioned authors, and thus it is hard to read this passage in a completely ironic way. It is also far from clear how we are to interpret Jacob's reading of the *Phaedrus* dialogue that same night, after going from the museum. This is the central passage on that act of reading, which segues from an evocation of the collective mind of Western culture to a more specific situation:

> Meanwhile, Plato continues his dialogue; in spite of the rain; in spite of the cab whistles; in spite of the woman in the mews behind Great Ormond Street who has come home drunk and cries all night long, 'Let me in! Let me in!'
>
> In the street below Jacob's room voices were raised.
>
> But he read on. For after all Plato continues imperturbably. And Hamlet utters his soliloquy. And there the Elgin Marbles lie, all night long, old Jones's lantern sometimes recalling Ulysses, or a horse's head; or sometimes a flash of gold, or a mummy's sunk yellow cheek. Plato and Shakespeare continue; and Jacob, who was reading the *Phaedrus*, heard people vociferating round the lamp-post, and the woman battering at the door and crying, 'Let me in!' as if a coal had dropped from the fire, or a fly, falling from the ceiling, had lain on its back, too weak to turn over.
>
> The *Phaedrus* is very difficult. And so, when at length one reads straight ahead, falling into step, marching on, becoming (so it seems) momentarily part of this rolling, imperturbable energy, which has driven darkness before it since Plato walked the Acropolis, it is impossible to see to the fire.
>
> The dialogue draws to its close. Plato's argument is done. Plato's argument is stowed away in Jacob's mind, and for five minutes Jacob's mind continues alone, onwards, into the darkness. Then, getting up, he parted the curtains, and saw, with astonishing clearness, how the Springetts opposite had gone to bed; how it rained; how the Jews and the foreign woman, at the end of the street, stood by the pillar-box, arguing. (ibid.: 94-95)

What relevance, if any, has this reference to the *Phaedrus*? The passage is nicely poised between inclusive and exclusive interpretations of Platonic dialogue. The remorseless nature of that dialogue seems, for a

long time, to be completely oblivious to the world outside it. Jacob's isolation in his apartment seems to mirror the Greek text's distance from what is going on at a street level, and the philosophy of love presented by Plato in the dialogue might seem to be implicitly accused of being an idealisation out of touch with the sordidness and pain of quotidian reality. This can be politicised: Jews, women and the poor would all cry "Let me in!"—while Plato and Socrates would always already be at home in the *polis*, like Jacob in his room, at liberty to roam outside if the fancy takes them. Such a reading ignores or tones down the final part of this passage, however. Due to the presence of such tensions, Brad Bucknell claims that the ending is open-ended: "Eventually," he grants, "Jacob does see what is outside, but it is never clear that he comprehends it in a complex way. The narrative suspends his perception, and we cannot be sure of his assessment" (Bucknell 2008: 772).

Yet perhaps one can go further than this, based on the fact that, at the end, Jacob's digested reading enables him to a vision of the world around him that is characterised by what is called "astonishing clearness." Woolf was taught Greek by Hester Pater, the sister of Walter Pater, and here Pater's reading of Plato as responsible for a "redemption of matter, of the world of sense" may be lurking in the background (Pater 2002: 131).[2] Pater was impressed by the formal freedom of Platonic dialogue, and compared it to the modern essay (cf. ibid.: 157-158). Woolf, too, admired the flexibility of Plato's use of form. In "On Not Knowing Greek," she claims: "All this flows over the arguments of Plato—laughter and movement; people getting up and going out; the hour changing; tempers being lost; jokes cracked; the dawn rising. Truth, it seems, is various; Truth is to be pursued with all our faculties" (Woolf 1992b: 101). Placed in such a context, the passage seems to be suggesting that the very form of Plato enables Jacob to an epiphany of reality rather than a narrow-minded selection or avoidance of it.

In her interpretation of this episode, Jane de Gay misquotes the final words of the penultimate paragraph as "it is impossible to see the fire" (De Gay 2006: 81). She argues that Woolf is alluding to Plato's cave parable in book seven of the *Republic*. Just as the unenlightened, according to Plato, are captured by images (represented by reflections

[2] Pater's relevance for Woolf's understanding of Plato is well addressed in Sim 2005.

behind a fire in Plato's parable), so is Jacob—in de Gay's view—"trapped in the ideologies of his upbringing, and does not notice the (metaphorical) fire which has been the source of his illusions" (ibid: 81). Contrary to such a reading, however, the text merely states that Jacob is neglecting a practical, everyday task—presumably, raking or taking care of the embers in some way—and not that he is unable to see the fire. One might in fact argue that the protagonist is neglecting the merely material image outside of himself (embodied in the fire) precisely because he already is immersed in the ideal realm of the mind (embodied in the book). Here Socrates' claim that the "truly existing essence [...] is visible only to the mind, the pilot of the soul" (Plato 1914: 475-477; 247c) is relevant, so long as one goes on to add that the Platonism of Jacob includes a return to a renewed and more insightful encounter with materiality. This would be in line with Socrates' insistence, in the discussion of the parable of the cave in *The Republic*, that the enlightened must be coaxed into returning to the world of illusion in order to instruct others (see Plato 2000: 225-226; 519c-520d). Reading Jacob's enclosed seclusion as completely negative also entails overlooking Woolf's stress on the necessity of tranquil isolation for intellectual activities, whether these are pursued in Jacob's room or the lodgings women might live to call their own: "The whole of the mind must lie wide open if we are to get the sense that the writer is communicating his experience with perfect fulness. There must be freedom and there must be peace. Not a wheel must grate, not a light glimmer. The curtain must be close drawn" (Woolf 1996: 97).

When we are told that "The *Phaedrus* is very difficult", does this imply that it is too difficult for Jacob? Given the persistent irony of the novel, it is hard to fully rule out such an interpretation. Despite his expensive education, Jacob is sufficiently obtuse for the narrator to later ask "how far was he a mere bumpkin? How far was Jacob Flanders at the age of twenty-six a stupid fellow?" (Woolf 1992a: 135) On the other hand, the narrator declines to draw any clear conclusion as to the relative intelligence of her protagonist, insisting that it "is of no use trying to sum people up" (ibid.). In addition, Woolf in another context admitted that Plato's philosophy presents considerable challenges to all its readers:

> It is an exhausting process; to contract painfully upon the exact meaning of words; to judge what each admission involves; to follow intently, yet critically, the dwindling and changing of opinion as it hardens and intensifies into truth. Are

> pleasure and good the same? Can virtue be taught? Is virtue knowledge? The tired or feeble mind may easily lapse as the remorseless questioning proceeds; but no one, however weak, can fail, even if he does not learn more from Plato, to love knowledge better. For as the argument mounts from step to step, Protagoras yielding, Socrates pushing on, what matters is not so much the end we reach as our manner of reaching it. (ibid.: 100-101)

This view contradicts Matthew Arnold's vision of the Greeks as a matter of sweetness and light: "Difficulties are kept out of view," he wrote in *Culture and Anarchy*, "and the beauty and rationalness of the ideal have all our thoughts" (Arnold 1993: 130).

As a modernist, Woolf is inclined to not only accept, but also to cultivate, complexity as a principle of form. As a successor to the Victorians, she is furthermore willing to acknowledge that the complexity of the Greeks may have something to do with the fact that they in many respects are very different from us. This topic provides some of the satirical bite of *Jacob's Room*. Early on in the novel, Jacob and his friend Bonamy quote snippets of Greek tragedy to one another during the later hours of Guy Fawkes' Night. They are confident of their own ability to fathom these texts: "'Probably,' said Jacob, 'we are the only people in the world who know what the Greeks meant'" (Woolf 1992a: 64). This presumption of familiarity is accompanied by selective identification with an idealised version of Greek civilisation. Even in the middle of London, it seems to Jacob as if "they were making the flagstones ring on the road to the Acropolis, and that if Socrates saw them coming he would bestir himself and say 'my fine fellows,' for the whole sentiment of Athens was entirely after his heart; free, venturesome, high-spirited..." (ibid.: 64). In a short story written earlier in her career, "A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus," Woolf similarly parodies British tourists who claim that they, rather than the modern Greeks, are the true inheritors of the spirit of ancient Greece. In thus questioning the identification with Greece that was part and parcel of much of the ideology of the British Empire, Woolf's position is attuned to more general intellectual trends, the more scholarly versions of which have been summarised by Richard Jenkyns. The latter refers to "a change in the nature of Greek scholarship in England, starting with James Frazer, continuing with the writings of Jane Harrison and Gilbert Murray, and further encouraged by the belated impact of Nietzsche in the first decade of this century." These figures "inspired a chastening sense

of our own limitations; we are better aware than our ancestors of the gulf that separates us from antiquity" (Jenkyns 1980: 343).

Jacob's Room is a novel of gulfs and gaps at several different levels. In the passage describing Jacob's reading of the *Phaedrus*, which I discussed earlier, there is effectively a large distance—both in terms of history and world-view—between the original text and its modern readers. No textual details of the *Phaedrus* are addressed there, and figures such as Socrates and Phaedrus do not appear—let alone Lysias or, say, the allegorical flights of Socrates' recantation. It is, further, hard to identify the remorseless, almost military, momentum of the text described by Woolf with the meandering and upredictable movement of the *Phaedrus* itself. Effectively, the text has been silenced and shunted aside in favour of the concrete context of its reception in Jacob's own quarters. As such, we are however not far removed from the arbitrariness of writing as discussed in the final section of Plato's dialogue. It is in fact possible, then, to see this departure from the original as illustrating, by way of detour, something of the spirit of the original.

The suspicion that something like this is taking place is strengthened by the fact that Woolf's novel arguably alludes to Socrates' critique of writing at other junctures. The first instance of this occurs in connection with a description of inner city alienation, as passengers in buses do not even attempt the vain pursuit of each other's inner thoughts: "Each had his own business to think of. Each had his past shut in him like the leaves of a book known to him by heart, and his friends could only read the title" (Woolf 1992a: 53). A more extensive use of the same metaphor, even more in line with Socrates' version, is found in a passage on the passengers of the urban subway:

> Beneath the pavement, sunk in the earth, hollow drains lined with yellow light for ever conveyed them this way and that, and large letters upon enamel plates represented in the underworld the parks, squares, and circuses of the upper. 'Marble Arch—Shepherd's Bush'—to the majority the Arch and the Bush are eternally white letters upon a blue ground. Only at one point—it may be Acton, Holloway, Kensal Rise, Caledonian Road—does the name mean shops where you buy things, and houses, in one of which, down to the right, where the pollard trees grow out of the paving stones, there is a square curtained window, and a bedroom. (ibid.: 55-56)

To make one's way through the city is to forge a path through a jungle of empty signifiers, devoid of the familiarity and significance of everyday life. Language has become something alien and obstructing.

In Plato's dialogue, Socrates indentifies a clear hierarchy between writing and "the living and breathing word of him who knows, of which the written word may justly be called the image" (Plato 1914: 567; 276a). This opposition is also at work in *Jacob's Room*, as the novel's uneasiness with writing becomes most explicit and most pronounced in the vicissitudes of Jacob's relations to his mother, Betty Flanders. As she is stuck in Scarborough, far from her offspring, Mrs. Flanders' epistles to her son inevitably fail to have the same effect on him that the more tangible, and less salubrious, contact with his urban friends and lovers has. Her frustrated attempts at real communication lead Woolf to a Proust-like mini-essay on the ontology of letters. "Let us consider letters," she writes:

> —how they come at breakfast, and at night, with their yellow stamps and their green stamps, immortalized by the postmark—for to see one's own envelope on another's table is to realize how soon deeds sever and become alien. Then at last the power of the mind to quit the body is manifest, and perhaps we fear or hate or wish annihilated this phantom of ourselves, lying on the table. [...] Venerable are letters, infinitely brave, forlorn, and lost. (Woolf 1992a: 79)

Here Woolf's literary response to Plato's philosophy is not a metaphorical improvisation on an argumentative basis, but rather the literalisation of a metaphor. Where the *Phaedrus* uses the parent-child relation as a metaphor for the fragility of writing—as an offspring of its writer's mind that "always needs its father to help it; for it has no power to protect or help itself" (Plato 1914: 567; 275e)—Woolf's novel makes that same relation the concrete stuff of its life.

Plato is of course not only preoccupied with the ontology of communication, but also the ethics of language. What the ontologies of certain media might make possible is important enough in itself, but the motivation lying behind their actual use is an equally important, if not even more vital, matter. In *Listening to the Cicadas*, Ferrari explains the contrast as follows:

> Plato takes pains to set this relatively straightforward point about the characteristic tendencies of written as opposed to oral formats (namely, that the written tempts us more forcibly to make a fetish of original performance) against the larger contrast of which it is only one manifestation: that between the concerns of the impresario and those of the philosopher—the one content with the mere effect of fine words, the other seeking the life which gives those words importance. (Ferrari 1987: 212)

Similarly, *Jacob's Room* is not exclusively interested in the impersonal mechanisms of modern life, but also the conscious decisions that facilitate or obstruct meaningful communication. This is especially noticeable during Jacob's time at Cambridge, where the don Sopwith puts down his old friend or student "Chucky" Stenhouse with patronising malevolence. At university, Jacob feels like a privileged inheritor of the past: "the sound of the clock conveying to him (it may be) a sense of old buildings and time; and himself the inheritor" (Woolf 1992a: 36). Yet for the narrator this is a place of empty words: "Talking, talking, talking—as if everything could be talked" (ibid.: 32). Like Phaedrus, the inhabitants of this place are more interested in the enjoyment of words for their own sake, than any ends beyond them. The novel's version of university life echoes Woolf's description, in her diary, of G. E. Moore as suffering "A lack of mass, somewhere... I dont [sic] see altogether why he was the dominator & dictator of youth. Perhaps Cambridge is too much of a cave."[3]

Political rhetoric of war is perhaps less insular in its effects than that of the university, but in *Jacob's Room* that does not mean that it is less prone to abuse or obfuscation. Towards the end of the novel, a pro-war demonstration passing by the Monument in the centre of London is presented in a detached, inscrutable manner, and the same treatment is also meted out to a crucial cabinet meeting where Asquith's government decides to embark upon what would become World War I. The jingoism of that war is however less evident here than in Woolf's subsequent novel, *Mrs Dalloway*, or her later tract *Three Guineas*. Instead, *Jacob's Room* sticks closer to the precedent of Plato by scrutinising the rhetoric of love. Like several other novels, Woolf's novel traces—through the friendship between Jacob and the homosexual character Bonamy—some of the homosocial undercurrents prevalent in the British Hellenism of this time.[4] But the main focus is on a series of heterosexual love affairs involving Jacob Flanders, which not only raise the issue of sexually motivated rhetoric, but also deal with the kind of assymmetrical forms of love specifically dealt with in the *Phaedrus*.

Insofar as the *Phaedrus* shows us, in Martha Nussbaum's words, that "the best kind of love, the kind that loves the individual for what he or

[3] Woolf, *Diary*, II, 23 June 1920, 49, quoted in Woolf 1992a, 164, n. 29.
[4] On this theme in the fiction of the period, see Cole 2003.

she really is, is a love of character and values" (Nussbaum 1990: 331), Jacob's brief life yields a dearth of meaningful, amatory relationships. Rather than attaining one constant and edifying relationship, he drifts from one love interest to another during the novel. Jacob is distant and non-commital in his relationships with Florinda and Fanny Elmer, and distracted in his inconclusive courting of Clara Durrant. Arguably, in all of these encounters Jacob is a non-lover of the sort portrayed in the first speeches of the *Phaedrus*: someone who seeks gratification and pleasure, but is not passionately engaged in the object of his affections. The ironical twist of the novel is that the tables are turned on Jacob during his visit to Greece: the married, middle-aged woman Sandra Wentworth Williams may appreciate both Jacob's classic, statuesque beauty and his attentions, but both she and her husband are fully aware from the start that this is only one out of a series of conquests on her part. As she thinks towards the end of the book, "Jacob would be shocked" (Woolf 1992a: 149) if he knew how superficial her commitment really is.

Sue Roe has argued that Jacob loses direction in his life due to his inability to control his own desire (cf. Roe 1992a: xxx). In the Penguin edition of the novel, she helpfully points out that a passage where a horse runs loose in Hyde Park ("a horse galloped past without a rider"; Woolf 1992a: 147) can be read as an allusion to Socrates' comparison of the soul to a chariot with two horses (see also de Gay 2006: 82). Certainly, Jacob's relationship with Mrs. Williams is not a beneficial one for him. She is portrayed as a rather decadent aesthete, searching for brief epiphanies of beauty—and craving recognition of her own charm and attractiveness. She thus not only provides the final example of the pitfalls of an asymmetrical form of love in the novel, but is also the vehicle for a critique of aestheticism. The latter critique arguably entails another engagement with Plato's heritage. As Woolf puts it explicitly in her essay "On Not Knowing Greek": "we must beware. Socrates did not care for 'mere beauty', by which he meant, perhaps, beauty as ornament" (Woolf 1992b: 102). Dwelling upon a superficial, passing kind of beauty rather than an aesthetic experience that might contribute to a purposeful life, Mrs. Williams effectively derails Jacob from any real insight. At one stage we are told that she is "floating from the particular to the universal" (Woolf 1992a: 134) -- but the universal in question has no rational aspect whatsoever, as it merely involves her lying "back in a trance" (ibid.). We are, in other words, far removed from the dialectic that Socrates believes

will help us "to comprehend particulars under a general idea" (Plato 1914: 559; 273d-e). Earlier in the novel, Jacob's muddled thoughts include believing that her mere existence "seemed to discriminate between truth and falsehood" (Woolf 1992a: 127)—but this is a relatively transparent illusion.

The high point of their affair takes place on the Acropolis. Jacob's many trips up to this ancient Greek site, during his stay in Athens, provide a counterpoint to his earlier reading of the *Phaedrus* dialogue. The previously cited passage describing his study of the dialogue evoked Plato walking the Acropolis; later, while Jacob himself is present at the same location, we are told that he "seldom thought of Plato or Socrates in the flesh" (ibid.: 131). Another link between the passage concerning Jacob's reading in the British Museum and his visit to Greece is provided by the Elgin Marbles, which of course originated from the Parthenon temple located on the Acropolis. These statues draw "a word or two of salutation" (ibid.: 93) from a Miss Marchmont while Jacob works away at the British Museum. More profoundly, at the level of symbolism, the two episodes have important connections—as both portray struggles of light against darkness, and the transcendence of height versus the lowly. The visit to the Acropolis provides a much clearer emblem of *failed* transcendence than Jacob's reading of the *Phaedrus* does. As in Socrates' recantation in Plato's dialogue, the movement of transcendence up to "the place where dwells the race of the gods" (Plato 1914: 473; 246d) is threatened by more earthly impulses. A comic version of this occurs when Jacob's meditations are rudely interrupted by a Kodak-clicking Frenchwoman. Woolf's protagonist is not amused: "'It is those damned women,' said Jacob, without any trace of bitterness, but rather with sadness and disappointment that what might have been should never be" (Woolf 1992a: 132). Later, though, another woman—Mrs. Williams—gets Jacob to climb the fence after dark, and engage in a no less worldly tryst upon the Acropolis.

Despite the bathos of these episodes, the Parthenon and the other temples of the Acropolis instigate some of the most lyrical flights of *Jacob's Room*. Particularly evocative is a meditation that follows Jacob looking, early in the morning, upwards towards the temples:

> There they are again, the pillars, the pediment, the Temple of Victory and the Erechtheum, set on a tawny rock cleft with shadows, directly you unlatch your

> shutters in the morning and, leaning out, hear the clatter, the clamour, the whip cracking in the street below. There they are.
>
> The extreme definiteness with which they stand, now a brilliant white, again yellow, and in some lights red, imposes ideas of durability, of the emergence through the earth of some spiritual energy elsewhere dissipated in elegant trifles. But this durability exists quite independently of our admiration. Although the beauty is sufficiently humane to weaken us, to stir the deep deposit of mud—memories, abandonments, regrets, sentimental devotions—the Parthenon is separate from all that; and if you consider how it has stood out all night, for centuries, you begin to connect the blaze (at mid-day the glare is dazzling and the frieze almost invisible) with the idea that perhaps it is beauty alone that is immortal. (ibid.: 130)

This passage goes on to conclude that "the Parthenon appears [...] likely to outlast the entire world" (ibid.). These speculations echo Woolf's diary notes from her 1906 visit to Greece. There a statue of a young man at the Acropolis museum provokes Woolf to meditate on "a look not seen on living faces, or but rarely, as of serene immutability, here is a type that is enduring as the earth, nay will outlast all tangible things, for such beauty is of an essence that is immortal" (Woolf 1990: 322). Recent critics have been eager to dismiss such early raptures from Woolf's later, more mature response to Greek culture, subsuming them in a supposedly all-pervasive relativism. If we return to the passage describing the Acropolis, it is obvious that its raptures are not without an element of qualification, as it is stated that Parthenon only "appears" to last forever and that beauty is "perhaps" immortal. Coming after the Victorians, Woolf was attuned to archaeological and anthropological arguments that insisted upon the historical distance separating the Greeks from her own time. Yet her text also remarks that the durability of the Parthenon "exists quite independently of our admiration."

Fiction as complex as Woolf's seldom presents straightforward assertions, however, and it is possible to argue that this statement of unfaltering endurance is filtered—via free indirect discourse—through the mediating consciousness of Jacob Flanders. Such an explanation runs up, though, against other, bothersome contextual evidence, in the form of Woolf's own pronounced admiration for the Greeks. In "On Not Knowing Greek," there is no ironic frame or filtering perspective in sight when she comes with the claim singled out by Terry Eagleton as a challenge to relativistic Woolf scholars: "In spite of the labour and the difficulty it is this that draws us back and back to the Greeks; the stable, the permanent, the original being is to be found there" (Woolf 1992b:

96). Difficulty and historical distance is in evidence, but this does not rule out the presence of ideality. At one stage even Jacob is influenced enough by the late- and post-Victorian tenor of thought that owned up to the distance between the Greeks and their own time to proclaim that "it is the governesses who start the Greek myth. [...] The point is, however, that we have been brought up in an illusion" (Woolf 1992a, 120). Yet Woolf's novel refuses to grant that illusion is all we have, attracted as it is to the idea of the Greeks providing a permanent identity that is the original of the West. Thus the Acropolis provides a vision of the upper echelons of being in *Jacob's Room*, analogous to those presented by Socrates in the mythical part of his recantation. On the other hand, Jacob's own errant desires are similar to "the horse of evil nature [that] weighs the chariot down" in Socrates' vision, "making it heavy and pulling towards the earth the charioteer whose horse is not well trained" (Plato 1914: 475; 247b).

The Acropolis and the British Museum are just two of the many sites given central importancce in *Jacob's Room*. Both place and space play an extremely important role in Woolf's novel, as indeed is indicated by its title. Since consciousness itself is understood as a peculiarly elusive phenomenon, the spatially situated and mediated evidence of human agency becomes all the more important. The objects of Jacob's life—his books, clothes, and rooms, for instance—provide important but ultimately inconclusive markers for an otherwise unavailable innerness. Space also constitutes an inescapable *milieu* for thought and identity, as the misfiring process of *Bildung* undergone by the protagonist is inescapably shaped by the intellectual and geographical contours of the places he inhabits along the way. Here, too, there is a connection to the *Phaedrus* dialogue, the "topographic ploy" of which Ferrari has remarked (Ferrari 1987: 37). Ferrari claims that the drawing of attention to the site of Phaedrus and Socrates' encounter, at the very beginning of Plato's text, is a pointer towards the text's exploring the basic, transcendental background to everyday thought and action. Woolf is similarly engaged in questioning the conventional pieties of the realist fiction of her day, as evidenced for instance in her programmatic essay "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown." *Jacob's Room* makes sure that we do not mistake the "phantom cities" of fiction for the "tangible brick and mortar" of given reality (Woolf 1977: 189), using space and place to tease us into thought rather than blindly reproduce the given sites we

already know. Thus, for instance, the Scarborough evoked in *Jacob's Room* is pretty much a pure invention, its overhanging hill featuring an old Roman fort providing a structural counterpart to the majestic hill dominating Athens' cityscape.

One needs, however, to think of space in a more abstract sense if we are to really fathom the common ground between these two texts on this matter. As we have seen earlier, Woolf's narrator describes the *Phaedrus* as "very difficult." Sue Roe does not fully plumb the depths of this comment, as she puts it down to what she calls the "gist" of Plato's text, referring to the *Phaedrus* as "Plato's dialogue (between Socrates and Phaedrus) on love" (Roe 1992b: 178, n. 29). If this were all Woolf wanted to evoke, she could indeed have mentioned *The Symposium* instead. Without wishing to underestimate the complexity of Plato's treatment of love, much of the difficulty of the *Phaedrus* arguably stems from the fact that it is *not* simply about love. Furthermore, it should be taken into account that the general critical consensus is that *Jacob's Room*, too, is a very difficult text. Although different in many ways, one of the major sources of the difficulties involved with these two texts may be a shared one. In both *Phaedrus* and *Jacob's Room*, the structural articulation of the text provides interpretive difficulty. Commentators have long been puzzled by the way in which the *Phaedrus* splices together different speeches, and they have been unsure whether the dialogue's main concern is the theme of love (explored in its first half) or the theme of rhetoric (raised in its second part). Woolf's book also presents itself as a collection of seemingly heterogeneous elements of text. It is full of ellipses, divided as it is into many small textual units separated from one another by empty spaces. The onus is on the reader to unite these seemingly disparate pieces of writing into one work, rendering whole (or at least somewhat cohesive) what would otherwise remain broken fragments. Woolf provides, then, a compositional challenge to the reader—one which is not all that far removed from the philosophical challenge that she saw coming out of Plato's texts: "in these dialogues," she claimed, "we are made to seek truth with every part of us." Plato's "dramatic genius [...] plays upon us in so many ways at once and brings us to an exultation of mind which can only be reached when all the powers are called upon to contribute their energy to the whole" (Woolf 1992b: 102).

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that we need to think in terms of a multi-faceted manifold of connections if we are to grasp what significance Plato generally and the *Phaedrus* dialogue specifically have for the interpretation of *Jacob's Room*. If Hayden Ausland is correct in claiming that philosophy, in the *Phaedrus*, arises out of a form of literature understood as a rhetorical art (see Ausland 2008), then *Jacob's Room* shows philosophy making a return journey back into literature. That journey should not, however, be understood as a simple process of appropriation or cooptation. As has been shown in this paper, Woolf's novel makes thematic use of Plato's treatments of love, rhetoric, writing, and place, and also arguably alludes back to the complex form of the *Phaedrus* dialogue as a predecessor for its own structural complexity. In 1906, as a tourist despairing over the discrepancies between classical and modern Greece, the young Virginia Woolf wrote that the "the sanest plan is to separate the quick from the dead, the old from the new, so that the two images shall not vex each other" (Woolf 1990: 340). Thankfully, her own later fiction would ignore this precept, mixing the old and new—and the literary and the philosophical—in a way that invigorates more than it vexes.

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Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*—Dismantling the idea of purity

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The Circle of Reason (1986) by Amitav Ghosh charts the geographical and ideological journey of a young weaver, Alu, who is brought up in a small Bengal village. After being falsely accused of terrorist activity, he flees westwards to Calcutta, Goa, the fictional Gulf state of Al-Ghazira and finally to Algeria. Alu is clearly the main protagonist in the novel, although for large sections of the narrative he remains more a kind of silent centre, through which the various discursive threads in the narrative are woven together. Through the intermingling of these differing threads the novel also constitutes a generic mixture, containing features of the picaresque novel, magic realism, the novel of Ideas, the detective novel and Hindu epic.

As can be inferred from the title, the concept of reason as conceived in Western modernity is the central theme running through all three parts of the novel. Reason is linked in the narrative with the idea of the purity of the poles in the Western binary constructions. The text brings forth several settings in which hybridised versions of reason are sketched. The first part features Alu with his uncle and foster father, Balaram, in the village of Lalpukur. Balaram, who is the teacher in the village school, is devoted to a trans- or supranational idea of reason and science. He is a devoted practitioner of phrenology, which he sees as a way of combining the outside and inside, body and soul, of people. Balaram is also inspired by the work of Louis Pasteur, and launches a campaign towards germs and superstition in the village to win the inhabitants over to his idiosyncratic vision of the purity of reason and sciences. In the second part, Alu continues the thematic of preaching reason by ending his characteristic silence and forming a mock-socialist group which aims to get rid of both germs and the personal ownership of money among the motley crowd of the inhabitants of the Souq, an ancient multicultural trading area in Al-Ghazira. In the third part, the original inspiration for purity and reason in the novel, Balaram's copy of *Life of Pasteur*, is

cremated with the body of one of the characters in a scene that calls for the adaptation of ancient rituals to the demands of the practical present.

The narrative can be read as a political treatise which attempts to undermine the Western-originated ideology of binaries. In a binary construction each pole is ideally the opposite of the other, not containing elements that are evident in the other side of the binary in question. However, in the novel the purity of the two poles in binary constructions (such as science vs. religion, body vs. soul, East vs. West, ideal vs. practical etc.) is dismantled. As a consequence, new connections transcending the barriers between the different poles within the binaries are formed. The novel also seems to aim at the alleviating of philosophical and theoretical binarisms. It makes use of "the lexicons of both liberal humanism and poststructuralism" (Dixon 1996: 16), transcending the border between these two approaches that have traditionally been realized as opposite. At the same time the text appears to be reaching towards "a syncretism that is an anti-humanist, postmodern recognition of difference and is also *at the same time* a humanist secular ideal" (Mondal 2003: 30). This, in the end, seems to lead to the dismantling of the binary of ethics vs. politics, or universality vs. difference. Ethics and poststructuralist/postcolonialist emphasis on difference become interconnected through the realization that the mere poststructuralist deconstruction of Western (as well as other) discourses does not actually lead anywhere. The outcome of deconstruction has to be given a new form, which, I will claim, happens by way of ethically informed connections and representations in the novel.

In what follows, I will examine the dismantling of binaries in the novel through the theme of purity, first on the plot level and then on the level of narrative strategy. The narrative technique of the novel is symbolized through the concept of weaving, which is strongly thematized in the narration. I shall end by introducing aspects of the theoretical discussion on the relationship between the politics of difference and the ethics of connections to find out how the novel situates itself in relation to this debate.

Dissolving the purity of binaries

In the novel the transcending of the lines between traditional and modern ways of life, between scientific and religious worldviews and between

natural sciences and humanism is effected through the gradual dismissal of the concept of purity. The idea of purity is closely linked with the idea of pure origin and pure distinct essences, which lie behind the typically Western rationalist ideology of binary constructions. Purity also refers to universalized discourses like that of Western sciences, or of Orientalism. The concept of purity implies that there must exist entities that are separate and distinct from one another, each possessing certain characteristics the opposites of which are to be found in the other entities. By this means the entities are conceived as 'pure': they are free of the traits apparent in the other entities. This is basically how binary constructions are formed. And the narrative aims at the deconstruction of these binaries, as well as the universalized discourses built on them.

The theme of purity runs through all three parts of the novel. In the first part, "Reason," there is a quest for purity on a scientific and practical level, as Balaram disinfects the village of Lalpukur with carbolic acid to destroy the germs brought in by recent refugees. The concept of purity is also deconstructed through the hilarious student organization called the Rationalists, who blend ideas from the Hindu religion with Western natural science ("the Brahma is nothing but the Atom" (47)) and launch a campaign against dirty underwear. There is also the suspicious 'science' of phrenology, which defies the purity of the mainstream natural sciences in its capacity to treat both the inside and outside, the mind and the body of human beings.

Ideological purity is also sought in the mock socialist uprising of the second part, "Passion," where money, and consequently private ownership, is declared impure. The third part, "Death," describes the merging, or transcending, of all the thematic binaries of the narrative: tradition vs. modernity, East vs. West and religion vs. science. Purity is here negotiated through the modified version of Tagore's play, *Chitrangada*, and the clash between ancient rules and rituals on the one hand and the necessities of the practical present on the other (carbolic acid is used as holy water in Kulfi's burial). The tension, then, is not merely between science and religion as systems of thought, but there is also the contrast between science and religion as collections of rules and rituals to be read from books and the adaptation of them to the often surprising needs of the immediate practical present. There arises the need to modify and unite elements of religion and science, make them impure

in a sense, to adapt them to the actual needs of human beings in their particular circumstances.

The third part also contains the revelation that life would be impossible without germs (i.e. 'impurity'). This revelation comes from the same book that has triggered all the preceding quests for purity in the novel, René Vallery-Radot's *Life of Pasteur*. This book can be seen as the offspring of Western rationalism and reason, which in the novel are symbolized by the concept of purity. Consequently, this reason has now come full circle: it has destroyed itself in deconstructing one of the premises of Western modernity that gave birth to it. The notion of purity behind the idea of binary constructions has been declared insufficient, implying that the poles of binary constructions are not distinct but rather interconnected: they cannot exist without one another.

One of the binaries that dissolve in the third part of the novel is that of the mind versus the body. In a sense, this issue has been approached already in the first part, where Balaram complains that "what's wrong with all those scientists and their sciences is that there is no connection between the outside and the inside, between what people think and how they are" (17). He justifies his interest in phrenology by saying that "in this science the inside and the outside, the mind and the body, are *one*" (17).[1] According to phrenology, the shape of a person's head indicates the nature of his or her character. In other words, by examining the body, one can examine the mind. This comment on the perhaps artificial separation of various branches of science, whether natural (body) or human (mind), into distinct, 'pure', islands is taken further in the last part of the novel, where Mrs Verma, who is a microbiologist, contemplates the origin of the microbes she examines in her work. She first draws a parallel between a microbiologist and a car mechanic, comparing bacteria with rust and "grime or dust somewhere in the machinery" (412). She then equates the body with a machine and states that "at least

[1] What we have here is a person who readily adopts the ideologies and methods of both the "arch-representative of mainstream science, Pasteur, [the finder of the germ] and those 'scientists' who are now widely considered to be discredited, such as the phrenologist George Combe" (Chambers 43). So, in general, although carbolic acid does disinfect things, the discourse that produced it, the ideology and rationalism of Western science, is anything but pure, covering both the areas "of what might be conveniently termed science and pseudo-science" (Chambers 2003, 37).

the surgeon sees the whole machine, even though it's all shrouded and chloroformed, face covered and weeping mothers hidden away, every trace of its humanity blanketed" (412). This sentence, bringing together natural science to do with body (surgeon, machine, chloroform) and human sentiments to do with mind (weeping mothers, blanketed humanity) anticipates the next step in Mrs Verma's reflections:

> And when you find something in a specimen can you really help wondering sometimes where all those microbes and bacteria and viruses come from? Whether they can really, all of them, be wholly external to our minds?
>
> And just as you let yourself wonder whether sometimes they are anything other than a bodily metaphor for human pain and unhappiness and perhaps joy as well you cut yourself short, for it dawns on you yet again that ever since Pasteur that is the one question you can never ask. (412)

She concludes by observing that the "tyranny of your despotic science" forbids the doctor in a general practice from telling some of the people who come there to complain about their bodily pains that "there's nothing wrong with your body—all you have to do to cure yourself is try to be a better human being" (413). In this way, the problematic of mind-body relations broadens into the problematic relationship between natural sciences and humanist ethics.[2] Of course, this "tyranny" of the science is once again the result of the idea of purity, of distinct sciences that construct the world according to certain premises and that therefore cannot see anything these premises will not allow them to see.

The argument in the third part between Dr Mishra and Mrs Verma is seemingly on whether to cremate the body of Kulfi or not, but this too is framed by the issue of purity. Dr Mishra's arguments are that the officials will not allow for cremation, and, more importantly, that the situation does not meet the requirements the old scriptures set for proper cremation. The victim is not suitable and they lack the necessary accessories for cremation. To prove that they cannot go along with the burial in the first place, Dr Mishra chooses to stand for the purity and

[2] Alu's boils and withered thumbs seem to be another instance of the connection between the mind and the body in the novel. The withered thumbs and the fact that they heal simultaneously with the disappearance of the various dichotomies towards the end of the narrative indicate that there is a connection between the body and the mind, and that if this connection is broken, both will become 'withered'.

persistence of the precepts of the Hindu religion: he wants the cremation to follow the rules set by ancient religious doctrines of the "scriptural times" (407). The comic tone of the novel, well-meaning and full of positive energy embodied by the character of Balaram in the first part, takes on a dark and cynical nature with Dr Mishra's ironical comments in the third part. Mrs Verma is ready to modify the ritual to allow for restrictions caused by the situation: ordinary wood is used instead of sandal wood, carbolic acid is used as holy water and butter for ghee. The use of carbolic acid nicely brings together the cleaning 'rituals' of ancient religion (holy water) and modern science (carbolic acid). When Dr Mishra complains that there are certain rules that have to be followed Mrs Verma answers: "All you ever talk about is rules. That's how you and your kind have destroyed everything—science, religion, socialism—with your rules and your orthodoxies. That's the difference between us: you worry about rules and I worry about being human" (409). Consequently, this modified version of ancient Hindu burial takes place, in spite of Dr Mishra's arguments.

The narrative clearly avoids taking sides in questions that have to do with the East-West divide (or with any divide, for that matter): the Hindu religion is here seen quite as pure, distinct and rule-bound as Western science. When Dr Mishra exclaims that the whole cremation is a shameful travesty, Mrs Verma justifies her action by saying that the times are like that: "Nothing's whole any more. If we wait for everything to be right again, we'll wait for ever while the world falls apart. The only hope is to make do with what we've got" (417). Kulfi has to have a funeral, and for this reason Mrs Verma and others have to abandon rules and purity and allow for the fact that they are Indian migrants living on the edge of the Algerian Sahara in Africa. In the modern migrant world of strange and sudden connections and situations, wholeness and purity have to be abandoned. That is why *Life of Pasteur* is burned along with Kulfi's body: both Alu and Mrs Verma have understood that in the modern world its message concerning the defence of mankind against the germs, the Infinitesimally small, the impure, and by an obvious analogy the subaltern and the other, is no longer valid. On the contrary, the various purities, whether we think of them as nations and people (both in the East and West), or as modes of knowledge in forms of various sciences and religions, have to open up to new influences and start to interact with each other.

Against this background it comes as no surprise that the links between the tripartite narrative structure of the novel and its thematic contents introduced above can be constructed in various ways that supplement one another. As D.A. Shankar has observed, the tripartite structure is reminiscent of Indian philosophy and the three qualities that make individuals what they are: *Tamas*, *Rajas* and *Satwik*. These form the order of the soul's upward evolution (Shankar 1994, 583). This implies that it is possible to see the narrative as a kind of picaresque *Bildungsroman*, where Alu moves through different stages as his journey continues. In the novel, however, the order of the stages is reversed: *Satwa*: Reason; *Rajas*: Passion; and *Tamas*: Death. Obviously, it is possible to interpret the novel through both sequences. If we follow the first one, the original order from the philosophical tradition, and look at the first part of the novel under the thematics of death, we notice that the death of Balaram and others in the explosion in Lalpukur actually starts Alu's journey, both physically and mentally. Death, in other words is the end, but also the beginning. And if we examine the last part under 'Reason', we can conclude that the revelation following the dissolving of the concepts of purity, distinct essences and binary constructions in general in a sense brings reason with it, although this reason is very different from, indeed almost the opposite of, the one based on the ideology of Western modernity.

If we follow the order stated in the novel, it is easy to see that the obsession of Balaram and other educated middle-class Indians with Western originated science and rationality fits in quite well with the title 'Reason' of the first part. And 'Death' as the title of the last part refers both to the death of Kulfi and the death of the idea of purity as the goal of, and basis for, human endeavours. Yet another way of looking at the structure of the novel is to see the title of the first part, 'Reason', as a symbol for the educated Westernized middle-class Indian babus who form part of the set of characters and who are totally absorbed in the achievements of Western natural science (Balaram) and literature (Gopal). The title of the second part, 'Passion' would then foreground the uneducated illiterate lower classes of the Souq with their interests in daily survival and story-telling. 'Death' in the third part would then indicate the death of all the distinctions implied by the above definitions and divisions, as all the social classes of the novel are brought together. But again, such an organization results in contradictions, because there

seems to be more passion in Balaram's undertakings in the first part than there is in the doings of the residents of the Souq, who certainly possess more practical wisdom than Balaram. And the death in the last part also simultaneously signifies birth, a new beginning, as both Das and Alu and Zindi embark on their journeys to Europe and India after the dismantling of the modernist binaries through the symbolic combining of purity and impurity and the burning of the *Life of Pasteur*. In the end, it seems, the thematic emphases indicated by the titles of the three parts of the novel are spread across the whole narrative in a manner which suggests the dismantling of the idea of distinct, pure essences. And this is effected through a process of narrative weaving that produces a colourful cloth intertwining various narrative threads.

Narrative weaving

The symbol of interaction and intertwining in the novel is weaving: the making of new worlds by connecting places, languages and discourses. As Balaram says in the novel, "Man at the loom is [...] a creature who makes his own world like no other can, with his mind." But although each weaver creates his/her own world, weaving "has created not separate worlds but one, for it has never permitted the division of the world. [...] It has never permitted the division of reason." (55) According to Balaram, "Weaving *is* Reason, which makes the world mad and makes it human." (58) In other words, reason is action, whereby people can produce their own discursive truth by interconnecting, or weaving, various discursive threads into their own personal texture, instead of following e.g. the universalized discursive totality of scientific reason.

The novel is, then, a celebration of stories and narration. It is also replete with metaphors, the most prominent being that of weaving. Ghosh connects weaving with narration. The weaver uses the loom to create a beautiful cloth out of different threads. In a similar fashion, the writer uses words and narration to produce narratives that connect different times, places and ideologies. When Alu is learning to become a weaver, his teacher, Shombu Debnath, will not give him access to the loom before he knows what it is: "The machine, like man, is captive to language" (73). Alu has to learn the names of the different parts of the loom in several languages: "So many names, so many words, words beaten together in the churning that created the world: Tangail words,

stewed with Noakhali words, salted with Naboganj words, boiled up with English" (73). Why so many words? They serve no mechanical purpose and do not seem to provide any help in the practical process of weaving. Words are important "because the weaver, in making cloth, makes words, too, and trespassing on the territory of the poets gives names to things the eye can't see. That is why the loom has given language more words, more metaphor, more idiom than all the world's armies of pen-wielders." And although the machinery has changed through time, those changes have been only mechanical; "the essence of cloth—locking yarns together by crossing them—has not changed since prehistory." (74)

The analogy to writing or narrating a story is obvious. The devices, writing machines and presses, even languages, have changed, but the essence of story-telling has not; we are still 'spinning a yarn,' to use a metaphor derived from the realm of weaving. Weaving and narration are also both actions. Consequently, in the novel Alu, who has been alarmingly silent and passive after his arrival in Lalpukur, gradually becomes more active and talkative after the beginning of the weaving lessons. In a sense, he is transformed from being a passive recipient of (mainly Western-originated) book learning into an active producer with a 'voice' of his own. One can notice here the presence of subaltern agency, which Ghosh is always careful to secure for the characters of his novels.

In the first part of the novel, Ghosh also draws on the history of weaving to create a counter-narrative to the Western history of scientific and technical development, expansion and industrialization by staging the loom as the agent of every new step in the grand narrative of modernization. He ends his account as follows:

> Once again the loom reaches through the centuries and across continents to decide the fate of mechanical man.
>
> Who knows what new horrors lie in store?
>
> It is a gory history in parts; a story of greed and destruction. Every scrap of cloth is stained by a bloody past. But it is the only history we have and history is hope as well as despair.
>
> And so weaving, too, is hope; a living belief that having once *made the world one and blessed it with its diversity* it must do so again. Weaving is hope because it has no country, no continent. (57-8) (emphasis added)

This idea of diversity in one is central to Ghosh's writing. His stories concern the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of his characters. They also represent an attempt to avoid appropriation of voice by

devolving narratorial responsibility to people of different social classes and cultures. Ghosh's narrators are often from the middle or upper-middle class of Indian society, the privileged group that has had a Western education and is fluent in English (like Ghosh himself). Describing the lower classes from this position in a language they often do not know at all can be seen as an act of appropriation that makes them part of the privileged discourse both linguistically and ideologically. To avoid appropriation of this kind, Ghosh tries to give these people agency and their own point of view by locating them as the narrators of their own stories.

Avoiding appropriation through oral stories

The sensitivity of Ghosh towards problems of appropriation comes through in his narrative technique. For instance, in *The Circle of Reason*, in the first part, which mainly describes the village and Balaram, there is an omniscient narrator. Ghosh, or his narrator, clearly presupposes a common discourse with Balaram, who has a university education and who is much higher on the social ladder than the illiterate villagers. But the second part of the novel, which concentrates on the lower classes, has parts of it narrated as oral stories by the characters in the novel. These include Zindi's story about the calamities that have fallen on her house (201-12), Abu Fahl's story of the trip to the ruins of The Star to rescue Alu (229-34), Hajj Fahmy's story of the coming of the oilmen (245-64) and Jeevanbhai Patel's story telling of Alu's return (274-84). The narrator of the novel recedes into the background, as these representatives of the lower social strata are given a voice of their own. Each of these stories is related in a different manner. Zindi's tale runs like a ghost story with its ominous magic incidents, Hajj Fahmy's story resembles a morality or an educational story with every part of it constituting a lesson of some kind. The stories by Abu Fahl and Patel are narrated in the first person, while those by Zindi and Hajj Fahmy, although set out as oral stories narrated by them personally, do not contain first-person pronouns. As John Thieme observes, the magic-realist, or supernatural, features and events in the novel are largely due to gossip, or "oral folk imagination" (Thieme 255). There is nothing genuinely supernatural in the novel; although many of its events appear to be highly improbable (for instance, Alu being rescued by two old

sewing machines in the collapse of The Star) there is nothing that is strictly speaking impossible.

Thus, the novel contains stories told by the characters, which are in a sense juxtaposed to the reality described by the narrator. This is neatly exemplified when Alu is buried alive in the collapse of the huge shopping centre, The Star. We are given three, not necessarily mutually exclusive, explanations of the collapse. First, Abu Fahl states that it happened because the contractors mixed too much sand into the cement. Second, in her story Zindi sees it as yet another incident in the chain of calamities that has befallen her house. Finally, Hajj Fahmy constructs a long story describing the coming of the oilmen and the Western capital which had been used to build The Star. His theory is that the building collapsed because nobody wants it; it was only a whim of capital.[3]

In *The Circle of Reason*, narration creates the world, makes it 'real', even corporeal. Consequently, by changing the narrative, the narrator changes the world:

> They had lived through everything Zindi spoke of […]; yet it was only in her telling that it took shape; changed from mere incidents to a palpable thing, a block of time that was not hours or minutes or days, but something corporeal […]. That was Zindi's power: she could bring together empty air and give it a body just by talking

[3] This layered narration has points of convergence, as well as of divergence, with one of the strategies for many-sited ethnography introduced by George E. Marcus:

> In the framework of modernity, the character of the stories people tell as myth in their everyday situations is not as important to fieldworkers tracking processes and associations within the world system as is their own situated sense of social landscapes. Reading for the plot and then testing this against the reality of ethnographic investigation that constructs its sites to a compelling narrative is an interesting, virtually untried mode of constructing multi-sited research. (1998: 93)

This citation brings forth one of the major differences between ethnography as a science and Ghosh's works of fiction. Unlike an ethnographer, Ghosh is both the creator and the 'researcher' of his fictional worlds, worlds in which stories are an important part of the "social landscape." By giving room to stories emanating from various social circumstances, he actually situates his narrator in that landscape. Whereas Ghosh's narrator examines the social background and practices in the novels as straightforward objects of description, the characters become subjects through their stories narrated via distinctive discourses.

> of it. […] And when sometimes she chose a different word or a new phrase it was like a potter's thumb on clay—changing the thing itself and their knowledge of it. (212-23)

The Circle of Reason concentrates on the importance of narration and the power of language to signify and to create alternative realities. As already stated, the symbol of weaving is used to create a counter-narrative to the Western history of scientific development, expansion and industrialization by staging the loom as the agent of every new step in the grand narrative of modernization. But Balaram's statement that weaving has "made the world one and blessed it with its diversity" (57-58) also hints at an ethical narrative strategy: the creation of connections with the other while retaining its alterity. This happens by presenting characters in a relationship with each other while giving them voice and agency without appropriating them into any one discourse.

Ethical "turmoil of languages"

As I have already implied, Ghosh does acknowledge that the world is a narrative and discursive social construction where knowledge is produced discursively by those versed in the hegemonic language/discourse. But in addition to this awareness of discourse as power and knowledge, he attempts to construct instances of communication which transcend the claim to knowledge requiring a specific language. This happens in the novel when Alu speaks to a crowd of people in a "turmoil of languages:"

> It was like a question, though he was not asking anything, bearing down on you from every side. And in that whole huge crowd nobody stirred or spoke. You could see that silently they were answering him, matching him with something of their own. [. . .] Tongues unravelled and woven together—nonsense, you say, tongues unravelled are nothing but nonsense—but there again you have a mystery, for everyone understood him, perfectly [. . .] They understood him, for his voice was only the question; the answers were their own. (279)

Alu's mixture of languages does not promote any particular ideology or claim to power in the way a specific language or discourse would. In other words, it does not 'know' and therefore does not provide a definitive answer. This linguistic mixture constitutes only a question, to which everyone can have their own response. Therefore, it speaks to

everyone, irrespective of class or language, without treating them as a homogeneous group. This kind of scene transcending the divisions created by different languages can be seen as indicative of a longing for a world before the separation of languages. But, before all, it may also be conceived as the sketching of a dimension of reality where the differences among people (or peoples) can be communicable without losing the distinctive features of these people.

This attempt at communication which would enable everyone engaged in it to have their own answer to Alu's linguistic mixture of a question veers close to the theories of the ethical by Emmanuel Levinas (1969). In his view, knowledge is discursive and appropriates as well as changes the target of knowing.[4] But here there is no 'pure' language or discourse that would be understandable, or knowledgeable to any one person in this motley crowd. In other words, as already mentioned, it is discourse without will or capacity to create knowledge. It is discourse retaining the alterity and independence of the person/s it is directed to. Remarkably, the crowd answers Alu through silence. Alu's blending of languages is, then, an equivalent of silence as an act or a voice: it does not attempt to 'know', or define anything through any linguistically recognisable discourse. This way, the communicative relationship maintains both the diversity of the group and its wholeness and secures the agency and independence of each of its participants. Alu's speech represents the ethically important approaching and searching of the other in the form of a question. As the other, or the one observed, cannot strictly speaking be known (this would bring him/her within the realm of discourse, or knowledge production strategy, of the observer), the

[4] At the centre of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas is the criticism of the ontological assumptions of Western philosophy. In his view, the other is appropriated by the same, or the self, through the basic idea of the self as the producer of meaning to the world. In Levinas's view, the other escapes the cognitive powers of the knowing subject. In other words, the other exists outside the ontology of traditional Western philosophy, which conceives of all being as objects that can be internalized by consciousness or grasped through an adequate representation. Consequently, the other, as well as that which is ethical, cannot strictly speaking be described in discourse, but are transcendental. The self can only 'know' things by projecting on them through language what it already contains in itself. Knowledge, then, is equal to linguistic appropriation of the object of knowing.

question in its function of approaching the other is of much more importance than the answer. What is more, the observer and the observed are in contact simultaneously. They are both active participants in this communicative act, in which no one is reduced to the position of a passive target of scrutiny without an agency or voice (be that the 'voice' of silence or an indecipherable mixture of languages). The principle of Alu's communication has not changed fundamentally: it has just taken on another kind of strategy and moved from silence into a web of discourses. In practice, both seem to have the same kind of communicative power.

This kind of construction of an extra-discursive epistemology escaping the power-politics of language constitutes a fictional counterpart to what the ethnographer, George E. Marcus, describes as an ethical, rather than power-related, approach to cultural phenomena. He maintains that this kind of approach, though cognizant of discourse as power, "is not built explicitly around the trope of power, but rather of ethics, that is, the complex moral relationship of the observer to the observed" (75). Further, Marcus's move away from "structural appropriations of discourse formations" to exposing "the quality of voices by means of meta-linguistic categories (such as narrative, trope, etc)" (66) resembles Ghosh's foregrounding of oral stories that are told by his characters. Although Ghosh represents the world as socially constructed and creates discursive realities to examine the movements of power, he is also trying to find a way of escaping the realm of discourse controlled by the hegemonic Western mode of knowledge production and its ways of narrating the world. So far, the only possible way for him to totally circumvent this powerful and deeply rooted 'way of knowing' would seem to be to hint at transcendent realities that cannot be accessed through a certain language and discourse, as is the case with Alu's linguistic mixture.

Traditionally, ethics has been seen as directing the personal choices of the individual, and moral as a code superimposed on him/her by the society. Levinas, among others, regards ethical norms as the primary guidelines for action in society. In a just society there has to be an ethically conceived basis for relationships between people. This basis could not, in itself, dictate any rules or ways of action for the society, but it should nonetheless be the starting point for the moral and the political order. The general emphasis on interpersonality in theories of the ethical

has resulted in criticism from quarters more aware of the political dimension of society. The binary structure ultimately in question here is the age-old personal vs. political, (or ethics vs. morality). The terms "ethics" and "politics" have perhaps too easily been seen as rivals and used against each other. It is my contention that Ghosh is searching for narrative strategies that would create balance between the two.

The most important and prominent theme in the writing by Ghosh is the transcendance of culturally constructed differences, lines and borders for the good of common humanity and interaction. These differences may be conceived spatially, temporally or culturally, and they may be related to class, race or ethnicity, but the on-going mission of Ghosh seems to be to indicate their constructedness and to bring to our awareness other possibilities of constructing the world based on connections. This requires both poststructuralist and postcolonialist deconstruction of discursive realities and an ethical approach for creating new connections with the other (be that a discourse or another human being) without appropriating it by silencing its own voice and eclipsing its difference. In order to clarify what this might mean both in theory and in practice, I shall end by briefly examining the budding of these themes in *The Circle of Reason*. I shall do this by reference to the Subaltern Studies group and the change in theoretical emphasis that Gayatri Spivak introduced in the group's work.

Poststructuralist difference & ethical relationships

The Subaltern Studies group was formed in the 1980s to formulate a new narrative of the history of India and South Asia. The narrative strategy of the group, inspired by the writings of Antonio Gramsci, was explicated in the writings of the founder of the group, Ranajit Guha. Although the group is, in a sense, politically left-wing, they are critical of the traditional Marxist narrative of Indian history, in which semi-feudal India was colonized by the British, became politicized, and then earned its independence. In particular, they are critical of the focus in this narrative on the political consciousness of elites, who supposedly inspired the masses to resistance and rebellion against the British. Instead, they focus on subalterns as agents of political and social change. They display a particular interest in the discourses and rhetoric of emerging political and

social movements, thereby directing the focus away from visible actions like demonstrations and uprisings.

Amitav Ghosh has a PhD in social anthropology. He is also an old friend with many of the scholars affiliated with the group and has published in their series, *The Subaltern Studies*. Therefore, it might be relevant to examine his writing in the context of the group. In the late 1980s, Gayatri Spivak published an essay that contained both positive and negative critique of the group's undertakings. In her view, the collective produced studies that were too politicized and lacking in theoretical acumen. As a devoted deconstructionist, she wanted to emphasize the poststructuralist vein which she saw as lying dormant within the politically charged writings of the group. R. Radhakrishnan sums up Spivak's politics as follows:

> to be part of the subaltern solidarity *and* read subalternity against the grain, engage in hegemonic representational practices in the interests of political scrupulosity *and* undertake a radical and indeterminate deconstruction of representation as such; rigorously mark out the historical terrain of subalternity for all to see *and* realize subalternity as the allegorical vanishing point of representation as such.
>
> (2003: 115-116)

Spivak's strategy is, quite obviously, in line with the principles of Derridean deconstruction. Each of the three 'contradictory' pairs above is an example of the coming together of ethics and politics. The message seems to be that we need this kind of ambivalent approach to secure the subaltern its voice, agency and subject-position in the jungle of hegemonic discourses, and to be able to find a way of representing it in connection with others without denying it these qualities. Consequently, deconstruction is here put to work in order to create new connections. After criticizing Foucauldian discursivity for forgetting the actual world and the Subaltern Studies group's overt emphasis on politics for concentrating on the world too much, Spivak in a way connects these approaches: "poststructuralism is lacking in macro-political density, whereas an exclusively politically oriented subalternity fails to address itself symptomatically" (Radhakrishnan 2003: 157).

In Spivak's view, the group has encountered one of these failures of addressing itself in its search for the subaltern consciousness, agent or subject, which seems to be conceived as already there, ready and just waiting to be found and made active and conscious. Spivak states that the

subject cannot be there, just waiting to be found "in a positive and pure state" (Spivak 1988: 198). This would make it similar to the traditional essentialist self-determining subject. In line with Derridean deconstruction, she proposes that the idea of a subaltern subject is actually a kind of subject-effect, an effected subject, caused by crossing discursive strands, the knots and configurations of which form an effect of an operating subject. She then goes on:

> Reading the work of subaltern studies against the grain, I would suggest that elements in their text would warrant a reading of the project to retrieve the subaltern consciousness as the attempt to undo a massive historiographic metalepsis and "situate" the effect of a subject as subaltern. I would read it, then, as a *strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest.
>
> (Spivak 1988: 205)

In *The Circle of Reason*, the subjectivity of Balaram, for instance, is presented as the meeting point of Western scientific discourse and local influences. At this level, Balaram can be realized as a poststructuralist discursively constructed subject who is only a knot in a universe of discourses. But as he is situated in the specific historical circumstances in the novel he becomes much more corporeal: the poststructuralist subject-effect is strategically situated in a certain socio-political context, which in a sense essentializes it. The use of strategic essentialism, then, implies that we need to use certain aspects of the hegemonic discourse we are in fact deconstructing just to make sense of the surrounding social and political situation. This is an ambivalent approach: with the notion of strategic essentialism we are trying to have it both ways, as it were: "neither the pure contingency of nothing but strategy without the comfort of identity effect; nor a naïve essentialism that believes in itself" (Radhakrisnan 2003: 161).

The narrative strategy of Ghosh seems to be ambivalent in the same manner as Spivak's theoretical strategy introduced above. The narration of the novel certainly comes through as a part of the subaltern solidarity, while simultaneously reading this subalternity against the grain: the 'subaltern' realities in the novel are presented quite as constructed as are those of Western modernity. Both are discursive constructions that change through mutual influences. The novel also engages in hegemonic representational practices in the interest of political scrupulosity *and* undertakes a radical and indeterminate deconstruction of representation

as such. Alu's strange communication with the crowd surely provides an instance of the deconstruction of representation as such by transcending the idea of discourses based on a certain language and by staging silence as a form of communication in the encounter with the other.

As with Spivak's model, ethics is doubled in the narration of the novel: it is both transcendent and situationally specific. While the level of transcendent ethical communication appears at the level of content, as it were, the situational fraught ethics is apparent in the narrative strategy, which allows several historically and politically located discourses and subjects to surface and create connections without losing their heterogeneous nature. Deconstruction works both ways between the hegemonic scientific discourse of modernity and the subaltern activity and discourse. The idea of purity, of pure essentialist binaries, becomes gradually deconstructed, as becomes the idea of the purity of subaltern rituals and cultures. The narrative weaving of these two strands creates an ethical-political whole where deconstruction appears as an ethical practice used strategically to create connections. In a similar vein, the narrative both marks out the historical terrain of subalternity for all to see *and* realizes subalternity as the allegorical vanishing point of representation as such. As Radhakrishnan explains:

> there is no pure way back to the indigenous or the precolonial except through double consciousness. We have all been touched by the West. The important question is not about ontological purity, but about strategies of using the West against itself in conjunction with finding one's own "voice." […] Spivak's position is that "we are both where we are and what we think," and if in a sense, as a result of colonialism, "where we think" is the West as well, it is quixotic to deny it. The way out is bricolage, transactional readings based on bilateralism, and multiple non-totalizable interruptions. (2003: 157-158)

This is why the ontological purity of subalternity as a whole is deconstructed in the novel, for instance through the denial of pure origins (the village of Lalpukur and the Souq) and the breaking of the inviolability of the old rules and rituals. However, this is an instance of an ethically functioning affirmative deconstruction, because the deconstructed totalities are not left adrift, but are tied to newly formed narrative trajectories that form new connections between people and ideologies. In the end, then, no pure subalternity or Western discursive formation can be found in this 'transactional bricolage' of a narrative.

There seems to be a general agreement that this first novel by Ghosh is, although a virtuoso achievement as a whole, derivative in comparison with his later, more assuredly original, novels. In particular, comparisons have been made with Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), which caused a considerable change in the narrative style of the Indian novel in English during the 1980s (see e.g. Paranjape 1990: 220) and to *One Hundred years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Márquez (see Thieme 2004: 254-5). It seems obvious that there is a relationship with Rushdie, especially as far as the frequency and nature of metaphors is concerned (compare, for instance, the characterizations of Alu's head and Salem's nose). And the strange events bordering on the impossible especially in the second part of the novel are reminiscent of magic realism à la Marquez, as Thieme (2004: 254-5) explains. Although for this reason, it may be fair to conclude that Ghosh has not yet found his own voice with his first novel, I would agree with Thieme (2004: 256) and say that he has, however, already found the themes he will be voicing in his later novels. It would seem that the significance of an ethically tinged representation based on the relationships and connections between people lies in what Marcus calls "the possibility of changing the terms in which we think objectively and conventionally about power" (1998: 75). In addition to the awareness of multiple histories, agencies and voices highlighted in the novel, this change in the way in which we think about the world may constitute a major step in the process towards more authentic multicultural representation.

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Prosopopoeia and classical topoi in W. S. Merwin's "François de Maynard 1582-1646"

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In 1963, the American poet W.S. Merwin (b.1927) travelled to the South-East of France, staying in the Causses, in the Massif Central, for the best part of a year. Over thirty years later, he returned to the area, where he reflected on the destruction of nature in the rural community he had known, and wrote a collection of poems entitled *The Vixen*. The vixen, present throughout the work, ends up dead in the moonlight as an image of all that is lost. The title of one of the poems indicates that it is inspired by the life of the French poet Maynard, who lived in the South-East, not far from the Causses. We are dealing here with the rhetorical figure *prosopopoeia*, as the 17th century poet becomes a spokesman for a modern poet. In an interview, Merwin speaks of his interest in foreign medieval and oral poetry (W.S.Merwin, Ed.Folsom, Cary Nelson 1982, 52-53), but does not mention Maynard.

This article will examine the following question: Why would Merwin leave the word to a minor poet who lived four hundred years before him? Merwin does not want to be a militant poet, but he does have something important on his mind at a time which he believed to be a critical juncture in history. His response to this crisis is to give new life to old rhetorical effects in order to contrast the present destruction of nature with the stability and permanence of the past. In *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* Ernst Robert Curtius observes that in turbulent times "(…) faded symbolic figures can be filled with new life, like shades which have drunk blood" (104). The figure of prosopopoeia, the now long dead poet speaking about his life, is one of the important "shades" of this poem. Jane Frazier says that Merwin's narrators "betray little or no personal identity and often seem as if they are voices speaking free of the body (…) Merwin's scheme is to remove the body from spatial and temporal restrictions in order to liberate the spirit" (1996, 1-2). In the poem about Maynard, his narrator is ascribed a personal identity and is situated in time and place, enabling the modern

poet to stay invisible while still expressing his concerns with the destruction of the landscape.

Merwin reminds us that images of landscapes have been used to represent permanence. He shows us, for instance, that in Antiquity the river Pactolus symbolized eternity. Merwin uses Maynard's voice to testify to an attitude towards reality that is no longer tenable, since nature itself is now permanently under threat—it is no longer a constant. By means of the story of another poet's life, Merwin aims to transmit a very specific attitude towards landscape—the idea that the permanence of a landscape, its presence before, throughout and after a person's lifetime, contributes to give meaning to existence. In contrast, the other poems in *The Vixen* challenge the capacity of the present to give meaning to the passing of time by means of the permanence of nature. Ernst Robert Curtius optimistic contention that "[t]he ideal landscape can always flower again in a new spring" (202) does not even countenance the question whether nature will survive. By looking back in time through Maynard, Merwin accesses a way of experiencing a landscape, as continuity and meaning, even where sorrow and death are present. The other poems in *The Vixen*, with their pessimism about the future, echo the underlying despair in the poem about Maynard. For what is left for us when the animals are gone, "in the silence after the animals" (69)?

Literary historian Antoine Adam considers Maynard to be a coward and debaucher (48-49). Maynard was widely regarded as a party animal, a reputation that might well have originated from the drinking songs and audacious epigrams which he wrote. Given his reputation as a reveller, and as a mediocre rather than a great writer, this resuscitated poet may not appear to have been an inspired choice of spokesman for the modern writer. Nevertheless, the contrast in the poem between the young poet's lack of experience and the old poet's wisdom, between past and present, between the life story and the narrative situation, persuades the reader to believe in the speaker's sincerity.

Even though Merwin does not make parallels between his life and Maynard's, Merwin's own life-story is present throughout the poem as a hidden sub-text. What binds the two poets together, I suggest, is their relationship to the same landscape—that of the South-East of France and an attachment to a large metropolis—Paris in the case of Maynard, New

York in the case of Merwin. [1] Both poets can be imagined as inhabiting several different worlds, with one look towards the village and the mountains and another to the world outside. Both have left a village and later returned to it. As such, the poem's final lines can be read as a double portrait of the two poets: "(…) standing where the mountains appeared to open before me/and turning I could still see all the way back to here/ and both ways were my life". In Merwin's poem, thanks to the "double I", the shadows the speaker talks to not only function as a metaphor for the memories of people whom Maynard loved, but also for the 17th century reader who is inscribed in Maynard's own poems, as well as for the modern reader with whom Merwin' poem about Maynard communicates.

Prosopopoeia

Prosopopoeia, "a figure which gives the ability to act and to move insensate things, as well as speech to absent or present persons and things, sometimes even to the dead" (TNPE) is used with the intention to lend more weight to a writer's words. In this case, Merwin seems to consider the words of a poet who had long since died, to be more powerful than his own. Merwin, who expresses a profound attachment to Maynard's native landscape, chooses as his spokesman a poet who is deeply frustrated, because he lives his retirement to this native landscape as an exile. I suggest that what is significant in this choice is not the fact of Maynard's unhappiness, but the fact that he is a baroque poet and comes from a particular region of France.

Merwin begins the poem by citing one of Maynard's poems: "When I cannot see my angel I would rather/ have been born blind and miserable I wrote at one time (…)". The speaker who rejects the superficial life of his youth, does not believe that his past echoes his present. Even though a feeling of continuity is created by the speaker's backwards look, the past and the present are clearly differentiated, by virtue of being associated with very separate kinds of life experiences. Merwin's poem about Maynard is based on a combination of fragments from Maynard's

[1] See for instance W.S.Merwin, *The second four books of poems*.

own poems and of biographical detail. Maynard was born in Toulouse[2] and studied law before becoming the secretary of Marguerite of Navarre, Henri IV's first wife. Around 1606, when in Paris, Maynard became a disciple of his more famous colleague Malherbe (1555-1628). Malherbe rejected both French and Italian Renaissance poetic models and advocated more accessible poetry. Maynard was a faithful disciple of Mahlerbe, respecting his demands for simplicity and clarity. As a young man, he was also a great admirer of Ronsard (who is mentioned in Merwin's poem), even though Ronsard was not highly esteemed by members of Malherbe's circle.

Merwin is not particularly concerned with the details of Maynard's life, and he does not even use the correct version of his name (he uses de Maynard with its aristocratic connotations instead of Maynard). He does, however, mention the main milestones of his life. There are a number of biographical details about Maynard's life which are commonly known. He was married in 1611 and had eight children. His eldest daughter died in 1626, his eldest son in 1634. In 1643, three years before his own death, his wife also died after a long illness. Maynard lived in Paris for some time before moving to Aurillac and Saint-Céré, from where he often returned to Paris to meet with his poet-friends, Saint-Amant and Théophile de Viau. Although at one point during this period he was tempted by libertinism, he ended up a sympathiser of Jesuitism. After spending some time in Rome (1635-36), he fell into disgrace and retired to Saint-Céré, where, two years before his death, he was given the position of "conseiller d'Etat".

The poem, "François de Maynard 1582-1646", connects to several historical periods, to the age of the modern poet, to Maynard's twilight years in the 1640's, a time when he both looks back and awaits death, and to various other milestones in Maynard's life—his childhood marked by violence and civil war, his youth and manhood filled with writing, success and sorrow, the time in Aurillac, his travels to Rome and the death of his wife. Maynard's life-story is not always recounted chronologically. The speaker goes back and forth in time, but ends up in the present of narration, in keeping with autobiographical convention.

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[2] It is not clear whether the poet was born in 1582 or 1583, according to Charles Drouhet in *Le poète François Mainard (1583?-1646).*

Topoi I and II: Youthful foolishness and sadness at the end of life

Ernst Robert Curtius describes topoi as general truths or common intellectual themes, as kinds of clichés which have survived through the centuries: "[Topoi] could be used in any form of literature, they spread to all spheres of life with which literature deals and to which it gives form" (70). Also in more modern literature, topoi can summon up youthful foolishness and the melancholy feelings experienced at the end of one's life. According to Ferdinand Gohin's introduction to Maynard's poems, the poems he wrote at the end of his life were deeply-felt and highly melancholy. Gohin observes that the sadness experienced in old age is a recurring topos in the poems of early 17th century, adding that: "no one gave them a more personal form than Maynard and a deeper feeling, even if they had subdued colours" (Maynard XVIII).

Maynard's later poems deplore his youthful debauchery and reveal a fear of death, but they also express aggression and frustration. But feelings of melancholy are more explicit in Merwin's poem than in most of Maynards's works.

Merwin creates an autobiographical narrative situation where the speaker gains a new understanding of the past. The poem also expresses the idea of becoming reconciled with one's past. There is, however, a gaping chasm, between the modern reader's experience and that of this poet from the 17th century, not least created by the loss of God as the ultimate guarantor of meaning and the development of the concept of identity. The idea of telling a life-story as a means of creating continuity and giving meaning to life is in itself a modern concept.

Our memories can present us with a plethora of actions which we regret not having taken or which we wished we had taken differently. In Merwin's poem, Maynard no longer approves of the attitudes he had and the acts he carried out as a young man. He describes himself as a young man who at times could not bear his life on earth and at other times was completely absorbed by his success as a poet. The speaker creates a distance between himself and his past with exclamations such as: "(…) how long it is since I left/ the court". He has conducted himself in a way in which the speaker would never accept in the present. Here the poem uses another well-known topos—the idea that young people do not know what is in their best interest and that they do not act rationally. The old poet's sadness at looking back is connected both to what he regrets about

his former conduct and to the loss of his loved ones, his parents, daughter and wife.

Structure and images

The poem is structured by comparisons and oppositions. The absence of punctuation, combined with the occurrences of coordinated sentences and temporal and locative clauses lend the poem a certain orality. The poem moves from long, lingering sections to shorter, more insistent staccato ones. In the last section, where we again find longer sentences, the tone becomes more meditative, the increasing pathos leading to the poet's assertion that he has become reconciled with his past. Despite its oral style, the poem contains many similes and metaphors. The poets of 17th century France were particularly interested in metaphor. Their understanding of metaphor was initially based on analogies between macrocosm and microcosm and between vertical and horizontal relations within the universe, these connections were eventually dismissed as irrelevant and, as a result, the metaphor became mostly decorative. Malherbe and his circle argued for a more sober and less original employment of images, in contrast to the imaginative use favoured by other baroque poets. According to Jean Rousset, Malherbe's used metaphor as "(…) a way of subduing the metaphor without letting it disappear, to make it harmless, if one can say so" (*L'intérieur et l'extérieur* 59).

The metaphors and similes in Merwin's poem are neither provocative nor original. The element of surprise usually associated with the metaphor is strongly subdued. This may be due to the fact that Merwin retrieves them from the French original. Merwin deliberately chooses clichéd metaphors, which are inevitably more discreet, and, by mimicking spoken language, these have the effect of lending his poems a conversational tone, giving the impression that the French poet is addressing himself directly to the reader. Similes are conventionally regarded as a more oral form than the metaphor. There is, however, nothing in the poem that indicates a systematic effort by Merwin to follow Malherbe's recommendations for writing good poetry or to try to reproduce Maynard's style of writing. The extended metaphors and similes in Merwin's poem do not fit in with Malherbe's ideas, and quotations from Maynard are transformed and put into new contexts.

The first line in Merwin's poem juxtaposes seeing with blindness: "When I cannot see my angel I would rather/ have been blind and miserable (…)". The same angel, the same contrast, can be found in a galant poem by Maynard, addressed to a woman with a jealous husband: "I would rather have been born blind and miserable, is not this wish bizarre? //But a jealous husband's stern demands/ hinder me in seeing my beautiful angel, / what is the use of you, my eyes? // Submerged by the water from my tears/ I feel the season of the flowers/ has only black on its palette".[3] In his poem, Merwin chooses to drop the rhetorical questions addressed to the poet's readers and to his "eyes", as well as the typically baroque metaphor, where the poet drowns in his tears. He then transforms Maynard's personification of spring as a painter into a new simile: "(…) then the season of flowers I said appeared to be painted black". Life on earth is unbearable for the amorous young man. Merwin elaborates on its meaning: "(…) and it was impossible through those days to imagine how I could have tarried so long/ on the earth" [4], an assertion which is again inspired by one of Maynard's poems, this time addressed to another woman. According to Charles Drouhet's biography of Maynard, the poet suffered from unrequited love and the woman who represented the object of his devotion, reappears under different names in several of his poems.

A temporal conjunction, "while", links the previous lines to a metaphor and a simile: "(…) while the syllables of thirty Aprils/ had dripped like ice in the mountains (…)" The relation between spring, the melting of snow and the birth of poetic inspiration are once again inspired by Maynard. He describes spring as a time for love. Thirty years before, the Muses had taught the poet where to find the fountain of love, so that he could write about love: "Thirty months of April have made the icicles/ melt in our mountains/ the countryside has won back its green exuberance/ and rejuvenated old bushes,/ since the Muses boasted that they had shown me the fountains/ that had given them so many lovers

[3] "Je souhaiterois d'estre né/Aveugle comme infortuné./ Ce désir n'est-il pas estrange?/ Mais si la rigeur d'un Jalous/ Me prive de voir mon bel Ange,/ Mes yeux, à quoi me servez-vous?// Submergé dans l'eau de mes pleurs,/ Je croy que la saison des Fleurs/ N'a que du noir en sa peinture (…)", "Ode", Maynard*:* 171. All translations from French are mine.

[4] "Je ne puis me figurer/Comme quoy j'ai pû durer/ Si long-temps dessus la Terre", "Ode", Maynard: 175.

(…)".[5] In one of the more original metaphors in his poem, Merwin describes a spring mountain landscape, which is associated with song. Here, the reader imagines the mountain landscape with dripping icicles, an image which is then developed into another extended simile: "(…) and I had listened to the water as a song I might know". The drops of water make elusive music whose meaning is not easy to capture. But while Merwin's poem talks of the problem of capturing the songs of nature, Maynard's poem moves from the mountains to a French garden where producing love poems is effortless.

Both poets use the last days of autumn as an image of the poet's old age. Maynard makes Destiny, "la Parque", become tired of spinning new days for him. Merwin personifies the passing days, which are made to feel the same resignation as the speaker: "(…) and the days arrive each one/expecting less". The temporal distance and the change in attitude between past and present are reinforced by the occurrences of "since" and "once": "(…) how long it is since I left/ the court I loved once". The focus then shifts from time to place. The repetition of the adverb of place, "where" is used to create syntactical parallelism: "where my mother… where the banquets… where my daughter", after which "here" (lines 29 and 33) is contrasted with "away and away" (line 35).

Maynard's period at court is described in Merwin's poem through a series of images. "[T]he skins of morning" is an enigmatic metaphor describing what could be interpreted either as an experience or an atmosphere. Could it be about awakening to a new day, or awakening to skin against skin? Jean Rousset describes the enigmatic metaphor as characteristic of baroque literature, where the relations within the metaphor are hidden rather than disclosed. The enigmatic metaphor, another type of metaphor disliked by Malherbe (*L'âge baroque* 186), does not otherwise find favour with Merwin. The personified month of May is vain and resembles the young poet. Its colourfulness contrasts with the black flowers of April. The optimism and ambitions of his youth

[5] "Trente Avrils ont sur nos Montagnes/Fondu le cristal des glaçons,/ Rendu la verdure aux Campagnes,/ Et rajeuny les vieux buissons,/Depuis que les Muses sont vaines/De m'avoir monstré les fontaines/ Qui leur donnent tant d'Amoureux (…) C'en est fait, mon Automne passe! (…) Et desja la Parque se lasse/ De me filer de nouveaux jours!(…) Que dira la race future/ Qui viendra voir ma sepulture/ Comme celle d'un demy-Dieu", "A Monseigneur le Cardinal de Richelieu", Maynard: 196-197.

are linked to uneasiness and dissatisfaction: "My hopes always for something/else that would be the same but more and never failing". The young man is conscious of the inconstancy of success. The plural of "loves" suggests that the relationships he had were many and superficial and gives weight to the last word in the poem—"love".

Merwin's speaker considers that he will be lucky if he is: "(…) buried/ as the poor are buried". He wants to be remembered by an unmarked white wall in the church. The speaker admits that his previous self-congratulation was exaggerated. Maynard's parallel poem takes the form of an elderly man's complaint at France's lack of gratitude towards his poetic gift: "It is over, my autumn approaches its end! (…) and already Destiny is tired/of spinning new days for me! (…) What will people say in the future / when they come to see my burial place/ as if it belonged to a demigod".[6] Maynard did not just want to emulate Ronsard, he wanted to be his equal, and he even imagined for himself a tombstone which would be a monument "as if it belonged to a demigod".

In Merwin's poem, there is no frustration or bitterness, just a hint of regret at not having been as successful in doing something more meaningful with his poetry than he actually succeeded in doing. The speaker has no more ambitions, and, as such, contrasts with the arrogant and insistent poet in Maynard' poem, who wants Richelieu to speak to the king on his behalf. Maynard wrote a series of poems recommending himself to influential people at court, boasting of his capabilities in order to try to secure a good position for himself there. He was, however, never able to establish himself in Paris again, and his resulting frustration is evident in his poems. In the extended simile in Merwin's poem, the speaker contrasts his attitude as an arrogant youth with his present more sober attitude: "a demigod whatever/ that may be". This distance towards his own arrogance is not to be found in the French original, where the speaker tries instead to attain the position which he believes he deserves. However, Merwin's poem itself becomes an homage to the poet Maynard.

In Merwin's poem, "those years when", leads us to the story of the persecutions witnessed in this region at the end of the 16th century, to soldiers on foot and on horseback, to burning farms, wounded people and

[6] "(…) Que dira la race future/ Qui viendra voir ma sepulture/ Comme celle d'un demy-Dieu", "A Monseigneur le Cardinal de Richelieu", Maynard: 197.

blood in the canals. By this rhetorical gesture, Merwin places Maynard's childhood in the same landscape as his old age, even though it is well documented that Maynard was born in Toulouse, and also spend his childhood there. Maynard's life-story is thus simplified, in order to enable Merwin to make a point of the poet coming back home to his childhood valley. The hill with the towers signifies continuity, in contrast to the vagaries of the poet's life: "[T]hose towers on the hill that I would see again and again". Could the ruins of these towers still have been there when Merwin himself arrived in that same valley in 1963? Past and present are united through the extended metaphor of the fingers of one hand, stretching out towards those who return.

Charles Drouhet writes the following about Saint-Céré and Maynard's own home there:

> From the small window in his narrow office on the first floor the poet saw (…) a great deal (…) of the area where Saint-Céré was built—an island made by a bend of la Bave and a canal (…) In front of the house one could see a hill with the ruins of castle towers (…) an old castle from the VIIIth century (…) Protected by a range of mountains from the strong and icy cold wind from Auvergne, lies Saint-Céré (…) deep down between mountain sides and forests (…). (140-141)

The river, the canal and the hill with the towers are all to be found in Merwin's poem. Every time the poet comes back, everything is at it used to be. The landscape has not changed, unlike the poet's own life. The cold house becomes a discreet, but effective metaphor for the speaker's sorrow at the death of his daughter, contrasting with memories of partying, worldly success and love affairs.

In the following passage the same sentence structure is repeated seven times, connecting the speaker to words of perception, movement and feeling. When the poet addresses the death of his wife, the same verb is repeated: "(…) I have sat beside my wife (…) I sat here beside her". The image that makes war a vast wave sweeping through the valley, stands out in this section of the poem, where the other descriptions are concrete and lacking in images: "(…) I have smelled rosemary and juniper burning in the plague". The smell of the burning herbs during the plague anchors the poem in the past, as does the following phrase: "I

have flattered evil men (…)".[7] Even though the sadness expressed could be that of a modern writer, by alluding to obscure customs and using old-fashioned expressions, Merwin reminds us that this story is about the past.

Topoi III and IV: Carpe diem and life is a dream

The speaker in Merwin's poem surveys the autumn leaves of the poplar trees floating on the river. The death of his wife is associated with autumn and with his own life drawing to an end. A connection can be made between la Bave, the river which Maynard could see from his house in Saint-Céré, and the river Pactolus, which he mentions, in that both were known for carrying gold dust (Drouhet 141). When king Midas decided that he wanted to be rid of his magical powers, having killed his daughter in the act of turning her into gold, he washed them away in the Pactolus, which from that moment onwards carried gold in its stream. "Gold" is repeated twice, which lends the word more weight. Might this mention of the river be a hidden reference to Maynard's relationship to his daughter? Did she perhaps die while he was chasing after honour and power? This reference gives the modern reader another reminder of the poetry of the 17th century, which is rich in allusions to mythology. Although Malherbe's circle wanted to play down the importance of mythology, this does not mean, as we have seen, that Maynard's poetry was without mythological dimensions.

Pactolus was once compared to eternity, the speaker tells us. He appears to reject the notion that nature lasts for ever, since the river he is contemplating, is associated with the passing of the seasons. However, the passing of seasons in a landscape can also function as an image of constancy, recalling the circularity of time. Moreover, the allusion to the passing of life corresponds to the baroque attitude to life, where the poets stressed man's mortality with the aim of encouraging people to enjoy life (*carpe diem*). This idea recurs in another of Maynard's poems to a reluctant lady: "While one has flowers, one should bind garlands" (Maynard 134).

[7] Maynard says something similar in another poem: "J'ay flatté les puissans, j'ay plastré leurs malices (…)", Maynard: 191.

In an interview, Merwin expresses a view which recalls the baroque idea of the importance of living in the present. He speaks about death being part of our lives, and the present as what we are "blessed with":

> Death is part of every moment of our lives. It's always there with us. It doesn't mean that we have to be gloomy about it, but it's always there. I mean yesterday is gone, isn't it? What we have and what we're blessed with is this very moment, with the whole of our past in it and the whole of the unknown future in it, but it's all there.
>
> (W.S.Merwin 2008)

Neal Bowers shows how an image in one of Merwin's poems "concentrates a feeling of mortality and the inherent sadness of human life (…) leaving us with a poignant sense of our own transience" (Bowers 1990), an analysis that can also be applied to Merwin's poem about Maynard.

Line 43 onwards of the poem concerns Maynard's adult life before the onset of old age. It may well relate to his riding back and forwards between Aurillac and Saint-Céré, or to his travels in the wider world. He used to stop where "(…) the mountains appeared to open before me and turning (…) all the way back here (…) and both ways were my life". This extended simile conveys an image of him in the midst of the mountains, where he momentarily appears to experience feelings of lucidity and control. He is standing in a well-known landscape, with roads leading back home and out again. The mountains look as if they open up, and the metaphor "and both ways were my life" again connects life to a mountainous landscape as in the beginning of the poem. There is a rupture between the speaker's two worlds, but this image creates a bridge between them.

The poet in Merwin's poem says that in his life he now has "(…) slept through to wake in a dark house talking to the shadows about love". The story we were told, was a dream. Again Merwin alludes to a well-nown topos: Life is a dream.[8] From a baroque perspective, however, the awakening from the dream would take place in a Christian Heaven. In Merwin's poem the speaker approaches death, but wakes up to tell the story of his life. The idea of an awakening is often used as an image of

[8] Ernst Robert Curtius mentions Calderon's *La vida es sueño* in his study of important topoi from Antiquity on, but only to show how Calderon uses a topos where life is seen as a stage, Curtius: 141.

having reached some kind of insight. While the modern reader may associate dreams with the subconscious, this particular dream is associated with the poet's retrospective recognition that certain aspects of his life—such as his past ambitions and successes—are no longer important, while other relations in his life—the relationships with the people he loved—are now the only value.

The mood of self-acceptance in the poem relates more to Merwin's present than to Maynard's biography. Merwin attributes the speaker more self-insight and peace of mind than Maynard expressed in his own poems. Reportedly, Maynard's frustration at not having been appreciated as a poet and at being exiled from Paris contributed to final illness and death. When the speaker in Maynard's poem sums up his life, he says: "I made my sins into my only pleasures" (Maynard 290). He is: "(…) haunted by the disgust of his own misdeeds" (Maynard 290). He demands the right to be afraid of death and hell and believes that he has no hope for salvation, but he asks God to have mercy on him.

In Merwin's poem the dark house represents the mental state of the speaker. All he has left, is the story of a dream. The dream contains memories of his loved ones, shadows joining him in his last days. Looking back, does love give his life meaning? The last lines of the poem and especially the use of the word "love" imply that this is the case, indicating to the reader that a modern poet's thinking underlies these words. Here, the creation of meaning is the responsibility of the speaker himself. It derives from the love which exists between him and his parents, his wife and his daughter. There is no mention of God.

Maynard in his poem relates shadows and love to an ideal landscape, the Elysean fields, where the poet will boast of being remembered after his death by the loveliest woman in the universe: "I shall go to the loving shadows/ who rest out in the happy fields/ under green myrtle/ to tell that my name has the honour / of living in the memory/ of the loveliest in the universe" (Maynard 173). Meaning is related to the afterlife in the baroque imagination, whereas the modern imagination looks for meaning here and now. Maynard ends his poem by saying that the woman is made of ice and that he cannot expect anything from her, from where he sits in exile.

Topos V: The landscape as a conveyor of meaning

The landscape exists independently of experience and memories, but at the same time it is closely linked to the inner space of the poet. Maynard's poem does not ask if a landscape can help give life meaning, it does not adopt this kind of modern attitude to nature. It is described using stereotypical images of lonely woods and beautiful plains, and is related to the poem's images of human life. Nature in Maynard's poem can be hostile. It may threaten and comfort human beings, but is not threatened by them. One can find contradictory assertions in Maynard's poems about his attitude to the landscape he lived in—both the wish to leave: "Farewell, Mountains! Farewell Wood/ I am tired of living as a hermit" (Maynard 130)—and the satisfaction of staying: "You know I love/ to live in this area" (Maynard 133). In the last case the speaker is courting a local lady who needs to know why he wants to go to Paris.

Maynard also relates the landscape to the lack of recognition he experienced as a poet: "You force me to die in the woods, oh ungrateful century!" (Maynard 287). His native woods thus become an image of exile and rejection. We should remember that banishment from the court and from Paris was considered a severe punishment for aristocrats in 17th century France. But Maynard can also look upon exile as something of value: "(…) I am overjoyed by the woods where I live./ Think my resort is good; which permits me to stay/ in the same village where my ancestors have died" (Maynard 32). The family's historic attachment to the place gives the poet a good reason for accepting his exile.

Another much older topos also haunts Merwin's poem, in the description of idealized nature and in the image of *locus amoenus,* where the question of "where" leads to the question "when", thus relating place to time (Curtius 183-202). The classical topoi relate to exotic plants and animals, to nymphs and grottos and shepherds and love, to places where there is no sickness or hunger, and where there is for ever spring. Merwin's descriptions, on the other hand, provide a realistic rather than an idealized representation of nature. The people who appear in the landscape, are threatened by loneliness, sorrow, war and death. On the other hand, the landscape in the poem is not antithetic to *locus amoenus.* The landscape anchors the fleeting life. It is a place where love can blossom and where the poet can come to terms with death. The description of his village has all the conventional classical elements—a river, mountains, a valley, spring, a sunrise, flowers (even though they

are black, the river is coloured by blood and the sunrise takes its red colour from burning houses). The landscape in the poem is another "shade which has drunk blood" (Curtius 104).

This landscape remained the same even after the waves of war had washed over it. It was a place to come home to, after an absence. And the many elements of this landscape which had been created by the local population, also represented an important part of its enduring quality—the church, the towers on the hill, the houses in the village, the house of the poet, even if it was cold and dark, the streets, the canals encircled by mountains. The description of the village and its environment is dramatized by the raging of wars inside and outside of the village. Through metaphors and similes, natural phenomena are related to human creations. The icicles which melt in the mountains, have something in common with the words of the poet, the soldiers set fire to the farms which colour the sunrise red. Spring is an image either of a broken heart or of social success, while autumn cannot be associated with anything but ageing and approaching death.

As we see in the poem "François de Maynard 1582-1646", Merwin's poems are often steeped in melancholy. The poem is not sentimental, but it is about a time when God was the guarantor of a meaningful end to one's life story, and nature represented a stable framework for people's lives. The experience of time in modernity is related to loss of meaning and annihilation. In Modernism, the idea of a "home" is associated with a space which can never be returned to. This idea presupposes that "home" did once exist as part of a meaningful whole. Life is a dream from which one ends up waking, as Merwin's baroque poet tells us. The attitude to life found in Merwin's poem relates to a dream of an ideal life of stability and permanence, founded on an unchanging landscape. In his other poems, Merwin points to the vulnerability of his modern readers. Looking beyond the baroque experience and the modernist conception of the world, he presents us with a new and urgent question—will nature survive us? How can we be reconciled with death and annihilation without being secured by the continuity of nature? And what does it mean to be a poet in a world without this security?

Poetic language tries to hold onto reality, but reality always escapes. In his introduction to *The second four books of poems*, written three years before *The Vixen,* Merwin reminds us how tragically complex—and ambiguous—our relationship to nature is. He warns the reader that

the bitterness which the exploitation of nature can arouse in us, can also make us forget our love for it, a passion which he believes can be so strong as to be impossible for words to recreate. In the following we find an expression of his agenda:

> I think it is essential to recognize the probable results of what we have done and are doing, but when we have seen that and its roots in human motives, the menaced world may seem even more to be treasured than ever. Certainly the anguish and anger we feel at the threat to it [nature] and the sleepless despoiling of it can lose their tragic complexity and become mere bitterness when we forget that their origin is a passion for the momentary countenance of the unrepeatable world.
>
> (*Four books* 5)

Jane Frazier sees Merwin's speakers like "wandering prophets" and remarks that although Merwin's poems are marked by a tinge of fatalism, they "close with a sense of the speakers having acquired a small parcel of knowledge in a world filled with questions" (Frazier 1996, 5). *The Vixen* addresses the question of the meaning of a poet's words, after the loss of the nature we know, in the "silence after the animals". The sadness the poet experiences at this idea could well have led to feelings of powerlessness and inertia, but instead the poet continues to write, spurred on by the love and anger he feels at the destruction of nature. By using Maynard as his spokesman, Merwin takes us back to the 17th century and in so doing casts an unexpected light on a very modern problem.

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Appendix:

François de Maynard 1582-1646

When I cannot see my angel I would rather
have been born blind and miserable I wrote at one time
then the season of flowers I said appeared to be
painted black and it was impossible through those days
to imagine how I could have tarried so long
on the earth while the syllables of thirty Aprils
had dripped like ice in the mountains and I had listened
to the water as a song I might know and how
the autumn is almost done and the days arrive each one
expecting less how long it is since I left
the court I loved once the passions there the skins of morning
the colors of vain May and my hopes always for something
else that would be the same but more and never failing
more praise more laurels more loves more bounty until I
could believe I was Ronsard and I wrote that I would have
a monument as for a demigod whatever
that might be when I will be lucky to be buried
as the poor are buried without noise and the faces covered
and be gone as the year goes out and be honoured as a blank wall
in a cold chapel of the church where I shivered as a child
beside my father the judge in his complete black those years when
soldiers clattered and clanged through the streets horsemen clashed
under the windows and the nights rang with the screams
of the wounded outside the walls while the farms burned
into dawns red with smoke and blood came spreading
through the canals at the foot of those towers on the hill
that I could see again and again after every absence
fingers of a hand rising out of the grey valley
in the distance and coming closer to become here as before
where my mother wanted me where I married
where the banquets glittered along the river to my songs
where my daughter died and how cold the house turned all at once
I have seen the waves of war come back and break over us here
I have smelled rosemary and juniper burning in the plague
I have gone away and away I have held a post in Rome
I have caught my death there I have flattered evil men
and gained nothing by it I have sat beside my wife
when she could move no longer I sat here beside her

I watched the gold leaves of the poplars floating on the stream
long ago the gold current of the river Pactolus
was compared to eternity but the poplar leaves have gone
in the years when I rode to Aurillac I used to stop
at a place where the mountains appeared to open before me
and turning I could still see all the way back to here
and both ways were my life which now I have slept through to wake
in a dark house talking to the shadows about love

Review

Early Modern English Medical Texts. 2010. *Corpus* [CD-ROM]. Compiled by Irma Taavitsainen, Päivi Pahta, Turo Hiltunen, Martti Mäkinen, Ville Marttila, Maura Ratia, Carla Suhr, and Jukka Tyrkkö. Software by Raymond Hickey. *Corpus Description and Studies*. Edited by Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Since the advent of the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* in the 1990s, compilers of English historical corpora have moved increasingly toward providing "short and fat" electronic text databases instead of "long and thin" (p. 7). These "short and fat" corpora commonly focus on a particular domain or genre and are more limited in temporal scope; this setup enables more in-depth studies of domain-specific language as well as investigations of patterns underpinning the more general trends found in the "long and thin" corpora. *Early Modern English Medical Texts* (henceforth EMEMT) is a very welcome contribution to this trend. It provides a continuation of *Middle English Medical Texts*, which was released in 2005 (Taavitsainen, Pahta, and Mäkinen), and is projected to be followed by a Late Modern English collection (p. 2). Together with the book that introduces the corpus and illustrates some of its possible uses, EMEMT constitutes a rich source for explorations of the connection between language and society, and presents new developments in the compilation and presentation of historical corpora.

The EMEMT package consists of several components: the corpus itself, the book with descriptions and studies (which includes sections by scholars other than the compilers), and the software that accompanies the corpus. I will begin by discussing general features of the corpus. Although I will draw on and refer to chapters in the book in this discussion, I will return to a description of the book as such. Finally, I will explore the technical aspects of the EMEMT, including software, coding, and presentation.

EMEMT consists of two million words of extracts from medical texts from the period 1500 to 1700. The texts are divided up into six main categories: 1) General treatises and textbooks; 2) Treatises on specific topics (further subdivided into Texts on specific diseases, Texts on plague, etc.); 3) Recipe collections and materia medica; 4) Regimens

and health guides; 5) Surgical and anatomical treatises; and 6) the *Philosophical Transactions*. The compilers also include an "Appendix," which covers texts more tangentially related to medicine, such as literary descriptions and alchemical/chymical discussions. EMEMT thus gives a fairly comprehensive view of the printed output by English medical writers in the early modern period. As emphasized in the introduction to the book (pp. 2-6), this setup particularly allows for the study of the intersection between developments in medical thinking and procedure and language use, to see whether, for example, the gradual transition from medieval, scholastic approaches to empirical methods is reflected in the language of the texts. The variety and stratification of texts also enables investigations of the connection between language and type of text, type of author (e.g. learned authors vs. authors with little or no formal training), or type of intended audience (e.g. learned physicians vs. surgeons).

As underscored by Irma Taavitsainen and Jukka Tyrkkö in their presentation of the categorization of the texts, it is important to recognize that EMEMT represents the world of medical texts in *print*; handwritten manuscript texts were not included in the corpus. Although this is a reasonable limitation, I wish the compilers had compensated for this exclusion by adding a more in-depth, focused discussion of our current knowledge of the copying and transmission of medical manuscript texts. Recent research has shown that some medical practitioners engaged in intense copying of texts. The Elizabethan astrological physician Simon Forman (1552-1611), for example, has left us numerous hand-written documents, attesting to his wide reading and excerpting from manuscripts as well as printed texts (Kassell 2005). Drawing on this research would have helped users who are new to the field of medical texts to gauge the extent and nature of manual copying vis-à-vis printing, and to get a sense of the genres and discourse forms that are available only in manuscript or that overlap with print. Such an exploration would probably also have led to a reconsideration or at least problematization of the compilers' claim that "printed texts arguably carried higher prestige" (p. 59) than manuscript texts.

The division of texts into larger categories has been a perennial problem for corpus compilers, and there is frequent debate about what features to take into consideration in assigning a text to a category. The classification of texts in EMEMT seems to have been particularly tricky

because of the many different forms and genres covered under the domain of medical writing. To provide categories, the compilers seem to have been forced to resort to a very broad classification, which appears to be primarily based on content. For example, texts included within the category General treatises and textbooks "range from learned and authoritative textbooks of medicine to all-in-one books providing access to basic theories of medicine and their applications" (p. 66). However, the category *Philosophical Transactions*, which represents extracts from the journal published by the Royal Society in the seventeenth century and beyond, is based on "publication format" (p. 127). This puts the categories on uneven footing since the classification is not based on uniform principles. Furthermore, within these larger units, there are several sub-categories or "genres": the *Philosophical Transactions* consists of book reviews as well as experimental reports; and recipes occur in several of the larger categories, the assignment of category being based on whether the text treats multiple substances and/or diseases, or one substance alone (p. 103). Although the compilers' decision to provide very general categories is understandable, it remains unclear how internally consistent the categories are and what the potential impact on linguistic studies may be of having, for example, reviews and experimental reports treated as one category. Depending on research question and aim, users may thus want to explore other, narrower classifications of the texts (see the discussion on software below).

The book that accompanies EMEMT is divided into four major sections: 1) Background; 2) Corpus Description; 3) Studies; and 4) Technical Aspects. While corpora are usually released with a manual and, in some cases, a brief description of the context of the texts, the EMEMT package clearly sets a new standard for future publications of corpora and text collections. With an enlightening introduction to medical practice in early modern England, to discourse forms and genres, and to the compilation and technical aspects of the corpus, EMEMT is made much more accessible to users who are not familiar with the domain of medicine (although some texts are still challenging owing to their technical nature). As historical linguists, if we are to understand the language of these texts, we need to understand the textual, communicative, and social context: this book provides us with the tools to do that.

The book is overall highly informative and readable. Especially readable are the discussions of the different text categories in Section 2 (written by various constellations of compilers). Among the chapters in the other sections, the meticulous study by Belén Méndez-Naya and Päivi Pahta in Section 3 (Studies) is particularly impressive in terms of clarity and scope. Investigating the shifting paradigms of intensifiers (such as *full*, *well*, *right*, and *very*), they demonstrate convincingly that a focused, domain-specific corpus such as EMEMT can "help qualify the general findings of studies drawn from general-purpose, multi-genre corpora" (p. 213).

There are aspects of the book's description and framing, however, where I would have wanted to see more specificity or clarity. This especially concerns the concept of "science" and its overlap with the concept of "medicine." The authors sometimes refer to "scientific" writing/discourse in relation to their corpus studies (e.g. pp. 37, 51, 212), and at other times "medical" writing (e.g. pp. 52, 193). Medicine is undoubtedly part of the complex of practices that can be considered early modern science, but it is unclear to what extent corpus results based exclusively on medical texts can be extrapolated to scientific texts more generally since there were many other manifestations of "science" in the period. Greater clarity about how the two areas overlap as well as differ would thus have been welcome.

The technical aspects of EMEMT (including the software, the presentation of texts, and other features) reveal quite a few innovative features. These technical aspects are described in Section 4 of the book, which includes a meticulous, illustrated manual (written by Jukka Tyrkkö, Raymond Hickey, and Ville Marttila). With the help of this manual, I had no problems installing the EMEMT software on two different PCs (both running Windows 7). The software (created by Raymond Hickey in consultation with the compilers) enables various searches and other manipulation of the text files (provided in extended ASCII format). In the search program, the texts are presented in a tree structure, which has seven branches in accordance with the seven text categories of EMEMT. The user can re-classify the material into whatever grouping the user may want by changing the tree format to a list format. As I suggested earlier, such a re-classification may be useful since the main categories provided in EMEMT are quite broad. Furthermore, as is shown in the studies in the book and in the compilers'

previous work, a great deal of diachronic variation occurs in the language of medical texts in the early modern period. Unfortunately, the EMEMT does not come with a set periodization, which means that users will have to construct their own periods. Dividing the texts into periods seems only to be possible by clicking appropriate texts in the list format and running separate searches on the separate sets of texts.

I was able to replicate the studies carried out in the manual and to carry out similar searches without problems.[1] More advanced search options and a host of other useful features of the program are outlined in a more detailed manual that accompanies the software. Some procedures produced persistent error messages the first time around, but after I closed down the program and conducted the procedures again, they worked smoothly.

Two features of the software deserve special mention, as they point to interesting developments in the presentation of corpus texts. Each text in the corpus is linked with a description of the text. This description includes author information, a brief overview of the content of the text, the library reference to the specific version presented in the corpus, hyperlinks to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and *Early English Books Online* (if appropriate), and other information. This allows the user to become familiar with the history and context of the text very easily. Even more impressive is the inclusion of images taken from the original books, such as front pages and illustrations. The illustrations are particularly useful as they allow a comparison between text and image, enabling studies of the multi-modal character of the texts.

Finally, in addition to the original texts presented in their original spelling, the EMEMT package includes what is called a "standardized" or "normalized" version of the corpus. Any English historical text collection from before at least the eighteenth century will present challenges for users because of the spelling variation that was common before the establishment of a clear standard in English: the user will have to make sure that he/she has found all variant spellings of a word in order

[1] Some of the searches that are illustrated in the manual must have been carried out on a pre-publication version of the corpus since dates of texts are not the same in the current corpus and in the illustrations. For example, Image 17 (p. 234) includes "1550 Langton. Introduction into physicke," while the corpus now has "1545 Langton. Introduction into physicke." Some of the word counts also differ, although the number of search hits match.

to avoid inaccurate analysis and faulty statistics. In collaboration with researchers from Lancaster University, the compilers of EMEMT have produced a version where the spelling variation has been substantially reduced. This has been accomplished with the help of VARD (Variant Detector), a program that identifies and automatically modernizes[2] the spelling of a word. It is claimed that this modernization "[makes] analysis easier and more accurate" (p. 284) and that we can "gain more precise results" (p. 289) by using the modernized texts. Although I would agree that it may help to make searches easier, since the user would perhaps not have to find a large number of variant spellings, I do think the claims of more accuracy and precision require modification. Modernization does not automatically provide more accurate or precise results: whether the user prefers the non-modernized or modernized texts for searches, the user would have to check for possible alternate spellings. About 73% of the variants detected by the program were modernized; the remaining variants did not reach a particular threshold where a modernized form could be assigned with confidence. Spelling variation may thus still occur, although the number of alternate spellings clearly depends on the nature of the search word. Furthermore, as with output from the non-modernized texts, careful post-processing will be needed even if the modernized texts are used, as the automatic modernization has clearly resulted in inaccuracies.[3] For example, it was decided that all verbal –th endings would be modernized to –s (with the exception of *hath* and *doth*, which are special cases; p. 286). However, this has led to a number of plural –th forms being modernized to –s. Among other instances, four examples of plural *sayth* (as in "Olde auncyent doctours of Physycke sayth…") in Andrew Boorde's 1542 *Dyetary of helth* have been turned into *says*. Consequently, the increased "precision" or "accuracy" of the procedure cannot be taken for granted, but must be evaluated carefully.

Overall, the EMEMT package (including the corpus, book, and software) is an important contribution to currently available corpora that cover aspects of the history of English, and to corpus compilation

[2] The authors of the chapter that describes the procedure (Anu Lehto, Alistair Baron, Maura Ratia, and Paul Rayson) refer to the process as standardization or normalization, but it is more accurately described as modernization, as the standard used is present-day spelling.

[3] There is no mention that the modernization was spot-checked after completion.

methodology and practice. Several features of the corpus (e.g. the information on texts, and presentation of images) and the book (e.g. the description of socio-historical context) set new standards for publications of corpora, and the material itself will undoubtedly give us new insights into the special language of medicine as well as the development of English in general.

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