Language Contacts Meet English Dialects

Language Contacts Meet English Dialects: Studies in Honour of Markku Filppula

Edited by

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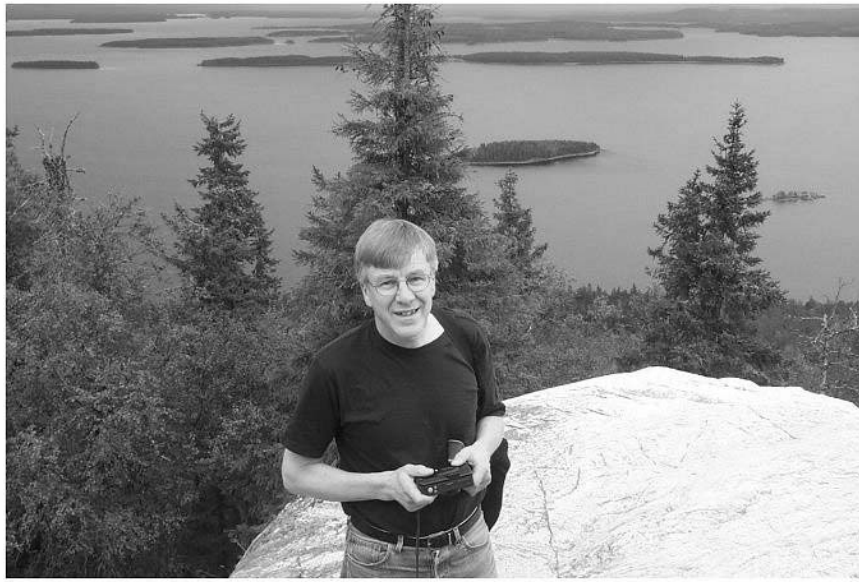

Markku Filppula heading further up in the beautiful sceneries of Koli (photograph taken by Raymond Hickey).

FOREWORD

This book is dedicated to Markku Filppula, Professor of English at the University of Joensuu, to honour his 60th birthday on 29 November 2009 with articles written by some of his friends, colleagues and former students on themes that have been the main inspiration for his academic career: dialectology, contact linguistics, and Celtic influence in English, with special emphasis on Hiberno-English.

Anybody who knows Markku is aware of his appreciation of quality, some might even say passion for perfection. Whenever Markku sets his mind about doing something, he does it to the utmost, showing no mercy for himself. This is natural in all his academic aspirations, as all those who are familiar with his work know, but it can also be seen in other fields of life: in the detailed manner in which Markku tunes up his mountain bike with special parts to get yet another 30 grams off its weight; in the midnight oboe exercises he schedules for himself when preparing to perform with the Joensuu City Orchestra; or in the way he follows his training schedule with a high-class heart rate monitor when getting in shape for another Ahmanhiihto skiing tour in the beautiful sceneries of Koli.

As the examples above show, Markku is a man of many traits, so many that it is astonishing to notice how much he has achieved during his academic career. But this also explains why Markku usually seems to be in a hurry when you see him—and why he drives Alfa Romeo. Loafing around does not get one very far.

Markku was born and reared in Mikkeli, in the heart of Savo Province, where he went to school and took his matriculation exam. After this, he left to study English philology at the University of Helsinki in the tumultuous days of student movement. Markku gained his MA in Helsinki in 1975, after which he extended his circles by continuing postgraduate studies at University College Dublin, making field trips to various parts of Ireland with his motorcycle. His family too got to know the life on the Green Isle. In 1986, Markku was awarded his doctorate by the National University of Ireland, and the results of his doctoral work were published in *Some Aspects of Hiberno-English in a Functional Sentence Perspective* in the same year. By that time, Markku had already worked for several years at the English Department of the University of Joensuu, where he

was first employed as Assistant, and later became Associate Professor and then full Professor.

Much of Markku's interest has been on Hiberno-English, as can be seen in many of his individual articles and the seminal monograph *The Grammar of Irish English: Language in Hibernian Style* (1999). His sphere of interest has subsequently widened to other Celtic Englishes and to the early Celtic contact influences on English, resulting in the Finnish Academy funded research project *English and Celtic in Contact* which he has been coordinating together with Juhani Klemola and Heli Paulasto. The three published a monograph under the same name in 2008, drawing historical linguists' attention to the long-neglected Celtic contact effects in the development of English. More recently, Markku has directed his interests to the roles of language contact and universals in vernacular Englishes. For this purpose, he started up another research project, *UniCont: Vernacular Universals vs. Contact-Induced Language Change*, again funded by the Finnish Academy and coordinated with Juhani and Heli. The fruits of this project can be enjoyed in *Vernacular Universals and Language Contacts: Evidence from Varieties of English and Beyond* (2009). For his scholarly merits, Markku received a membership in the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 2007.

Since his postgraduate days, the spirit of Ireland has never lost its grip on Markku. He has worked several years in various institutions of the country: in the academic year 1990–91, he was Visiting Professor at University College Dublin, in 2001–02 Visiting Professor at the School of Celtic Studies of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, and most recently he spent the academic year 2007–2008 as Research Professor at Queen's University Belfast.

However, Markku is not simply a researcher but also a teacher, and he has been an important mentor for many postgraduate students. The two of us are prime examples of this. From 2003 onward, Markku's role as a teacher has extended beyond individual students to linguistic postgraduate studies more generally. As the Director of LANGNET, the Finnish Graduate School in Language Studies, he has influenced the way postgraduate studies in linguistics are organised and structured in the whole country. In the last few years, he has also been coordinating NordLing, The Nordic Graduate School Network in Language Studies.

His wide contacts in the academic world have helped Markku organise numerous interesting conferences, seminars, symposia, colloquia, summer schools, and other academic meetings. The biggest ones include *The Eleventh International Conference on Methods in Dialectology* in 2002 and *The 40th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea* in

2007, the first of which resulted in several publications—two of them co-edited by Markku himself.

In addition to his scholarly merits, Markku has for the past years been increasingly involved in academic administration, first as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Joensuu and now also as the Founding Stage Dean of the Philosophical Faculty, one of the four major faculties of the newly founded University of Eastern Finland that joins together the Universities of Joensuu and Kuopio and will start at full blast at the beginning of 2010. This makes Markku one of the major forces in moulding the role of human sciences in the new university.

All in all, there are numerous reasons to celebrate Markku Filppula's academic achievements thus far. On the occasion of his 60th birthday, we wish him many more years in which to reach the goals he has set himself. This Festschrift is a way of showing appreciation for the significant work he has done in the field of linguistics. Happy birthday, Markku!

The scope of the volume is inevitably limited and many potential writers could not be included, but we still hope that this volume brings joy both to Markku himself and to everyone interested in similar issues in linguistics. The contributions arise from the three fields that have been central in Markku's work—contact linguistics, historical linguistics, and dialectology—and they have been organised accordingly.

The articles in the first part, *Theory and methods: language contact and variation*, discuss theoretical approaches to variationist research and contact linguistics and present case studies of the outcomes of typologically distant and close languages in contact.

J. K. Chambers discusses two usage problems in spoken English—agreement breakdown with expletive *there* and concord breakdown with compound objects of prepositions—as vernacular universal phenomena. At the root of these features he finds the cognitive limits of the language faculty, a failure in the look-ahead mechanism required to process these constructions correctly. Both usage problems arise in acrolectal English, too, which is evidence of their universal nature and of the ideological rather than linguistic basis for insisting on the grammatical forms.

Peter Siemund, Georg Meier and Martin Schweinberger call for methodological detail in describing nonstandard features of grammar in varieties of English. They illustrate their case through analyses of the discourse marker LIKE in four ICE corpora and the distribution of pronominal case forms in carefully processed internet-based corpora. The authors conclude that categorical statements on the presence or absence of certain features tend to mask complex distributional and functional

patterns which should be accounted for in order to obtain a more realistic picture of grammatical variation.

Terence Odlin investigates a number of structural similarities which appear in language-contact situations in English and in other languages, with a view on the processes which produce these constructions and the methods used to study them. In addition to structural transfer, he draws attention to, e.g. social, psychological and cultural motivations.

The Finnish contributors in this part of the volume examine language-contact situations where the Finnish language is in a central role. In their joint paper, Lisa Lena Opas-Hänninen, Timo Lauttamus, Ilkka Juuso and Pekka Hirvonen focus on how the progressive aspect manifests itself in the speech of two generations of Finnish Australians shifting to English. In their analysis, the authors discuss the roles of Finnish substratum, interlanguage formation and vernacular universals.

As the only non-Anglicist in this section, Helka Riionheimo counterbalances the former articles by giving a theoretical perspective on the contact of two closely related and morphologically rich languages, Ingrian Finnish and Estonian. She studies contact-induced attrition in past tense formation in Ingrian Finnish in the light of morphological processing, presenting a continuum model where lexicon and the productive rules of grammar are seen as partly overlapping and competing means of processing the inflections.

The second part of this volume is entitled *Historical approaches to the Celtic-English interface*. It consists of studies focusing on the impact that the Celtic languages have had on the historical development of English in England and in Ireland. The discussions are based on comparative research of the structural or lexical features of English and Irish or Insular Celtic, exploring the likelihood of contact influence.

Hildegard L. C. Tristram looks into the history of the Irish and Irish English perfect constructions, paying special attention to the Irish origins of the so-called *after*-perfect and medial-object perfect. She finds that while the former is a calque from Irish, the latter is an English archaism by way of the Irish Past Participle perfect construction. Both perfect forms are innovative in their functions in IrE.

Patricia Ronan investigates support verb constructions involving *do* in Early English and Irish. Her analysis of the Old Irish usages indicates that the functional roles of these constructions in early Irish and English are to a great extent similar.

Anders Ahlqvist examines how the notion of ‘welcome’ is expressed in Old, Middle, and Modern Irish. He also points out parallel Irish and

English expressions for 'You're welcome' and suggests that this may be a question of English influence on Irish rather than vice versa.

Theo Vennemann focuses on the method of answering Yes/No-questions in (Irish) English and Insular Celtic with modal-only sentences, an unusual feature in Indo-European languages. He argues for the possibility of Hamito-Semitic substratum in Pre-Celtic, thus drawing attention to the transitivity of language contact, contact-induced changes forming chains as well as bidirectional relationships.

The third part, *Dialect in England, Wales, and Ireland*, comprises dialectological studies from regional dialects of Britain and, of course, especially Ireland. Most of these arise from the language situations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but earlier and more recent perspectives are also included. The central topics are dialect shift and variation, which are, in many articles, described against the background of socio-historical factors. The Welsh, Irish and Tyneside settings also involve language and dialect contact, which are affected, e.g. by immigration or the mode of language acquisition. The themes of methodology, substratum influence and World Englishes are revisited.

Stephen Laker's chapter concerns historical dialect phonology: the merger of /kw/, /hw/ to /χw/ and ultimately to /w/ in a number of words in Northern English dialects. Laker presents evidence from place-names and the Survey of English Dialects (SED) on the distribution of the feature, and finds that the etymology of the words in question reveals the roots of the merger.

Juhani Klemola sheds light on infinitival constructions in the Traditional Dialects of England by examining their distribution in SED tape-recordings. The findings reveal new regional variation patterns and some evidence pointing to possible Celtic substratum influence.

Heli Paulasto examines why, in spite of the relative recency of language shift in Wales, Welsh English is considered a fairly levelled variety of English. She focuses on one possible source of influence, the mode of acquisition of English, and considers its impact in regional variation patterns of two dialect features. Paulasto's data indicate that in the early twentieth century, Welsh substratum influence was strongest in areas where English was learned informally rather than through the educational system. The latter was, however, highly influential in disseminating English in most of Wales.

Joan Beal and Karen Corrigan discuss the impact of Irish vernaculars in the Northern English dialects of Tyneside and Sheffield, both of which received great numbers of Irish immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century but evolved in different directions in their dialects. The authors examine

the socio-history of Irish immigration as well as contact-induced lexical and morphosyntactic elements in the two dialects, using regionally focused corpora of spoken English.

Raymond Hickey gives a comparative overview of the English and Irish modal systems, with a look into dialectal modal patterns in Southern IrE and Ulster English. He finds that Irish substratum in this respect is unlikely, but that dialectal features have arisen in IrE through analogical extension and transported Scots grammar in the North.

In the final article, John M. Kirk and Jeffrey L. Kallen address the topic of World Englishes in relation to the study of IrE, promoting a globally as well as locally defined view of the dialect. Their investigation focuses on patterns of negation, especially those with lexical *have*. The authors utilise the freshly published ICE-Ireland, uncovering stylistically and regionally conditioned similarities and differences in the ways in which standard IrE patterns against other, 'inner circle' and 'outer circle' varieties of English.

Joensuu, July 2009
Esa Penttilä and Heli Paulasto

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PART I

THEORY AND METHODS: LANGUAGE CONTACT AND VARIATION

CHAPTER ONE

YOUR VERNACULAR ROOTS ARE SHOWING: WHERE VARIATION INTRUDES ON STANDARD, AND WHY

J.K. CHAMBERS

Linguists have generally ignored usage problems. As linguists, we are interested in what we think of as the deeper reaches of the language faculty. To us, it does not seem especially interesting if some people use *hopefully* as a sentence adverbial that means 'I hope that...' (as in *Hopefully, those bees will not sting us when we take their honey*) when other people insist that it can only be an adverb that means 'with hope' (as in *The children looked hopefully at the man handing out free balloons*). Issues like that, we believe, are better left to prescriptivists and other arbiters. It is not that usage problems are completely devoid of linguistic interest. Linguists might point out, for instance, that using *hopefully* as a sentence adverbial is relatively recent. Sociolinguists might study occurrences of *hopefully* in actual conversations and discover its progress as a sentence adverbial, perhaps even projecting from apparent-time evidence when it will likely become established in standard use. The usage itself becomes interesting not in its own right but as a change in progress.

We have seldom bothered to investigate usage with sociolinguistic depth. Unlike phonological and grammatical variation, usage variation belongs to etiquette rather than to the language faculty. Or so it seemed.

I have recently found myself deeply engaged in analyses of two usage problems because I realized that they provided evidence for the interplay of cognition and the language faculty. The usage problems are well known: the first is agreement breakdown with expletive *there* (as in *There's two ways of proceeding*), and the second is concord breakdown with compound objects of prepositions (as in *between you and I*).

The usage problems I am interested in must be stable and persistent. Unlike *hopefully*, they are stable, not changing. They persist from one generation to the next as far back as the historical record goes. They can

be "improved" by educators and other arbiters in the sense that they are used less frequently when people are pressured to avoid them, but they cannot be eliminated. This characteristic distinguishes them from usage "problems" like *ain't*, the negative verb form that means 'isn't' or 'hasn't' (as in *He ain't here* and *He ain't heard of that*, respecttively). *Ain't* was widely acceptable in colloquial speech at all social levels in the eighteenth century but then it became targeted as improper and ignorant; by the mid-twentieth century, it had successfully been eradicated from middle-class usage in all standard varieties of English.

From their stability and persistence, I infer that these usage problems are embedded in the language faculty, the distinctly human system of rules and representations that allows perception and production of an unlimited number of utterances (discussed more fully in Chambers 2005). Otherwise they would be expected to increase from minority variants to standard usage, like *hopefully*, or to be eradicated from polite speech, like *ain't*. Instead, attempts at eradicating them fail, and they hang on doggedly against all opposition. They are, in that sense, irrepressible, and thus by inference excrescences of the language faculty.

1. Two usage problems

1.1. Agreement breakdown with expletive *there*

One of the rules of standard English grammar is that verbs agree with their subjects in person and number. This rule is enacted fairly trivially most of the time because English is relatively poor in inflectional morphology. Its most conspicuous application comes in third person singular non-past verbs, which are distinguished from the rest of the paradigm by suffix *–s*, as in *She/he/it runs* contrasted to *I run/you run/we run* and *they run*. It gets a little more interesting with the copula verb, in which paradigmatically differentiated suppletive forms make the rule more relevant for keeping apart *I was/you were/she was/we were/they were*. Simple though the morphology appears to be, it is interesting to note, in passing, that nonstandard dialects are found to depart in both possible directions (Kortmann et al. 2005). West Country vernaculars among others inflect non-third persons in *I runs* and *they runs*. Rural Cumbria vernaculars and others level the copula to *was* in *you was* and *they was*. The most basilectal vernaculars thus avoid grammatical complexities by selecting invariant forms where the standard makes distinctions.

Where the standard persistently fails is when the subject NP slot is filled with expletive *there*. In the paired sentences of (1) and (2), (1a–b)

are grammatically correct but (2a–b) occur in conversations with greater frequency:

(1) a. There are a couple of doves mating on your window sill.
b. There're a couple of doves mating on your window sill.

(2) a. There is a couple of doves mating on your window sill.
b. There's a couple of doves mating on your window sill.

The obvious cause of the grammatical breakdown is *there*, a featureless place-holder that fills the subject slot because English does not permit it to be empty (by contrast to null-subject languages like Italian that permit *parlo* '[I] speak'). The logical or semantic subject, *a couple of doves*, follows the copula. If the sentences are re-cast with the logical subject in the subject-NP slot, no speaker of any standard variety of English would fail to adhere to the subject-verb agreement rule by saying (3b) instead of (3a):

(3) a. A couple of doves are mating on your window sill.
b. *A couple of doves is mating on your window sill.

The frequency of sentences like (2a–b) in which standard subject-verb agreement breaks down was not appreciated until linguists began working with corpora of real speech. Recordings of normal unmonitored conversations revealed that such sentences occurred with *is* more than half the time even among careful speakers. Such findings were disquieting to meticulous speakers. To this day, some people flatly deny that they would say such a thing even when caught in the act. Their denial, of course, reveals a great deal about their aspirations but nothing about their behaviour. The strength of their denials provides an impression of the normative power of the subject-verb agreement rule.

1.2. Concord breakdown with compound objects of prepositions

Standard English grammar includes a rule stating that objects occur in the accusative case. As expected, the relative paucity of inflectional morphology in English means that the rule is seldom invoked. Full NPs, for instance, are not differentiated by case marking, and as a result an NP like *the fluffy dog* has the same form in *The fluffy dog saw me* and *I saw the fluffy dog*. Pronouns like *I/me* in these sentences are case-marked, however, and thus pose a potential problem for the rule. Even here, the

problem is highly localized because three of the eight English pronouns are undifferentiated (*you* in both singular and plural and *it*). Not surprisingly, the rule applies with categorical efficiency in nearly all contexts, whether the accusative is marking object position in clauses (4) or phrases (5):

(4) The fluffy dog [bit [him]].
(5) The fluffy dog barked [at [him]].

Natural-speech corpora never include violations of the rule in these contexts (**The fluffy dog bit he, *The dog barked at he*), and it is difficult to imagine such sentences even as momentary slips of the tongue.

The context where accusative non-concord sometimes occurs is more specifically defined. It is in conjoined pronouns that are objects of prepositions, which take the standard form (6a) but are sometimes heard as nonstandard (6b):

(6) a. The fluffy dog barked at him and me.
b. The fluffy dog barked at him and I.

Usage surveys almost exclusively test speakers with the preposition *between* because it requires plural objects (*between meals* but not **between meal*) and plural objects can be conjoined (*between breakfast and dinner* but not **between breakfast*). The usage quandary arises in judgements of "correct" usage in pairs of sentences like these:

(7) a. Mary is sitting between John and I.
b. Mary is sitting between John and me.

Familiar sociolinguistic correlates apply: well-educated speakers are more likely to use (7b), the "correct" variant, than less educated, and women more likely than men, but no group manages to get it right all the time and the failure rates remain about the same from one generation to the next.

The cause of the problem is evidently the occurrence of the pronoun in a conjunct, and in fact its context is very specific. It must not only occur in a conjunct but it must occur as the second (or later) element in that conjunct. The concord rule never fails with first elements in the conjunct, so that (in the terms we used above) phrases like (8a) are so automatic that it is hard to imagine getting it wrong as in (8b), even as a momentary slip of the tongue:

(8) a. This argument is between [him and John]
b. This argument is between [*he and John]

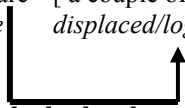
So the breakdown is confined to the second pronoun (or later) in conjoined objects of a preposition.

2. Cognition and grammar

I have suggested that these two usage problems arise because of lexical elements—expletive *there* in the first instance, and conjoined object pronouns in the second. Of course it is not literally the lexical elements but rather their structural configuration that is at the heart of the problem. What these usage problems represent are instances where the grammatical rules come into conflict with human processing capabilities. The rules themselves—verbs agree with their subjects in number, objects take the accusative form—are easily applied and automatic in nearly all instances. The ones where they prove recalcitrant—hard to apply consistently, and in fact persistently misapplied by some portion of well-intentioned users—go deeper and may provide a glimpse of the workings of the language faculty.

Processing subject-verb agreement with expletive *there* requires a look-ahead mechanism. The logical subject, and the constituent with which the verb must agree, is the one that would fill the subject slot if the expletive were not in it. It is displaced, obviously, to the position following the verb. These structural relationships are represented in (9):

(9) There are [a couple of doves] mating on your window sill.
expletive *displaced/logical subject*



look-ahead mechanism

In the temporal act of speaking, expletives uniquely require speakers to anticipate the number of the displaced subject NP in order to encode its number in the verb. That NP follows it in the linear sequence of the utterance.

The failure to get the agreement right with expletives suggests that look-ahead mechanisms tax human processing capabilities. Elsewhere I have shown that look-ahead mechanisms cause similar problems in all languages where they occur (Chambers 2009a), such as verb-first languages (VSO) and languages with object-agreement. Utterances in

which the logical subject is displaced even further by intervening adverbials, as in (10), are more likely to occur without agreement:

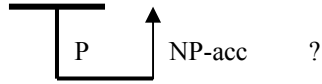
(10) a. In the normal course of events there's obviously at least six factors to take into account.
b. There's obviously, in the normal course of events, at least six factors to take into account.

Though the cognitive challenge of looking ahead does not seem, a priori, particularly difficult, in the act of speaking it is just one of many processes going on. It is often one too many, apparently.

The failure to mark accusative concord in expressions like *between you and I* also involves distance between constituents. As we saw, speakers of standard varieties never get the case wrong when the pronoun immediately follows the preposition. Case failure is something that happens with conjoined pronouns and then, crucially, only with the second conjunct. The schematic diagrams in (11) illustrate the difference between prescribed scope and its failure:

(11) a. It is a secret [[between] [[Mary] and [me]].

b. It is a secret [[between] [[Mary] and [I]].



Grammars for languages other than English apparently recognize the processing problem caused by concord in complex objects, as in (11a) above. Spanish and Arabic, for instance, limit agreement to the left conjunct only, that is, the contiguous conjunct, in VS structures (Chambers 2009a, 25). These grammars thus limit the scope of look-ahead mechanisms in the grammatical system, effectively avoiding usage problems that would be caused by over-extending cognitive processes.

3. Cognitive limits in the two usage problems

These two cases are similar because they are instances of grammatical rules that in very specific structural configurations tax the cognitive abilities of speakers. The processing problems sometimes cause speakers to construct sentences deemed to be ungrammatical. Except for these specific structures, the grammatical rules are otherwise innocuous, and not at all problematic. They are in fact typical of agreement and concord rules that show up in numerous standard grammars for many languages.

Presumably it is the relative rarity of the particular structural configurations that leads to this odd situation. The grammar prescribes that verbs agree with subjects in number and that objects occur with accusative marking. These rules apply automatically in countless utterances in all the standard varieties. They seldom or never enter the consciousness of speakers. To this there are some well-known exceptions. Adults learning English as a second language are sometimes taught the rules and strive to apply them consciously as they speak. And people who have been made self-conscious by being corrected for their grammatical failings sometimes make the effort of mastering the grammatical niceties.

One of the aids for those who feel the need for aid is the usage guide. The usage problems we have been discussing will be prominent in any useful guide. *The Oxford Guide to Canadian English Usage*, for instance, includes these entries (Fee and McAlpine 2007, 577, 78):

> **there is, there are** *There is* or *there's* before a plural, as in 'There's more glasses somewhere,' is very informal. In writing, *there are* is required before a plural noun....
>
> **between you and me** *Between you and me* is correct, though *between you and I* is often heard. *I* is the subject form of the first-person pronoun; *me* is the object form. After a preposition (*between, about, after*, etc.), it is the object form that is required....

These entries are somewhat unusual because they involve grammar. Most entries in usage guides are concerned with sorting out lexical subtleties (distinguishing *hyper-, hypo-, hyper*, for instance, or *ravage, ravish*), spelling variants (*omelette, omelet*) or idioms (*Scylla and Charybdis*, or *purple prose, blue language, yellow journalism*).

Notwithstanding their general similarities, the processing difficulties posed by the two usage problems are not the same. The expletive case requires a look-ahead mechanism. Look-ahead mechanisms pose problems that are readily understandable because speakers must anticipate

grammatical properties from constituents that have not yet been uttered. Look-ahead mechanisms entail coding information in the syntax—in this instance, number of the logical subject—before that information is explicit or overt. Although that information is undoubtedly available in short-term memory, retrieving it in a timely way during the speech act proves challenging.

The other usage problem, marking case appropriately on the second pronoun in the conjoined object of a preposition, does not require looking ahead. What it involves is coding accusative marking on the entire constituent that is in the scope of the preposition. The general concord rule is deeply entrenched in the grammars of standard English speakers. For that reason, accusative marking, as we have noticed more than once, is automatic and invariant on constituents that immediately follow the preposition. Other things being equal, one might expect that sustaining the concord rule for the second conjunct would not greatly tax short-term memory when it is already established on the preceding constituent. However, it is not automatic, and variation occurs. The variation is not stylistic or dialectal but grammatical. The fact that sustaining the concord rule beyond the most proximate object poses difficulties for many speakers suggests that scope of the preposition must be projected from the head, that is, from the preposition itself, independently on each of the conjuncts in its scope. This seems cognitively inefficient but it provides an explanation for utterances like *between him and I*, in which case marking is accusative on the first conjunct but not on the second, and also *between him and me*, where it is accusative on both, but non-occurrences of **between he and I*, where it is accusative on neither.

Both usage problems implicate short-term memory. Above all, they show that memory limitations impinge upon grammatical form, and override rule constraints. Usage problems like these also hint at the fragility of linguistic processing. In the multiple tasks that come into play when people speak, it seems that getting the grammar exactly right gets low priority compared to conveying the right message, choosing the right words, expressing the appropriate tone and all the other tasks that must get accomplished in milliseconds.

4. Interdependence of cognition and grammar

One of the tenets of the Chomskyan conception of the language faculty is that grammar is modular. It exists autonomously in the mind. Its operating principles apply to constituents that are hierarchical (in our discussions above, subject NP, prepositional phrases and conjoined

pronouns, among others). It employs analytic principles that are grammar-specific (subjacency, null-subject parameter, and countless others, many of them less plausible, that have been proposed by sometimes overzealous syntacticians).

This conception must be essentially correct (details aside, which are hypothetical and thus subject to continuous empirical refinements). The autonomy of the grammatical system is guaranteed by the rapidity of its development in infants and the intricacy of constraints that are underspecified by external stimuli.

However, my analysis of these two usage problems suggests that the autonomy of the grammatical system is not absolute. It can be disrupted by cognitive limitations when it runs afoul of them.

In agreement marking with post-verbal subjects, and generally in many kinds of grammatical structures that require look-ahead processing (as discussed in Chambers 2009a) the need to encode grammatical information that is not yet explicit in the utterance can lead to ungrammaticality in sentence production. To produce a grammatical sentence, the constituent must be anticipated. Sometimes speakers fail to anticipate it. By contrast, when the subject is pre-verbal, the grammatical information is explicit and already registered in short-term memory. In these circumstances, speakers never fail to apply the agreement rule. Explicitness and memory thus impinge on grammatical form. But explicitness and memory are cognitive adjuncts that apply in all kinds of tasks.

In accusative marking on non-contiguous pronouns, which sometimes poses too great a problem for speakers, memory limitations again seem to override grammatical constraints. But in this case, more than that seems to be at stake. Speakers apparently lose track of hierarchical structures, failing to recognize that the second conjunct is part of the same constituent as the first one. Accusative marking, which is infallible on the first conjunct, is abandoned on the second. Here, speakers are behaving as if production is linear rather than hierarchical. Production is proceeding as if the temporal sequence determined grammatical marking rather than constituent structures.

In defence of the strong version of the language faculty, which would maintain that grammar is impervious to non-linguistic cognitive factors, someone might cite Chomsky's (1965, 3) classic definition, which states that "[l]inguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener... who... is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors". Inclusion of "memory limitations" in this list makes it particularly

inviting as a counter-argument. But it seems clear that Chomsky is not talking here about memory limitations of the kind that are implicated in the agreement and concord breakdowns that I have been discussing. Rather, he seems to mean the memory limitations that might lead a speaker to stop and say, "Now where was I? Oh yes...." or something similar. Certainly that is in line with the other "grammatically irrelevant conditions" he lists, which are the sort of things that lead to slips of the tongue, tip-of-the-tongue ("What's the word I want?"), spoonerisms, infelicities, digressions, interruptions and other common performance phenomena.

The memory limitations I have been looking at seem to belong to a different order altogether. Rather than excrescences on the grammar, they interact with the grammar. Hence they create "ungrammaticality" in the strictest sense. The grammar includes two well-formed rules that under ordinary circumstances do not tolerate exceptions or variants. Sometimes, however, under fairly rarified and very well-defined structural conditions speakers of the language—native speakers, even meticulous ones—get them wrong. When they do, they produce ungrammatical sentences—that is, sentences that violate the grammar. As I have said, and it bears repeating, these sentences are not stylistic variants or dialect variants. They are ungrammatical variants. They impinge upon the grammar itself.

5. Grammatical cognition and vernacular roots

Finally, I want to explicate the path that has led me fairly deeply (or perhaps just obsessively) into these matters of language processing and cognition. One aspect of the theory of vernacular roots is the search for explanatory principles that might underlie the distinction between primitive and learned features. The theory starts with the common observation that dialects become more complex as they become more standard. Dialects form a continuum, a hierarchical chain of grammatical systems similar to creole continua ranging from basilectal to acrolectal. Impressionistically, basilectal grammars are simpler than acrolectal grammars; similarly, child grammars are simpler than adult grammars, and traditional enclave grammars are simpler than middle-class urban grammars. In attempting to come to grips with an explicit or non-impressionistic or workable definition of "simpler" in this sense I began looking at what might be called grammatical build-up and that led me inevitably to studying grammatical breakdown.

Creole continua are a microcosm of these matters, and they make a concrete illustration with the advantage of familiarity. The concept of the