

Cristina Suárez-Gómez 2006: *Relativization in Early English (950-1250): The Position of Relative Clauses*. Bern: Peter Lang. (Series: Linguistic Insights. Studies in Language and Communication). 149 pp. ISBN 3-03911-203-1

M^a Ángeles Ruiz Moneva
Universidad de Zaragoza
mruiz@unizar.es

Generally speaking, the study of the historical evolution of the English language has tended to focus upon the fields of morphology and phonology. As for syntax, reference may be made to the existence of highly acknowledged histories of English devoted to this level of linguistic analysis – most notably Rydén (1979), Traugott (1972) or Visser (1984) – as well as monographic editions of international conferences such as Gotti (1993) and the chapters devoted to this field in the volumes of *The Cambridge History of the English Language* (Hogg 1992). Likewise, some of the classic works devoted to a comprehensive account of the history of the English language also contained monographic chapters or sections on the evolution of syntax, such as Strang (1970), which covered all the fields both of the internal history of the language and also the social background. The work under consideration, *Relativization in Early English (950-1250): The Position of Relative Clauses*, may be said to fill an existing gap, in so far as it offers the scholar a complete and rigorous analysis of the evolution of relative clauses during the Old and Middle periods of the English language.

The treatment given to relative clauses in some of the most representative existing manuals of Old and Middle English has been succinct. Thus, in the chapter that approaches 'Syntax' in the Volume of *The Cambridge History of the English Language* devoted to the Old English period, Traugott (1992) focuses on the most significant differences between these constructions in Old and Present-Day English, respectively. Some of these concern the absence of a specific relativizer in Old English, or the inadequate application of the Modern English classification into restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses to the Old English adjectival constructions. The approach to the structures of relative clauses during Middle English has tended to concentrate on aspects such as the progressive simplification of the paradigms inherited from Old English, or also the introduction of the interrogative pronouns as relativizers, particularly from the fourteenth century onwards. The contrasts between the relevant features of relative pronouns in the Middle and Modern English periods, respectively, which concern aspects such as *animacy* and *information*, have also been accounted for by authors such as Fischer (1992).

Concretely, the work under analysis dwells upon the way in which the position of relative clauses with respect to the main clause has evolved throughout the history of the English language, in particular, during the periods corresponding to Late Old English and Middle English. Traditionally, under the so-called *parataxis hypothesis*, it has been generally maintained that relative clauses have evolved from being extraposed structures adjoined to the main clause, towards being positionally embedded structures

within the main clause. This change would be contextualized in the general evolution that accounts for hypotaxis – that is, the relation holding in constructions formed by main and subordinate clauses – as a subsequent development to parataxis as the relation holding between independent clauses. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that the parataxis hypothesis has enjoyed remarkable popularity amongst scholars: to provide just one illustrative instance, this view can be found in the recently published one-volume *A History of the English Language*, edited by Richard Hogg and David Denison (2006), which is an updated synthesis of the highly reputed *The Cambridge History of the English Language* (Blake 1992). Thus, in the former, Fischer and Van der Wurff note: "Relative clauses may have had their origin in paratactic clauses" (2006: 127). The change just described would then have gradually taken place in the time span considered in the book under review. Suárez-Gómez also sets out to revise the hypothesis according to which the process of incorporation undergone by relative clauses and their corresponding close attachment to the main clause was produced through an intermediate stage of topicalization. Within this process, the relative clause must have been positioned following the main clause, while a cataphoric reference anticipated it.

So as to fulfil the above commented purposes, the work is structured into five main chapters, namely an Introduction (Chapter One), three major chapters (Chapters Two to Four), and a Conclusion (Chapter Five). In addition, an Appendix contains a list of tables detailing the schema used to codify the data employed in the analysis, and, finally, the references employed in the study are detailed. Both the breadth and comprehensiveness of the material consulted by the author in the writing of the work must be emphasized, for it includes most of the relevant publications in the field of relative clauses during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to date.

The first chapter, 'Introduction and Methodology', is a preliminary section devoted to background and methodological questions. It presents, therefore, an exhaustive and rigorous synthesis of the main trends developed with regard to the study of relative clauses, both synchronically and diachronically. These have come from various theoretical standpoints, most importantly formal, typological and variational. In this chapter, the author also explains the *methodology* adopted in the analysis, which is wholly consistent with her thesis: namely to explore the different positions occupied by the relative clause with respect to the main clause, with a view to accounting for the reasons for such variation. The author makes a distinction within the different kinds of relative clauses, depending on whether they have raised the interest of scholars, or have been neglected. Consequently, the study has focused upon those relative clauses which refer back to a nominal antecedent introduced by a relativizer, which is derived from the application of pronominal, invariable or gap relativization strategies. The reasons for such an analysis rest upon the author's hypothesis that the present-day classification of relative clauses into restrictive and non-restrictive types does not seem to be formally supported in Early English. Accordingly, an analysis of structure in terms of the relativizer used has been applied, as a more consistent and suitable approach.

It must justly be remarked that the methodology is subservient to one of the main merits of the study, namely to test the above-mentioned hypotheses regarding relative clauses in the period concerned, on the basis of the existing textual evidence, as

illustrated by representative corpora, of the ways in which different constructions were actually used in the different periods under consideration (Rydén 1979). The analysis focuses upon the reasons why the relative clause came to be embedded into the main clause, and also the factors involved in such a process.

Chapter Two, 'Relative Clauses in Early English', offers a revision of the theoretical and grammatical *background* within which the study is placed. In this sense, to begin with, both the definition of the relative clause and its conventional classification into restrictive and non-restrictive respectively are examined, by focusing upon the ways that the above said classification can be applied to the periods under study. It also approaches the status of the *relativizer* and in this respect highlights the fact that, in contrast to Present-Day English, both Old and Middle English tend to use the same relativizer to introduce both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses. The chapter concludes by dealing with the internal structure of the relative clause and the syntactic functions that it usually performs. The structure of the relative clause is covered from a threefold perspective: first, according to the relativizer; second, according to the type of relative clause, whether restrictive or non-restrictive; and third, depending on the position of the relative clause, according to which criterion it may be embedded, extraposed or left-dislocated.

Chapter Three, 'Origin and Development of Complex Clauses: The Case of Relative Clauses in English', analyzes relative clauses in early English, from a theoretical perspective, within the wider framework of complex clauses as a whole. The author revises the existent bibliography critically, with a view to clarifying the status of relative clauses in early English and also their origin. Three main approaches are examined, based on traditional and formal views, typological studies and grammaticalization studies, respectively. The Parataxis Hypothesis, named above, would stand for the prototypical explanation of relative clauses within *traditional* standpoints. *Formal* approaches, however, such as Rynell (1952), argued that such a hypothesis was not tenable, since both hypotactic and paratactic constructions are well documented since the earliest preserved texts. The choice between those would mainly be stylistic. *Typological approaches* – based on the works of authors such as Van Valin (1984), Foley and Van Valin (1984) or Van Valin and LaPolla (1997) – started to regard coordination and subordination as a gradual relationship. Thus, within a continuum, they also distinguish a third possibility, i.e. *cosubordination*, in between the former two, characterized by the existence of dependence and the absence of embedding. Finally, those approaches based on *grammaticalization*, most importantly Hopper and Traugott (2003), have regarded clause linkage as intra-clausal grammaticalization. The analysis of all these standpoints is characterized by its balanced position, relying as it does upon evidence. In order to test the main hypotheses, as well as these existing theories, the study is based on a textual sample chosen from *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts: Diachronic and Dialectal*. The sample so selected for the study consists of 518 examples, taken from nineteen texts, of which twelve correspond to Late Old English and the remaining seven texts pertain to Early Middle English.

Chapter Four, 'Results and Analysis', deals with the core analysis carried out in the work, namely the study of the diachronic evolution of relative clauses as far as their position in the sentence is concerned, both in Old and in Middle English. This is done

with a view to demonstrating whether relative clauses evolved during these two periods from being extraposed to embedded constructions, with left-dislocated constructions as a middle stage between the two. This hypothesis is mainly based on O'Neil's (1976) study on relative clauses, which had referred to several reasons that may account for this change, such as the increase in literacy amongst the Germanic people, perceptual factors or a process of topicalization of the noun phrase that eventually would have affected relative clauses. The main purpose of the chapter, therefore, and more generally of the work itself, is to see which hypotheses on the origin of relative clauses can be tenable and sustained on the basis of existing *corpora*. In addition, in Chapter Four, the results and findings obtained in the analysis are also provided. The analysis has covered the following areas: first, the time period concerned; second, the relativizer employed to introduce the corresponding relative clause; third, the type of relative clause; fourth, the syntactic function of the antecedent; fifth, the length of the relative clause; sixth, text type; seventh, dialectal variation. All these factors are then contrasted in a multivariate analysis. The results and findings of the work provide an in-depth description of the distribution of the existing relativization strategies in Late Old English and Early Middle English. They also account for the reasons why some relativizers are preferred in certain contexts.

Finally, Chapter Five is devoted to synthesizing the conclusions of the study. The work done confirms the initial hypothesis, namely that relative clauses became progressively integrated and related to the main clause throughout the history of the English language. The study, therefore, may be said to provide a test and revision of the classical hypotheses regarding the development of relative clauses in the period considered, through the evidence provided by actual texts taken from The Helsinki Corpus and also through the implementation of contemporary influential theories such as typological and grammaticalization studies.

The application of corpora together with theoretical background has enabled the author to offer a realistic analysis and conclusions based on sound evidence, which have led to a systematic account of the use of relativizers in the time span under study. Thus, some of the most valuable contributions of the work have to do with the explanation of the role taken by certain contextual factors in the selection of the relativizer used, such as stylistic choices, the genre of the text or its date. These have moreover been contrasted across different texts corresponding to the time span considered, in this way more accurately pinning down the evolution undergone by the relative clause in consonance with the factors analyzed in the corpus. The study confirms that a variety of factors has to be taken into account to trace and explain the evolution of the constructions analyzed. The most interesting conclusions of the study point to the fact that to account for the evolution of relative clauses in the time span considered involves taking into consideration not only the time factor, as previous studies such as O'Neil (1976) had done, but also other factors referred to above that are both of an intralinguistic and also an extratextual nature.

In her analysis, the author highlights the lack of agreement among grammarians as to what should be regarded as a relative clause. The point is relevant for the study, in so far as the author shows how certain structures of Old and Middle English do not fit within contemporary definitions of relative clauses. The connection between relative

clauses and subordination is a case in point, which leads the author to search for other universal and necessary criteria that would identify a relative clause as such. Other aspects that show significant differences between Modern English and the preceding periods have to do with the classification into restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses and the nexus used to introduce them.

On the whole, the work makes a truly remarkable contribution to the study of relative clauses in the period considered in the analysis. The study reflects the importance of taking into account not only intralinguistic aspects but also extralinguistic factors which are bound to account for the ways in which relative clauses are used. This places the work within the most influential and broadly held approaches of contemporary research in linguistics, not only diachronic but also synchronic. Thus, the study is significant, as it shows how the evolution undergone by relative clauses throughout history is not exclusively the result of the diachronic evolution of complex structures. These are the aspects that make Suárez-Gómez correct the traditional approach to relative clauses as based upon the parataxis hypothesis. The work is noteworthy for its scientific rigor, which does not prevent the author from making the exposition of the ideas and concepts as clear as possible. The accurateness and clarity in the use of terminology are also worth emphasizing. All these features make the work accessible for any scholar who may be interested in English diachronic linguistics, for both didactic and research purposes. The analysis carried out by the author shows a thorough knowledge of the subject, as does her exploration and revision of the relevant bibliography, which is always adequately mastered to sustain the author's views. In particular, such valuable qualities apply to the discussion of those cases which may admit more than one syntactic interpretation of the forms concerned. All in all, therefore, scholars currently working in the field of diachronic linguistics will welcome the work here being reviewed.

Works Cited

- Blake, Norman F., ed. 1992: *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Vol. II: 1066-1476*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Fischer, Olga 1992: 'Syntax'. Norman F. Blake, ed. *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Volume II: 1066-1476*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 207-60.
- and Wim van der Wurff 2006: 'Syntax'. Richard M. Hogg and David Denison, eds. *A History of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 109-98.
- Foley, William A. and Robert D. Van Valin 1984: *Functional Syntax and Universal Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Gotti, Maurizio, ed. 1993: *English Diachronic Syntax. Proceedings of the Vth National Congress of History of the English Language*. Milan: Guerini.
- Hogg, Richard M., ed. 1992: *The Cambridge History of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- and David Denison, eds. 2006: *A History of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Hopper, Paul and Elizabeth C. Traugott 2003 (1993): *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- O'Neil, Wayne 1976: 'Clause Adjunction in Old English'. *General Linguistics* 17: 199-211.

- Rydén, Mats 1979: *An Introduction to the Historical Study of English Syntax*. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International.
- Rynell, Alarik 1952: *Parataxis and Hypotaxis as a Criterion of Syntax and Style (especially in Old English Poetry)*. Lund: G.W.K. Gleerup.
- Strang, Barbara 1970: *A History of English*. London: Methuen.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs 1972: *A History of English Syntax*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- 1992: 'Syntax'. Richard M. Hogg, ed. *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Vol I: The Beginnings to 1066*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 168-289.
- Van Valin, Robert D. 1984: 'A Typology of Syntactic Relations in Clause Linkage'. *Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*. 542-58.
- and LaPolla 1997: *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Visser, F.Th. 1984 (1963): *An Historical Syntax of the English Language. Vols. I-IV*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Received 2 November 2007

Accepted 5 May 2008