

# LWPLP

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## Editorial Preface

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Leeds Working Papers in Linguistics and Phonetics (*LWPLP*) is a peer-reviewed journal which publishes reports on research in linguistics, language studies, phonetics, and translation studies by staff and students at the University of Leeds. First published in 1983, the journal was revived in 1998 by Paul Foulkes (now at the University of York) and Diane Nelson. Since then, it has published research papers by staff and postgraduate students in Linguistics and Phonetics, The School of Modern Languages and Cultures, and also from outside of the University of Leeds. Since 2006, the journal has been run entirely online.

In January 2013, *LWPLP* became a student-run publication, with an editorial board of postgraduate students representing the Department of Linguistics and Phonetics, the Centre for Translation Studies, and the School of English. In line with this, the scope of the research published in the journal has expanded from an earlier focus on linguistics and phonetics to include any topic in language, linguistics and translation.

Thus, this 18th volume of *LWPLP* marks both the 30th anniversary of the journal and a new beginning. The editors hope that the broad range and excellent quality of the articles and interviews collected here will continue to be a hallmark of the journal, and that the newly revised format and digital presentation will make *LWPLP* more useful and enjoyable to read and to use. Surely the highest aim for any academic journal is that it aid learning and understanding: we have certainly learned a lot from putting together our first volume; we hope that our submitting authors have, too—and that our readers will now gain something themselves.

The research presented in this volume covers medieval language contact (Hall), Arabic phonology (Heselwood and Watson), 19th century Bible translation (Nickel), critical discourse/corpus linguistic analysis (Sanigar) and Arabic articulatory phonetics (Shitaw). Furthermore, there are interviews pertaining to translation (Di Bari) and interpreting studies (Xu).

The editors would like to thank Professor Jeremy Munday and Doctor Barry Heselwood for their invaluable help in getting this new incarnation of

*LWPLP* running. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the reviewers, who have kindly offered their time and expertise in order to keep this journal academically rigorous and relevant. Finally, many thanks to all those who contributed research and interviews.

# Jón the Fleming: Low German in thirteenth-century Norway and fourteenth-century Iceland

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## Abstract

Low German influence is one of the most prominent characteristics of Old Norse in the later medieval period, but the processes whereby this took place are little evidenced. However, *Laurentius saga*, Einarr Hafliðason's fourteenth-century Icelandic biography of Bishop Laurentius Kálfsson, provides anecdotal evidence for this that has been overlooked by researchers. The anecdotes concern the linguistic (mis)adventures of a Low German-speaker in thirteenth-century Norway—the otherwise unknown Jón flæmingi (Johannes the Fleming)—and, perhaps uniquely in medieval Scandinavian texts, they also provide a representation of L2 Norse. Problematic and brief though this source is, it affords us valuable perspectives both on fourteenth-century Icelandic metalinguistic discourses and on the processes whereby Low German influence took place in thirteenth- to fourteenth-century Norse. Contrary to some recent assumptions, *Laurentius saga* suggests that Low German and Old Norse were not seen as mutually intelligible; it provides some support for the idea that Low German influence was responsible not only for loan words into Old Norse, but also for morphological levelling; and emphasises that in seeking vectors of Low German influence on Old Norse we should look not only to Hanseatic traders, but also to the Church.

## 1 Introduction

Perhaps the most dramatic changes that took place in the North Germanic languages during the Middle Ages were massive Low German influence on the lexicon (Simensen, 2002–5) and, in the Continental varieties, the profound reduction of morphological complexity (Mørck, 2002–5).<sup>1</sup> However,

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<sup>1</sup>I use the term *Low German* here inclusively, to denote all the West Germanic varieties spoken along the North Sea and Baltic coasts, from Flanders in the West to the eastern Baltic. Like-

the sociolinguistic processes by which these changes took place are little evidenced (see for surveys Braunmüller, 2002–5a, 2002–5b; Nicholas, 2009: 180–98; Elmevik and Jahr 2012a). For the most part, their outcomes appear in the written record long after the developments themselves must have begun, while the written record itself offers only an indirect witness to the oral communication which must, then as now, have been the dominant engine of language-change (Jahr, 1999 [1995]: 119–22, 129). It is widely suspected that Old Norse lexical and morphological change are linked: that the Low German influence clearly attested in the lexicon is also part of the explanation for the reduction in morphological complexity. It is also assumed, in turn, that the profundity of the Low German influence on Old Norse was facilitated by the close family resemblance between the two languages: Braunmüller in particular has argued that Old Norse and Low German were for practical (and particularly mercantile) purposes mutually intelligible in speech as well as in writing, and that the massive influence of Low German on Old Norse arose in a context of ‘receptive bilingualism/semicomcommunication ... between speakers of these genetically closely related languages’, ‘predominantly in face-to-face situations’, arguing that we should really be thinking in terms of dialect contact rather than language contact (2002–5b: 1231).

This consensus is fragile, however. Elmevik and Jahr recently surveyed a century or so of historiography which assumed that there must have been a ‘mixed language’ or pidgin deriving from Low German and Old Norse in the Hanseatic period, finding that these assumptions are ‘all unfounded’ (2012b: 13). Nor is this the only such shibboleth to have come under fire recently: the long-standing assumption that the Low German which later medieval Scandinavians encountered was a homogeneous *Lübecker Norm* has also been dismantled (Mähl, 2012: 118). However, Elmevik and Jahr concluded their article with the declaration that ‘the most probable reason for the lack of such a pidgin-like mixed Scandinavian–German idiom is that, at the time, Scandinavian and Low German were ... mutually intelligible’

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wise, I use (*Old*) Norse to denote all the North Germanic varieties, using (*Old*) West Norse to specify the closely related Norwegian and Icelandic varieties. The terms *language* and *dialect* are generally fraught, and as Braunmüller has emphasised (2007: 27–29; 2013), potentially anachronistic for a pre-national period. I use both loosely in this study, viewing both ‘Old Norse’ and ‘Low German’ as modern scholarly abstractions from a complex array of linguistic varieties. I argue, however, that we can meaningfully understand the different varieties denoted by these terms as both genetically very similar and to a large extent mutually incomprehensible.

(2012b: 14) when the primary-source evidence for this idea is no stronger than for the ‘mixed language’ idea. The degree of mutual intelligibility between Old Norse and Old Low German is uncertain—particularly for the period before the fifteenth century, and particularly regarding spoken rather than written communication—making it hard to guess at the precise sociolinguistic contexts in which Low German influence first took place on Old Norse. Accordingly, some recent commentators seem to prefer to conceptualise German-Norse language contact firmly in terms of bilingualism rather than ‘receptive bilingualism’ (the ability of a speaker to understand a variety but not to produce it) or dialect contact (e.g. Rambø, 2012; Zeevaert, 2012).

This debate should also be connected with wider discussions of Norse linguistic identity in earlier periods (cf. Leonard, 2012) and the vexed question of how readily Old Norse- and Old English-speakers could converse during the Viking Age (cf. Townend, 2002). The degree of mutual intelligibility between Old Norse and Old English is basically unknown, but the fact that scholars dispute it should encourage caution in assuming that other medieval North and West Germanic dialects were mutually comprehensible. Morphological changes in Old Norse and its later varieties are typologically consistent with long-term developments across most Germanic varieties, so are hard to connect with German influence specifically or even, necessarily, with language contact of any sort (Perridon, 2003; cf. Trudgill, 2012; Zeevaert, 2012)—a problem that has likewise dogged efforts to explain morphological simplification in medieval English as a result of language-contact with Celtic, Norse, and/or Romance languages (see Hall, 2011: 220).

A helpful step in the debate on the roles of language-contact in language-change has recently been taken by Peter Trudgill, who (building on Jahr, 1999 [1995]) has argued in a comparative context that the most plausible mechanism for morphological simplification in Old Norse is that adult Low German-speakers—speakers past the critical age-threshold for child language-acquisition—learned Old Norse, introducing and promoting the kinds of non-language-specific morphological simplifications characteristic of adult language-acquisition. In this interpretation, the prestige of Low German-speakers in Scandinavian society then led native speakers to adopt the distinctive features of Low German-speakers’ L2 Old Norse, which thus spread through the language (Trudgill, 2010: esp. 306–9; cf. Lupyán and Dale, 2010). This invites a slightly different understanding of the sociolinguistic situation in medieval Scandinavia than the receptive bilingualism/mutual

intelligibility model: it encourages rather a reading in which, at least in the crucial earlier periods, we are dealing with contact between mutually incomprehensible languages, in which German-speakers had to learn Old Norse. This situation would be typologically more similar to the contact between English and French in medieval England than to the ‘receptive bilingualism’ scenario.

A further assumption which characterises almost all work on Low German influence on Old Norse is that the vector of linguistic contact was Scandinavian trade with the Hanseatic League and its precursors. There is no reason to doubt that this was one major vector of contact, especially in the later Middle Ages, where we have strong evidence to support this. But that should not lead us to exclude other possibilities, particularly earlier on. Aristocratic and courtly connections are a possible vector: in a Norwegian context, *Piðreks saga af Bern*, a massive compilation of heroic narratives apparently largely translated from lost Low German poetry, probably attests to an enthusiasm in the court of Hákon IV (r. 1217–63) not only for France but also for the German-speaking world as a model for Norway’s Europeanisation (Haymes, 1988: xx–xxi; cf. Murray 2004 on Denmark). Indeed, one of the few figures *Laurentius saga* mentions in the Norwegian royal court is a Fleming noted for his skill in fireworks (B ch. 10; ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1998: 237–38). But the strongest alternative possibility would be the Church, medieval Europe’s pre-eminent transnational organisation. It is well known but little considered that earlier medieval Old Saxon/Low German loan-words into Old Norse include a large tranche of ecclesiastical terminology (e.g. Veturliði Óskarsson 2003: 146–53). The Scandinavian Church was part of the archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen until 1104, with Norway gaining its own archbishop, based in Niðarós (now Trondheim), only in 1151. The proportion of German ecclesiastical personnel in the medieval Scandinavian church is unknown, but links with the Low German-speaking world must have been deep, and could have been influential long into the thirteenth century. Zeevaert has recently argued that some of the influence on Old Swedish ascribed to Low German can instead be seen as earlier Latin literary influence (2012: 184–86); while this de-emphasises the role of Low German *per se*, it does emphasise to potential power of the Church to promote linguistic change. The disinterest in the Church as a possible vector of Low German influence on Old Norse is a striking blind-spot in past research.



Bringing evidence to bear on the issues of mutual intelligibility and the sociolinguistic contexts for language contact would be helpful. Braunnüller has commented that in medieval texts, ‘generally, hardly any comments are to be found concerned with questions of problems of multilingual communities’ (2002–5b, 1228). Hopefully, the rising wave of new work on administrative literacy in medieval Scandinavia will start to uncover new perspectives on multilingualism in our medieval material (for major recent contributions see Veturliði Óskarsson 2003; Nedkvitne 2004; Hagland 2005; Heikkilä 2010; Ranković, Melve, and Mundal 2010). But researchers have so far overlooked a valuable, if brief, anecdotal source for the relations between Low German- and Old Norse-speakers in thirteenth- to fourteenth-century Scandinavia. Problematic though anecdotal evidence for multilingualism is (cf. Adams 2002: 9–14), it can afford insights which the language of written texts itself cannot. Moreover, the source makes an unusual effort to represent in direct speech the Old Norse of an L2 speaker. The source is *Laurentius saga*, a biography of Laurentius Kálfsson (1267–1331), bishop of Iceland’s northern diocese of Hólar 1324–31. The biography is a richly anecdotal account of Laurentius’s life, almost certainly composed by Laurentius’s pupil and subsequently colleague Einarr Hafliðason (1307–93) in the third quarter of the fourteenth century (Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, 1998: lxiv–lxxv; Sigurdson 2011: 47–52). It survives primarily in sixteenth-century copies of two versions: A (in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, AM 406 a I 4to, which seems generally the more conservative copy) and B (in AM 180 b fol, which seems the more innovative, and to have been shortened). Both manuscripts are defective, however, and most of the material discussed in this article is found only in B or a 1640 copy of B, with gaps filled from A, AM 404 4to, made when the source manuscripts were more complete. The saga shows a profound interest in language and literacy throughout. This interest is focused on Latin, but Low German makes an appearance during Laurentius’s time working at the archiepiscopal seat of Niðarós (now Trondheim) in Norway in the 1290s, where he meets one Jón flæmingi, or Johannes the Fleming (a man known only from the saga). The relationship between the two visitors to Niðarós forms the basis of a couple of striking anecdotes about language which have received almost no comment in previous scholarship.

As always with Icelandic sagas, the text’s source-value is problematic: *inter alia*, it is hard to decide how far the anecdote in question represents the realities of the time it depicts (sometime around 1296 × 98 by the reckoning

of Elton 1890: 19); the realities of the time when it was composed (around 1331 × 93, to give the broadest date range); or something else again—tall tales concocted by an elderly Laurentius about his own youth or invented by his biographer, for example. This article examines *Laurentius saga's* anecdotes about Jón flæmingi both from the point of view of its setting, late thirteenth-century Niðarós, and from the point of view of its time of composition, later fourteenth-century Iceland. The two perspectives together enable a balanced evaluation of the historical sociolinguistic significance of the text, offering insights into the metalinguistic discourses of Iceland in Einarr's time, but also raising useful points which are consistent with Trudgill's argument about how Low German might have been perceived and have been influential in thirteenth-century Norway.

## 2 Norse-German contact in late thirteenth-century Norway

If only for heuristic purposes, it is worth reading *Laurentius saga's* account of Norse-German contact first on the assumption that the saga faithfully presents the experience and metalinguistic discourses of late thirteenth-century Niðarós (ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1998: 238–39 [ch. 11]):

var þá kominn fyrir litlu klerkr einn mikill, Jón flæmingi, hafði hann lengi til París staðit til Orliens at studium. Var hann svá mikill juriste at enginn var þá í Nóregi hans líki; hafði ok erkibiskupinn þar við at styðjaz sem hann var, því at allir mesthátar kórsbræðr vóru honum mótstaðligir. Appelleruðu þeir iðugliga til páfans ok fengu bréf mörg af páfagarði erkibiskupi til þunga; vildi ok erkibiskupinn gjarnan fá klerka hvar sem hann kunní. Mátti því Jón flæmingi miðr gagna erkibiskupi í deilum þeira kórsbræðra at hann kunní ekki norrænu at tala, ok skildi alþýðan ekki máls hans því at hann talaði allt á latínu, fransisku eðr flæmsku.

A great scholar, Jón the Fleming, had recently arrived. He had spent a long time studying in Paris and Orleans. He was so great a jurist that there was at that time no-one of his calibre in Norway. Moreover, the archbishop had good reason to lean on him, because all the leading brothers of the chapter were set against

him. They were always petitioning the Pope and got many letters from the Curia with which to oppress the Archbishop—and the Archbishop was always eager to get hold of scholars wherever he could. But Jón the Fleming could help out the Archbishop less in his dealings with the chapter because he couldn't speak Norse, and the *alþýðan* didn't understand his speech because he said everything in Latin, French or Flemish.

This passage testifies to the relevance of the advice on trading of the father to his son in the Norwegian *Konungs skuggsjá* from around 1260: 'nemdu allar mállýzkur, en allra helst latínu ok völsku, þvíat þær tungur ganga víðast' ('you must acquire all languages, but first and foremost Latin and French, because those languages are the most widely used'; normalised from Holm-Olsen, 1983: 129). Jón flæmingi's story emphasises that these language skills need not have been of use only to Norwegians abroad, but also in Norway itself. However, *Konungs skuggsjá* goes on to say 'en þó týndu eigi at heldr þinni tungu' ('though don't neglect your own language either'), and it would seem that this was the message taken more to heart by the populace of Niðarós.

Given the later importance of German, its absence from the list of languages most needing to be learned in the *Konungs skuggsjá* is interesting. This could be seen as consistent with the idea that, for practical mercantile purposes, Low German and Norse were mutually intelligible. Braunmüller (2002–5b, 1228) has argued that communication between speakers of different Germanic varieties was, to medieval Scandinavian writers,

not worth mentioning because it was the normal or default situation: if problems occurred, they must have been treated as the result of different points of view or antagonistic interests but obviously not by a failure of communication due to a multilingual/dialectal situation. Therefore, we have very good reasons to suppose that direct, interdialectal communication worked quite well between genetically closely related languages/dialects in the Hanseatic sphere.

Braunmüller's reasoning here does not take into account medieval writers' general disinterest in discussing interlinguistic communication (Kalinke 1983: 850; Leonard 2012: 118–19; cf. Hall 2010: 39–40 regarding Anglo-Saxon England and Murray, 2011: 121–31 on the eastern Baltic). It is also

contradicted by *Laurentius saga*, which states explicitly and with no suggestion of surprise that Flemish was unintelligible to Norse speakers.

Even if taken as an accurate report of real events, *Laurentius saga's* statement is not, of course, straightforward evidence. Flemish was the westernmost variety of Low German and might have been less familiar in Norway than, say, the German of Hamburg or Lübeck; meanwhile, Niðarós is more famed as a seat of royal and archiepiscopal governance than as a trading place, by contrast with Hanseatic Bergen (the presumed epicentre of Low German influence on Norwegian) or the southern Norwegian coast, and so its inhabitants might have been less used to dealing with Low German-speakers. Nor of course in any Norwegian experience necessarily representative of the rest of Scandinavia: with relatively high segregation of ethnic Germans and Norwegians in fourteenth-century Bergen, a case can even be made that we owe Low German influence on Norwegian not to German merchants but to its transmission through the (written) Danish of the fifteenth-century state (see Nedkvitne 2012: 32–35). Another complexity is that the account of Jón's incomprehensibility arises in the context of antagonism between interlocutors, and (as Braunmüller implies) the mutual comprehensibility of different language varieties can depend more on the willingness of interlocutors to communicate than on formal linguistic features. The precise valence of *alþýðan* is important here: the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* (1983–) defines it both as ‘everybody, the people, the population’ and ‘common people (without special title or status), ordinary people’ (s.v.). It is not entirely clear, then, whether virtually nobody in Niðarós understands Latin, French and Flemish, or whether it is only the lower-status inhabitants who do not understand them. Laurentius uses the word later, in chapter 49, when electing to speak Norse instead of Latin in a legal case where some people present understand spoken Latin but the ‘alþýða’ does not, but this passage presents a similar ambiguity (ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, 1998, 404; *almúgi* in the B-text, p. 403). It is hard to see why Jón's comprehensibility to the general populace of Niðarós would be important in legal disputes between the Archbishop and the cathedral chapter, so it might indeed mean ‘everybody’, in which case *Laurentius saga* offers a testament to the monoglot character of Niðarós's thirteenth-century clerical elite. Whatever the case, we might reasonably conclude from the passage that—if it does indeed directly reflect Laurentius's experience in the late thirteenth century—a significant proportion of the chapter of Norway's archiepiscopal cathedral could unblushingly claim

not to understand Low German. This is consistent with similar claims elsewhere, which have perhaps been dismissed previously is too distant in time or space from Hanseatic Scandinavia to be relevant to the history of Low German there. In chapter 4 of *Grœnlendinga saga*, the ‘suðrmaðr’ (‘Southerner, Saxon’) Tyrkir speaks, in his excitement at discovering grapes, ‘á þýzku’ (‘in German’), to the incomprehension of Leifr Eiríksson and his fellow settlers, to whom he has to speak in *norræna* (‘West Norse’; ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson 1935). In *Kristni saga*, Bishop Friðrekr, from Saxony, ‘undirstóð þá eigi norrœnu’ (‘didn’t then understand West Norse’; ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Foote 2003: 6).

The most striking discussion of Flemish-Norse multilingualism, however, comes a little later in the saga (ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1998: 243–44 [ch. 14]):

Nú er þar til at taka at Laurentius var með Jörundi erkibyskupi í Niðarósi ok studeraði jafnan í kirkjunnar lögum er meistari Jóhannes flæmingi las honum; vóru þeir ok miklir vinir sín í millum. Laurentio þótti mikil skemmtan at hann brauz við at tala norrænu en komz þó lítt at. Einn tíma mælti Jón flæmingi við Laurentium: ‘Ek vildi at þu flyttir við minn herra at hann veitti mér Máriaúrkirkju hér í býnum, því at hún er nú vacans.’

Laurentius svarar: ‘Hversu má þat vera þar sem þér kunnið ekki norrænu at tala?’

‘Kann ek sem mér þarfar’, sagði Jón, ‘ok þat sem mér liggr á at tala.’

‘Skipum nú þá’, sagði Laurentius, ‘sem kominn sé föstuinngangr, þá verðr at tala fyrir sóknarfólki yðru hversu þat skal halda langaföstuna.’

‘Á þenna máta’, sagði Jón flæmingi, ‘nú er komin lentin, hvern mann kristinn komi til kirkju, gjöri sína skripin, kasti burt konu sinni, maki engi sukk, nonne sufficit, domine?’

Þá hló Laurentius ok mælti: ‘Ekki skilr fólkit hvat lentin er.’

Sagði hann erkibyskupi ok gjörðu þeir at mikit gaman, en fengu Jóni nokkorn afdeiling sinnar beizlu því at hann var mjök bráðlyndr ef ei var svá gjört sem hann vildi.

The next thing to relate is that Laurentius was with Archbishop Jörundr in Niðarós, and always studied the laws of the Church

which Master Jóhannes the Fleming read him. They were also good friends with each other. It seemed very funny to Laurentius that he struggled away at speaking Norse but still made so little progress. On one occasion, Jón the Fleming spoke to Laurentius: ‘I’d like it if you could have a word with my lord about him granting me St Mary’s here in the town, because it’s currently *vacans*.’

Laurentius replied, ‘How could that happen when you can’t speak Norse?’

‘I can say what I need to’, said Jón, ‘and what I’m required to.’

‘So let’s suppose’, said Laurentius, ‘that it’s the first day of Lent, and you have to tell your parishioners how they should celebrate Lent.’

‘Like this’, said Jón the Fleming: ‘Now *lentin* has arrived, each Christian person should come to Church, do his *skripin*, throw away his wife, make no disorder, *nonne sufficit, domine?*’

Then Laurentius laughed and said: ‘The people won’t understand what *lentin* is.’

He told the archbishop and they had a good laugh about it, but they gave Jón a share of his request because he was very hot-tempered when he didn’t get his way.

In the manuscript spelling (AM 404 4°), Jón says: ‘Nu er kominn lentin huorn mann christinn komi til kirkiu, giori sýna skripin, kasti burt konu sinne, maki einginn suk. nonne suffitardus’ (ed Árni Björnsson 1969: 17); Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir’s reading *sufficit Domine* is an emendation.

This passage offers a vivid, well poised, and amusing view of the kinds of linguistic adaptation which Low German-speaking churchmen might undertake in thirteenth-century Norway, including an exceptionally rare representation of the Norse of a second-language speaker (for a comparable, but L1, use of style in direct speech see Taylor 1994–97). The descriptions are lively and the dialogue realistic. Jón’s attempt at Old Norse is appropriately ridiculous and comically blunt. Thereafter, Jón lurches into Latin, a neatly deployed code-switch presumably indicating the language in which the rest of the conversation has been taking place: for Laurentius and Jón at least, Latin is a handier *lingua franca* than their native varieties of Germanic.

While no doubt shaped primarily by a narratorial desire for comic effect, Jón's words offer valuable insights into the kinds of second-language features with which Low-German speakers might be associated in thirteenth-century Norway and/or fourteenth-century Iceland. Low German vocabulary pervades the speech and deserves close scrutiny: it almost certainly tells us more about medieval Icelanders' *perceptions* of how Low German-speakers might talk than how they actually *did* talk, but that is sociolinguistically valuable information in its own right. Laurentius focuses on *lentin* as the foreign term. This certainly a West Germanic word rather than an Old Norse one (cf. *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*: s.v. *lentin*, where this is the only attestation). However, Jón seems to be using the word to mean 'Lent', and this is a distinctively English usage: in the rest of the West Germanic world, the word meant 'spring' (OED, s.v. *lenten*; Schiller-Lübben 1878: s.v.; Verwijs-Verdam-Stoett 1885-1941, s.v. *LENTE*). Whoever was behind the punchline of this anecdote, then, seems to have conflated English and Low German here (itself providing an interesting hint at Nordic acquaintance with English). Indeed, the main terms for 'Lent' in Old Norse and Middle Low German, such as Old Norse *Langafasta* and Middle Low German *Vasten*, have a common Germanic origin, making Jón's confusion here particularly unlikely for a Flemish-speaker. Meanwhile, *skripin* does not seem to be a real word in any language: it must be echoing Old Norse *skript* 'penance', either representing Jón's fumbling of the correct word; a mock-Low-German loan; or perhaps the Norse-speaking storyteller's own fumbling attempt to introduce real Low German words into Jón's speech. *Máti*, *maka* and *sukk* are all Low German loans in Old Norse, giving Jón's speech a strongly Low German inflection (de Vries 1962: s.vv.; cf. Veturliði Óskarsson 2003: 280, 282). That said, their presence in Jón's speech has a double edge: Einarr Hafliðason's Old Norse is itself not untouched by Low German loans. *Máti* and *sukk* are widely attested in Old Norse and remain in Modern Icelandic. *Maka* is rare, occurring only here; in various versions of *Óláfs saga helga*, starting with the oldest version; and in *Alexanders saga*. Gudbrand Vígfússon suggested that both the example in *Laurentius saga* and the one in *Óláfs saga* 'seem to be put into the mouths of foreigners trying to speak Norse' (Cleasby-Vígfússon 1957: s.v. *maka*), but this is not certain, and in some later versions of *Óláfs saga* the verb is placed in the direct speech of Óláfr himself (see citations in the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, s.v.), while in *Alexanders saga* it is used by Alexander the Great with no apparent suggestion of for-

eign overtones (cf. ed. de Leeuw van Weenen 2009, and the original Latin, ed. Colker 1978: 195). While *maka* is rare, then, it may not have been obvious to a West Norse-speaker around 1300 that it was not on the same road to acceptance as *máti* and *sukk* (cf. Modern Swedish *maka* and Modern Danish *mage*). Jón's usage of *sukk* as a direct object of *maka* 'make' might be thought unidiomatic: as the citations in the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* show, *sukk* is almost always used in prepositional phrases to mean 'squander' (e.g. 'Hallgerðr var fengsöm ok stórlynd, enda kallaði hon til alls þess, er aðrir áttu í nánd, ok hafði allt í sukki', 'Hallgerðr was acquisitive and had a big personality; she was always asking for anything that others in the neighbourhood had, and squandered everything', *Njáls saga* ch. 11, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954: 33). It is also used in the singular, whereas Jón's 'einginn suk' seems, if it is not intended to show incorrect gender, to be plural: *sukk* is neuter and, giving Jón the benefit of the doubt, we could reasonably understand the scribal 'einginn suk' as a seventeenth-century spelling of the neuter accusative plural *engin sukk*. Strikingly, though, the other main example of a construction like Jón's recorded by the DONP occurs elsewhere in *Laurentius saga*, but this time in the narratorial voice: 'sá atburður gjörðiz einn tíma á Völlum at kennslupiltar gjörðu sukk í kirkjunni þar á Völlum' ('on one occasion, this event took place at Vellir: that the schoolboys were making a racket in the church there at Vellir', ed Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1998: 226, quoting B [ch. 5]; A [ch. 2] is almost identical). *Sukk* here could be singular or plural, so again it would be possible to give Jón the benefit of the doubt and take his usage as idiomatic. *Maka engin sukk* may have been intended to sound odd, but if so the joke may have been close to the bone for Einarr Hafliðason. It seems likely that Einarr was aware of the foreign resonance of the vocabulary he put in Jón's mouth; but if, at one level, *Laurentius saga* laughs at Jón's propensity to stuff his Old Norse with convenient Low German loans, at another it tacitly admits to Old Norse's acceptance of the greater part of those loans—and implies that Low German-speaking clerics had a role in introducing and embedding them. At the same time, though, Einarr was not so familiar with Low German that he did not get confused (or repeated someone else's confusion) about the semantics of *lenten*.

The morphology of Jón's speech shows some confusion, and this is broadly consistent with the development of Continental Scandinavian. Jón uses the accusative *hværn mann* instead of the nominative *hværn maðr*, echoing the Continental levelling of this irregular nominative singular noun to *mann*.



That said, the *mann* form is not unknown in medieval Icelandic manuscripts, possibly through Norwegian influence (Stefán Karlsson 2000a [1978]: 186), and the inflection of the other substantives is as expected (unless we take ‘einginn suk’ as showing either the wrong number or gender). Jón also appears to be untroubled by subjunctive verbs. This may show the limitations of Einar’s literary artifice in providing true-to-life representations of second-language Norse-speakers; but it could also reflect the similarity in form and usage of third-person singular Middle Low German and Old Norse subjunctive endings, whereby Jón would have found subjunctives fairly easy to handle; this mood was, after all, to have a relatively long life in Continental Scandinavian (Mørck 2002–5, 1146). It is probably fair to say that the narrator behind Jón’s speech focused on lexicon and style more than grammar, but that they did register the phenomenon of morphological confusion, and associated it with L2 Norse.

We cannot take *Laurentius saga’s* portrayal of Jón flæmingi’s Norse at face value, then, as the exact words a Low German-speaker might utter. But we can read it as representative of the kind of features which Norse-speakers associated with the L2 Norse of native Low German-speakers, and representative of some of the sociolinguistic contexts in which the Norse of L2 speakers might be heard. In its literary way, the passage provides a sociolinguistically plausible image of a Low German native speaker making the most of existing loans in Norse and pushing the envelope with new ones; and doing so from a prestigious and public social position, from which his language might influence that of native speakers. The next section explores how these conclusions rest on simplistic assumptions about source value and cannot be accepted straightforwardly. But none of the conclusions is sociolinguistically implausible and, in a context where evidence is generally lacking, all are useful in providing evidence-led perspectives from which we can interrogate our existing understanding of Norse-Low German language contact:

1. Low German and Norse were not, contrary to common assumptions, considered mutually intelligible. Moreover, the acceptance of Low German loans into Norse did not simply entail native speakers’ enthusiasm for all things German, but a sometimes antagonistic relationship—whether the kind of friendly antagonism shared by Jón flæmingi and Laurentius or the more serious kind between Jón and the chapter of Niðarós.

2. Given the evidence for the unwillingness of local populations to understand or learn Low German, we can infer a model of language contact in the thirteenth century which involved neither mutual intelligibility nor Norse-speakers learning German. We might infer rather that Low German-speakers, by necessity, learned Norse.
3. In adopting Old Norse, Low German-speakers had recourse to the genetic similarity of their native language to Norse, encouraging them to use Low German vocabulary; their Norse tended to exhibit the morphological simplifications characteristic of adult learners of a second language.

As I have discussed above, meanwhile, most work on Low German influence on Old Norse has taken it as a given that mercantile contact was the pre-eminent vector for influence, with researchers' frame of reference focusing unquestioningly on the Hanseatic world. However, while an emphasis on the ecclesiastical sphere is a genre feature of *Laurentius saga* and need not be at all representative of prevailing language-contact situations in thirteenth-century Norway, the saga's vivid portrayal of the Church as a context for thirteenth- to fourteenth-century language contact and, potentially, change, is compelling. Jón's request for the benefice of St Mary's church in Niðarós, it should be emphasised, is not a minor one: this was an important and lucrative benefice (Sigurdson 2011: 182). Both the passages quoted emphasise that a churchman with pastoral duties was expected to communicate with his parishioners in Old Norse—not to mention his colleagues. While there is no reason to doubt the prestige and influence of the language of the Hansa in later medieval Scandinavia (see for example Tiisala 2007), it is not self-evident that it enjoyed such dominance earlier on (cf. Kala, 2003 on German in relation to Estonian in Tallinn). Absence from the runic corpus hardly proves a negative, but it is at least worth observing that despite being used extensively for mercantile purposes, attesting to colloquial as well as formal varieties of Norse, and representing multilingualism in the form of Latin (and even Greek and Hebrew), the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century runic inscriptions from the Bryggen in Bergen are not noted for showing Low German influence (cf. Schulte 2012, Spurkland 2012). The story of Jón flæmingi deserves to be taken seriously as we look for plausible vectors of Low German influence on Old Norse.

### 3 Writing Norse-German contact in later fourteenth-century Iceland

As I have emphasised, *Laurentius saga* was composed by Einarr Hafliðason, who knew Laurentius well and might have been repeating the story of Laurentius's dealings with Jón flæmingi just as his mentor and friend had told it to him. Even then, however, it was Einarr, in fourteenth-century Iceland, who chose to write the anecdote down: whether it tells us about Laurentius's self-presentation to his Icelandic pupils, or what his pupils found memorable about him, it tells us something about fourteenth-century Icelandic metalinguistic discourses. Moreover, the account might be ascribed more to Einarr's imagination than to Laurentius's experience: Sigurdson has called this section of the saga 'highly fanciful' and shown the predilection of Einarr and his circle for relating implausibly aggrandising accounts of Icelanders abroad (2011: 189–96, quoting 182). Einarr's representation of Jón's Norse, vivid though it is, might therefore represent no more than a caricature of L2 Norse with little basis in reality. It is therefore imperative to assess what the narrative might have meant to Einarr and his audience as part of source-criticism, but also as an analysis of fourteenth-century Icelandic discourses about Low German. Since the fourteenth century was a time of rapid linguistic change in Icelandic, *Laurentius saga* offers important insights into Icelandic identity at that time. Einarr Hafliðason would, indeed, himself make an interesting case study of Latin- and Low German-influence on fourteenth-century Icelandic, not least because his section of the *lögmannsannáll* survives in an autograph copy (AM 420b 4to), albeit to a large extent compiled from earlier sources (Rowe 2002); suffice to say here that the Low German influence on his lexicon is, as my discussions above imply, readily apparent. In this section, I gather a range of information which is fairly well known to scholars of Icelandic literature and history but which has not been adduced in the context of historical sociolinguistics before to explore the speech community from which Einarr wrote *Laurentius saga* and its attitudes to language change.

Consider the remaining narrative about Jón flæmingi's language in *Laurentius saga* (ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1998: 244 [ch. 15]), which follows directly from the previous anecdote quoted:

Einn tíma kómu mörg Íslandsförl til Niðaróss ok vóru á margir íslenzkir menn; vildi síra Laurentius þeim öllum nokkot til góða gjöra. Þar kom millum annarra sá maðr er Klængr steypir hét ok

frændi Laurentii ok honum heimuligr. En sem Jón flæmingi sá þat, vildi hann gjöra honum nokkot athvarf ok talaði einn tíma við Laurentium á latínu ok mælti:

‘Kennið mér at heilsa á þennan yðar kompán upp á norrænu.’

Laurentio þótti mikit gaman at Jóni ok sagði: ‘Heilsaðu honum svá: Fagnaðarlaus kompán!’

‘Ek undirstend’, sagði Jón, ‘at þetta mun vera fögr heilsan, því at gaudium er fögnuðr, en laus er lof,’—gengr síðan at Klængi steypir, klappandi honum á hans herðar ok mælti: ‘Fagnaðarlaus kompán!’

Hinn hvessti augun í móti ok þótti heilsunin ei vera svá fögr sem hinn ætlaði.

Nú mælti Jón flæmingi við Laurentium: ‘Ek forstend nú at þú hefir dárat mik, því at þessi maðr varð reiðr við mik.’

Another time, a lot of sailings from Iceland arrived at Niðarós, and many Icelandic people were aboard; Síra Laurentius wanted to do something good for them. Amongst others came a person called Klængr steypir, who was a kinsman of Laurentius’s and close to him. And when Jón the Fleming saw that, he wanted to hang out with him, and at some point spoke to Laurentius in Latin and said ‘Tell me how to greet this friend of yours in Norse’.

Laurentius thought of a great joke to play on Jón and said, ‘Greet him like this: *Fagnaðarlaus kompán!* [‘damned dude’; lit. ‘joyless dude’]’

‘I understand’, said Jón, ‘that this must be a nice greeting, because fögnuðr [Old Norse, ‘joy’] is *gaudium* [Latin, ‘joy’] and *laus* [Latin, ‘praise’] means *lof* [Old Norse ‘praise’].’ So he went up to Klængi steypir, clapping him on the back, and said ‘*Fagnaðarlaus kompán!*’

The man narrowed his eyes at him and then the greeting didn’t seem as *fögr* [attractive] as Jón thought.

So then Jón the Fleming spoke to Laurentius: ‘I now understand that you tricked me, because this man was angry at me.’

Previous commentary on this passage has emphasised its amusement value and rather elaborate deployment of Norse-Latin false friends (Bjarni Guðnason, Jakob Benediktsson and Sverrir Tómasson 1993: 149). It can be

read as emphasising the same themes in Jón's struggles with Norse as the previous one: it is perhaps of interest that the unusual but transparent formation *fagnaðarlauss* is opaque to Jón while the Low German loan *kompán* seems untroublesome. At first glance, Jón's use of the West Germanic loans *undirstanda* and *forstanda* ('understand') looks like it might echo the language of a native Low German-speaker, but again, *undirstanda* and (in a slightly more nordic form) *fyrirstanda* are both attested in the narratorial voice in the B-text so this is less clear-cut than at first sight (ed Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1998: 353, with *fyrir standa*, where A lacks a corresponding sentence; p. 404, with *undirstanda*, where A, p. 403, has the more traditional *skilja*; 413, where A and B both have *undirstanda*).

My own experience certainly attests to the continued enthusiasm of Scandinavians for playing Laurentius's trick (cf. Power, 1998–2001: 311). However, I can't say I've ever actually known anyone to fall for it; the false friends may do more to inflate the audience's sense of its own Latinity than to represent a likely misunderstanding by Jón; and the passage has an analogue emphasising a literariness which indicates the importance of understanding it within the distinctive textual and sociolinguistic environment in which its author Einarr lived. The analogue is *Gísls þáttur Illugasonar*, specifically as it appears in the L-version of *Jóns saga helga*, a biography of Jón Ögmundarson (1052–1121), the first bishop of Hólar. Einarr knew a version of *Jóns saga*, and we can be fairly certain it was this one (Foote 2003: ccxxviii). Here, the eponymous Gísl is the leader of a group of hostages (fittingly, given that his name means 'hostage') sent by the Norwegian king Magnús berfœttr Ólafsson, putatively in 1102, to the court of King Muirheartach Ó Briain of Munster. A Norwegian member of Gísl's group claims to speak Irish, and greets the King. His greeting, perhaps uniquely in Old Norse, is given in Irish (albeit, in the surviving manuscripts, badly corrupted). Far from being the ingratiating greeting intended, however, it turns out to mean 'bölvadr sér þú, konungr' ('may you be damned, King'). Fortunately, the king takes this in his stride (ed Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Haldórsson, and Foote 2003: 227; cf. Power 1998–2001). Whatever the provenance of his own account of Jón flæmingi's 'fagnaðarlauss kompán', Einarr almost certainly saw his text resonating with this one, as another example of the motif of a little linguistic knowledge being a dangerous thing.

The intertextual relationship between *Jóns saga helga* and *Laurentius saga* is characteristic of a distinctive, clerical, literary culture which—almost

uniquely in a time and place where sagas are normally anonymous—can be reconstructed around Einarr, known to scholars as the North Icelandic Benedictine School (Sverrir Tómasson 2006: 168–71). The School is noted for writing in a distinctive ‘florid’ style, characterised by Latinate syntax, and Latin and Low-German loan-words, which is readily apparent in the L-version of *Jóns saga helga* (Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Foote 2003: ccxvii–ccxix). We owe much of our information about this group and their personal relationships to *Laurentius saga* itself: the ‘school’ represents a tight-knit (if not always agreeable) group of elite earlier fourteenth-century churchmen associated particularly with the diocese of Hólar: the known key members, their salient offices, and their (principal) Norwegian connections are represented in Figure 1. Most of the members of the school whom we can name were pupils of Laurentius, and although we can securely link them with only a small number of texts (still a rare achievement in the study of medieval Icelandic literature), the appearance of other texts in the florid style indicates that these people or their colleagues were among the most prolific writers in medieval Iceland, translating, editing, or composing biographies of saints and bishops, and romances; and taking a significant role in the development of administrative literacy on the island. It is undoubted that members of this group read each other’s work, and wrote to some extent with their friends in mind. This group, then, provides one important context for understanding Einarr’s accounts of Jón flæmingi’s multilingualism.

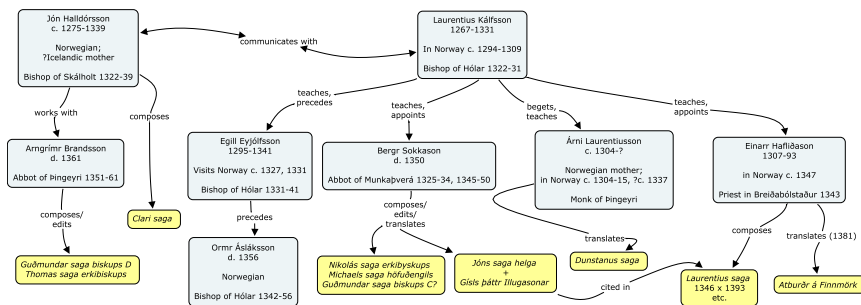


Figure 1: The Northern Icelandic Benedictine School: the social network of Einarr Hafliðason, summarising principal known Norwegian connections; listing indicative ecclesiastical offices; and including most certainly ascribed writings.

Strikingly, the interests of the North Icelandic Benedictine School included, besides the predictable elite political, religious, and ideological issues of the day, a fascination with multilingualism. As their prose style and commitment to translation suggests, the group was acutely conscious of their relationship, as Old-Norse-speakers, with Latin—a point which deserves a much fuller historical-sociolinguistic study than is possible here. *Laurentius saga* is laden with references to Laurentius's distinctive Latin skills and the power they conferred in his world. The concern with multilingualism went beyond Latin, however; it is perhaps characteristic that the central character of the miracle-story *Atburðr á Finnþork*, which Einarr translated from Latin, is a Sámi-Norse interpreter (ed Kålund, 1908–18: I 57–59). While the account of Gísl's band in the court of Muirheartach Ó Briain in the L-version of *Jóns saga helga* almost certainly derives from a lost, older text (Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Foote 2003: cclxiii–cclxvii), it is telling that it is this version alone (likely by Einarr's friend Bergr Sokkason: Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Foote 2003: ccxxv, ccxxviii) which quotes the multilingual exchange. Medieval Icelandic romance shows a rare interest in multilingualism (Kalinke 1983; cf. Kalinke 2008 and Hughes 2008 on *Clári saga*). The intellectual, in some ways xenophilic tenor of the North Icelandic Benedictine School did not prevail in fourteenth-century Iceland; Einarr relates how the prodigious but poor young Laurentius is bullied at school not only for his poverty but also his learning (B ch. 5, ed Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1998: 228–29), a story which may reflect the sympathies of Laurentius's pupils as much as the experiences of their master. We can speculate that they perceived themselves as a vibrant, outward-looking, but embattled—one might even say geeky—intellectual community. While Einarr clearly expected his readers to laugh at Jón flæmingi, he also expected them to be familiar with and interested in the tribulations of language-learners; and at the same time he expected them to understand his text as a literary construct.

Icelanders like Einarr had a close relationship with Norway and Norwegian. Ties between Iceland and Norway were perhaps at their closest in the first half of the fourteenth century, and Icelandic elites saw themselves as integral to their Norwegian archbishopric and to Norwegian royal governance (Sigurdson 2011). They saw their language as essentially the same as Norwegian: Icelanders' early tendency to refer to Old Norse as *danska* (with *norroena* possibly a synonym of this) was being superseded by a pref-

erence for calling their language *norroena* in the sense ‘West Norse’, emphasising Norwegian–Icelandic linguistic identity (Leondard 2012: 121–28). Icelanders exploited this identity by producing manuscripts for export to Norway (Ólafur Halldórsson 1990 [1965]; Stefán Karlsson 2000b [1979]). Einarr’s other accounts of Laurentius’s time in Norway emphasise the fascination which the metropolitan contexts of this foreign land held: Einarr delays his plot not only by introducing Jón flæmingi but also, for example, by discussing the fireworks which Laurentius saw at the royal court in Bergen—also, incidentally, created by a Fleming, emphasising both Flemings’ prominence in Norway and their association with arcane learning (B ch. 10; ed Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1998: 237–38). However, this does not mean that fourteenth-century Icelandic clerics were starved of access to Norwegian culture. Figure 1 emphasises the degree of exposure which members of the North Icelandic Benedictine School had to native-speakers of Norwegian varieties of Norse: they all worked closely with Norwegian bishops; most were taught by Laurentius, who had spent at least fifteen years living there and had (had) a Norwegian concubine; some had grown up in Norway before coming to Iceland, and they were friends of those who had not; most are known to have spent time in Norway.

This closeness to Norwegian culture is unlikely to have been ideologically unproblematic. Iceland had a long standing love-hate relationship with its more powerful neighbour (see in a sociolinguistic context Leonard 2012: 116–43; *Laurentius saga* has even been understood as making a case against appointing Norwegian bishops to Iceland, though this seems unlikely: Sigurdson 2011: 210–13). Still, as their Latin- and Low German-influenced language attests, the North Icelandic Benedictine School were not only acutely conscious of Norway’s linguistic innovations but, at least in the lexis of their prose, more inclined than their countrymen to embrace them. The fourteenth century seems to have been a critical time for the divergence of Icelandic and Norwegian: the Low German loans and nascent morphological simplification in (some varieties of) Norwegian, and the tendency of Norwegian to converge with the previously divergent East Norse varieties, must have been palpable to well-travelled Norwegian and Icelandic elites alike. In the event, Norwegian changed much faster than Icelandic, but it is not impossible that fourteenth-century Icelanders expected and wished their language to change in step with Norwegian. Phonologically and, insofar as Icelandic has changed at all, morphologically, the fourteenth century was probably



the time of greatest change in Icelandic, with most of the changes which distinguish Old from Modern Icelandic either becoming dominant in our manuscript record or finding their first written attestations during that century. Typologically similar, albeit seldom identical, developments to most of these were taking place in at least some Norwegian varieties around the same period (Schulte 2002–5a, b; Mørck, 2002–5), and though the evidence is merely circumstantial, contact between Icelandic and Norwegian, of which Icelandic clerical elites seem likely to have been important vectors, is an obvious suspect for provoking or encouraging changes (Stefán Karlsson 2004: 11–23).

Moreover, the fourteenth century bears witness to spellings in Icelandic manuscripts consistent with a few other changes in Norwegian which have not made their way into Modern Icelandic (Stefán Karlsson 2000a [1978]). I take my examples of the following relatively prominent trends from the autograph text of Einarr's *lögmannsannáll* (ed Storm 1888: 231–78, s.aa. 1–1361); the autograph charters ascribed to him (for which see Stefán Karlsson 1963: xxxix) tell a similar story.

- Analogical cancellation of u-mutation. This is rare in Einarr's writing, but apparent: 'stallarum' for *støllurum*; 'anduduzst' for *ønduðust*; 'allum' for *øllum* (ed. Storm 1888: 259, 261, 270, s.aa. 1277, 1284, 1332).
- *hr-, hl-* > *r-, l-*. Contexts for this change are limited, but it seems to be uniform for Einarr, with *lutr* regularly for *hlutr* (ed Storm 1888: *passim*1, albeit with an instance of 'hlupu' p. 277, s.a. 1360) and 'reppa' for *hreppa* and 'Rafn' for *Hrafn* (ed. Storm 1888: 273, s.a. 1341; 260, 261, 273, s.aa. 1283, 1283, 1342).
- Analogical levelling of verb-forms. Einarr presents only one example of this, but it is characteristic of one of the main kinds of levelling, the analogical reintroduction of *v-*: 'vurdu' for *urðu*, 3rd person past plural of *verða* (ed. Storm 1888: 262, 271, s.aa. 1299).

These changes have traditionally been taken as evidence that Icelandic scribes were adapting their written language to Norwegian norms to facilitate book-exports (and then extending these habits to their other writing; Stefán Karlsson 2000b [1979]; 2004: 47–49), but Stefán Karlsson has suggested that some such spellings represent phonological developments in spoken Icelandic like those in Norwegian (2000a [1978]: 185–86), a scenario

paralleled by Haukur Þorgeirsson's case (2013: 234–56) for the development of a two word-tone system in fourteenth-century Icelandic similar to that which survives in most Norwegian varieties (but which, in Haukur's reading, was lost from Icelandic in the sixteenth century).<sup>2</sup> Either scenario is pertinent to the present study: learned Icelanders were conscious enough of Norwegian's phonological divergence from their own Norse to try to adapt to it in writing, and/or some elite Icelandic-speakers were early adopters of forms consistent with Norwegian innovations which did not ultimately take root in Icelandic generally.

With this context, we can return to *Laurentius saga*. Its author was intellectually interested in multilingualism; personally and politically invested in Icelandic-Norwegian unity; intimately familiar with Norwegian varieties of Norse; arguably aware that Icelandic was to some extent changing in line with them; and, in some respects, inclined to adopt innovative forms in line with Norwegian developments (at least in his written language). It seems clear that, for fourteenth-century Icelanders like Einarr, one of the key meanings of the Icelandic priest Laurentius and the Norwegian archbishop Jǫrundr laughing together at Jón flæmingi's incompetence in *norraena* was that it affirmed the identity of *norraena*'s Icelandic and Norwegian varieties. It seems likely, however, that in recounting the story, Einarr also unwittingly exposed his anxiety about that the precariousness of that identity—a precariousness which was manifested as both a linguistic and political marginalisation as Norway came under Danish control in the late fourteenth century and Icelandic elites found themselves increasingly shut out of Nordic trade and politics.

Laurentius's amusement at his friend's struggles with Old Norse is reminiscent of the complex identity politics of modern European small languages:

<sup>2</sup>A rough, electronically based survey of the *Diplomatarium Islandicum* (ed Jón Þorkelsson et al. 1857–1932), using the poorly optically-character-recognised copy downloaded from [http://baekur.is/bok/000197700/Islenzkt\\_fornbrefasafn\\_sem](http://baekur.is/bok/000197700/Islenzkt_fornbrefasafn_sem), suggests that while very rare in nouns, the fourteenth-century cancellation of *u*-mutation was more common in relevant forms of the high-frequency adjectives *allr* and *margr* (perhaps occurring in 7% of fourteenth-century occurrences of these words), and more common again in the first- and third-person past plural weak verb endings *-ǫðum* and *-ǫðu* (perhaps accounting for 15% of fourteenth-century occurrences of these inflections). This hints at morphological and/or phonological conditioning of the changes, which would be more characteristic of natural language variation than scribal convention. Likewise, *h*-loss is most frequent within personal names, then within attestations of the high-frequency noun *hlutr*, and least frequent in other common nouns. These investigations would require a much more accurate and contextually sensitive expansion to deserve any credence, but at least suggest that fuller investigation would be worthwhile.

I can attest anecdotally to the pride which many present-day Icelanders (and Finns) take in the belief (and in stating the belief) that their language is unlearnable—or at least unlearnable for non-natives associated with historically or currently dominant cultural powers like Denmark (for Iceland), Sweden (for Finland), or Britain and America (for both; for immigrants from the developing world, there is, paradoxically, a stronger assumption that they can and must learn the local languages). In *Laurentius saga*, in place of the Danish- or English-speaker of today, it is a learned, southern scholar, apparently fluent in French, Flemish and Latin, who is at the sharp end of the unlearnability topos. This kind of discourse privileges the vernacular as an arcane form of knowledge unique to its native speakers, yet also deprecates it as inevitably marginal to international communications (cf. McDonald 2009: 121, on *Nítíða saga* and Hall, Richardson, and Haukur Þorgeirsson, forthcoming on comparable discourses of locality in *Sigrarðs saga*). In the case of Jón flæmingi, if we understand *Laurentius saga* to suggest that he did get (a share in) a prestigious and lucrative benefice, the meta-discourse of language-learning perhaps also encodes or echoes a measure of jealousy at the figure of the foreigner, privileged with prestigious knowledge and education which was relatively inaccessible in Scandinavia, being able to win jobs there over the heads of locals (with Icelanders, once again, being construed in this interpretation as locals to Norway).

## 4 Conclusions

*Laurentius saga* is an underrated source for the history of Low German in medieval Scandinavia, and offers a rare if not unique medieval representation of the spoken Norse of a native Low German-speaker. The passages which I have been analysing are short, and their significance is not to be overstated. Einarr's account of Laurentius strikes a personal and anecdotal tone and it is hard to doubt that much of what he reports reflects tales Laurentius himself told. But Einarr's account is also highly literary, certainly echoing and possibly purposefully deploying literary tropes; his writing of Jón flæmingi's L2 Old Norse is very unlikely to be a linguistically precise representation of real speech.

Of the various conclusions I have drawn above from the account of Jón flæmingi, the most straightforward, albeit somewhat speculative, is that Einarr was fascinated by multilingualism and used his account of Jón as

a vehicle for emphasising the unity of Icelandic and Norwegian varieties of West Norse at the period in Icelandic history when this unity mattered most to elite Icelanders, but when it was becoming clear that unless the Icelandic language sustained or accelerated the pace of ongoing changes, it was liable to become quite different from its Continental sister. If this is correct, the story gives us a valuable window into the discourses of Icelandic language and identity in the fourteenth century. This line of argument could be consolidated with a deeper study of Einarr's language, and a fuller examination of his metalinguistic discourses more generally.

That said, we should still take Einarr's portrayal of multilingualism in Niðarós seriously. It is too problematic a source to prove anything and implausible in some of its linguistic detail. But it is a good enough source for metalinguistic discourses that we should hesitate to discount, on the basis of much later evidence or sociolinguistic models based thereon, the sociolinguistic scenarios it portrays. We cannot be sure to what extent it reflects the first-hand experience of Laurentius, and to what extent it reflects Einarr's. But whoever's voice is loudest, and however contrived the account, it is the voice of an Icelander who was intimately familiar not only with Icelandic but also Norwegian varieties of West Norse and with the metropolitan life of Niðarós. His audience was equally well informed and must, then, have found *Laurentius saga* at least convincing enough to be funny. The narrator(s) behind the saga, when not carried away by their jokes, were fully equipped to narrate vivid, sociolinguistically convincing, multilingual environments. *Laurentius saga* provides a fairly unequivocal statement that a Low German-speaker could not speak his native language and be understood, even in elite circles, in Niðarós. We might choose to disbelieve the saga, or argue that this incomprehension reflects specific problems with the Flemish dialect, or a specific situation of complex and antagonistic legal discourse, rather than basic mercantile communication. But at the same time, we should at least be open to the possibility that no-one in thirteenth- to fourteenth-century Norway found their language mutually intelligible with Low German, and that, at least in this period, Low German-speakers routinely learned Old Norse to communicate there. After all, despite the Low German influence on their language and their close connections with Norway, Einarr and his audience were apparently ignorant enough of Low German to be untroubled by a punchline which confuses the English and Low German senses of *lenten*.

Notwithstanding the flaws in his own German, Einarr clearly associated the Norse of Low German-speakers with the adaptation of Low German vocabulary to Old Norse based on the etymological similarities between the two, and this represents a plausible mechanism for Low German loans to enter Norse—from the successful, like *sukk*, to the partly successful, like *maka*, to the unsuccessful, like *lentin*. Einarr also associated the Norse of Jón flæmingi with morphological confusion and levelling, albeit not to the same degree that he associated it with loan-words. Perridon (2003: 238) has argued, rightly, that

the burden of proof lies ... squarely with those who claim that a given change in the grammar of a language is the result of language contact. Simple statements of the type *prope hoc ergo propter hoc* ('near it, hence because of it') will not do.

*Laurentius saga* gives us at least a little evidence that the emergence of levelled forms like *mann* for *maðr* sounded to the ears of thirteenth- and certainly fourteenth-century Icelanders like Low Germanisms. Of course, this proves nothing about how language change was actually taking place in Norwegian, but it is at least consistent with the idea that morphological levelling in Norse might indeed have originated with the L2 Norse of Low German-speakers. This reading is consistent with the arguments of Jahr (1999 [1995]) and Trudgill (2010), who see a key source of morphological simplification in the history of Norse as the spreading of features characteristic of adult learners, who struggle with morphological complexity.

Finally, Einarr's account alerts us to the underappreciated possibility that churchmen were an important vector of language contact between Low German and Norse in the crucial thirteenth- to fourteenth-century period when Norse varieties must have been opening up to massive Low German influence. Historiographically, sociolinguistics is rooted in capitalist and to some extent secularist societies, so historical linguists borrowing interpretative frameworks from sociolinguistics may unwittingly have underestimated the power of the medieval Church as an engine for language-change, in favour of focusing on trade networks (cf. Hall 2010: 73–74 on Anglo-Saxon England). Veturlíði Óskarsson's study of Old Icelandic diplomas emphasises the degree to which Low German loans in Icelandic can be associated with ecclesiastical and secular governance—implemented to a large extent by the clerical class to which Laurentius and Einarr belonged. While this is perhaps to be ex-

pected from a study of diplomas, Veturliði also emphasises that elsewhere in Old Icelandic this vocabulary is most commonly found in bishops' sagas and romances, genres particularly closely associated with that same clerical class (2003: 356; cf. Johansson 2000; Kalinke, 2008). Moreover, he finds that the commercial activities of English and German fishermen in fifteenth-century Iceland had little effect on the language. Veturliði sounds almost apologetic when he writes (2003, 355; cf. 352) that

a number of words from MLG show up already early in the fourteenth century and there are a few in charters and other documents dated to the thirteenth century, but most of these words are not representative of the actual influence of the language spoken by the German Hansa merchants.

But both Veturliði's evidence and *Laurentius saga* encourage us to consider whether, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, instead of the Hansa, one of the key interfaces between Low German and Norwegian, and one of the most effective mechanisms for promoting Low German influence, was the Church. *Laurentius saga* helpfully emphasises the degree to which Low German-speaking ecclesiastical personnel, perhaps with pastoral duties but undoubtedly with prestigious positions among native-speaking clerics, might have promoted Low German loans and adult-learner features in native speakers' Old Norse.<sup>3</sup>

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# The Arabic definite article does not assimilate

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## Abstract

In this paper we argue that the popular account of the phonology of the Arabic definite article in terms of assimilation to a following coronal consonant is not justified. The accepted account holds that the definite article has an underlying phonological form /ʔal/ (or /l/ in some versions) which surfaces as [ʔal] when the following word begins with a non-coronal consonant, but when the following word begins with a coronal consonant the /l/ completely assimilates to the coronal resulting in a geminate coronal consonant: compare for example *al-bint* [ʔalbint] ‘the girl’ and *al-zaffa* [az:af:a] ‘the wedding procession’. We present theoretical and empirical grounds for rejecting the assertion that the /l/ of the definite article assimilates to a following coronal consonant in any synchronically meaningful sense of ‘assimilation’. We argue that for something to count as synchronic assimilation it must be optional, meaning that an unassimilated pronunciation must also be allowed by the grammar. In the absence of counter-evidence, we also assume that optionality implies gradience. Historical assimilation, by contrast, admits neither optionality nor gradience, only unsystematic token-to-token variation in the realisation of the product of a historical process of change.

Using illustrative acoustic and electropalatographic data, the situation with the /l/ of the definite article when followed by a coronal consonant is compared to within-word sequences of /l/ + coronal consonant in *alzam* /alzam/ ‘most necessary’, *alʔaf* ‘most kind’, the form I doubled verbal coronal geminate in *hazza* /hazza/ ‘to shake’, and the optional assimilation of word-final /l/ to word-initial /r/ in *ħabil raʔi* ‘a thin rope’. It is also compared with the optional assimilation of the definite article /l/ to a following dorsal stop in Cairo Arabic.

Electropalatographic and acoustic data are presented to support the argument that forms such as [az:af:a] should be regarded synchronically not as assimilation but as a type of ‘true’ or ‘lexical’ geminate resulting from phonologically-determined allomorphy.

## 1 The Arabic definite article

The definite article in Arabic forms a syntactic word with the noun or adjective which it defines (Watson 2002: 61–2), and in context forms a phonological word with the preceding syntactic word (*ibid*). Standard Arabic and the majority of the dialects outside the south-west of the Arabian Peninsula show six allomorphs (Haywood and Nahmad 1965: 22): it has the phonological form /ʔal/ or /ʔil/ when the noun or adjective is utterance-initial and begins with a non-coronal consonant or vowel; it has the form /l/ when the noun or adjective begins with a non-coronal consonant and follows a vowel-final word; when the noun or adjective begins with a coronal consonant, however, the consonant of the article must be that same coronal consonant, giving /ʔaC/ or /ʔiC/ in utterance-initial position and /C/ in utterance-medial position following a vowel-final word. In traditional Arabic grammar, the fourteen non-coronal consonants are known as *al-ḥurūf al-qamarīya* (‘letters of the moon’) (/b ɖ ʒ k q ʔ f χ ʁ h ʕ m w j/), and the fourteen coronal consonants as *al-ḥurūf al-šamsīya* (‘letters of the sun’) (/t ʈ d ɗ θ ð s ʒ z ʃ l n r/).<sup>1</sup> Table 1 provides some examples from Standard Arabic.

Gloss	Non-coronal initial consonant	Gloss	Coronal initial consonant
<i>the moon</i>	ʔal-qamr	<i>the sun</i>	ʔaʃ-ʃams
<i>the boy</i>	ʔal-walad	<i>the figs</i>	ʔat-ti:n
<i>the girl</i>	ʔal-bint	<i>the journey</i>	ʔas-safar
<i>the big book</i>	ʔal-kita:bu l-kabi:r	<i>the long river</i>	ʔan-nahru ʧ-ʧawi:l
<i>the name</i>	ʔal-ism	<i>the wedding procession</i>	ʔaz-zaffa

Table 1: Arabic definite article before a selection of non-coronal and coronal consonants

Many dialects in the south-west of the Arabian Peninsula, including dialects of southern Saudi Arabia and Yemen, do not exhibit the /l/ definite article in any environment. Several dialects of far northern Yemen and the coastal plain, including Saudi Rijāl Alma‘ (Asiri 2009) and Yemeni Minabbih (Behnstedt 1987: 85) exhibit /m/~/am/~/im/ with no (complete) assimilation to any following consonant, as in: *am-safar* ‘the journey’, *am-qamar*

<sup>1</sup>Emphatic consonants are represented with a subscript dot; /ɖ/ was historically a non-coronal /g/ although it now behaves as a coronal consonant in many modern varieties with respect to the definite article.

‘the moon’. A selection of dialects in northern Yemen exhibit an /n/ definite article, which again shows no assimilation to any following consonant, as in northern Yemeni Majz *in-šaʿbah* ‘the female donkey foal’, *in-šams* ‘the sun’. Finally, dialects scattered throughout the western Yemeni mountain range, and some dialects of southern Oman, exhibit an article which involves gemination of any nominal-initial consonant, as in: *ab-bēt* ‘the house’, *aḡ-gamar* ‘the moon’, *ih-hōd* ‘the wedding’ attested, for example, in Rāziḥit, Jiblah, Ġamar and Xawlān (cf. Behnstedt 1987: 85).

## 2 Review of accounts that take an assimilatory view

Most linguistic accounts of the definite article in dialects which exhibit the [ʔVI]~[VI]~[I] ~[ʔVC]~[VC]~[C] variants establish an underlying form /al/ (or /l/) with feature-spreading rules, or gestural phasing, to the left of a nominal with an initial coronal (Salib 1981, Watson 2002, Woidich 2006, Youssef 2013). Adopting feature geometry models, Watson (2002) and Youssef (2013) propose that definite article assimilation is motivated by a lexical violation of the Obligatory Contour Principle on the [coronal] tier—both /l/ and the adjacent coronal consonant are marked on the place tier as [coronal]. Assimilation to a following coronal consonant is total—manner and voice, and also place (e.g. ranging from dental /θ ð/ to postalveolar /ʃ/). Youssef (2013: 26) further proposes that assimilation of /l/ of the article to a following coronal results in a false geminate rather than a true geminate. What is interesting about these analyses is the fact that with the exception of /l/ of the definite article, /l/ in Arabic only ever assimilates productively and totally to a following coronal sonorant (Wensinck 1931, Watson 2002, Youssef 2013), rather than to all coronal consonants, as in Baghdadi /baddal-na/ [baddanna] ‘we changed’, /staʃmal raff/ [staʃmar raff] ‘he made a shelf’ (Youssef 2013).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Sibawayh discusses examples where /l/ may assimilate in Classical Arabic to dentals and interdental, but states that assimilation of /l/ is less frequent before interdental than dentals and less frequent before dentals than apical sonorants (Sibawayh II: 416–417, cited in Testen 1998: 151–152).



### 3 A non-assimilatory account

In this section, we begin by defining terms we use in this paper: ‘true’ geminate, ‘false’ geminate, ‘fake’ geminate, and assimilation. We will then consider examples of different kinds of phonetic accommodation in Arabic involving /l/ followed by a coronal consonant, and also different kinds of geminates involving coronal consonants, namely: within-word coarticulation, coarticulation across a word boundary, and ‘true’ geminates. Then we will consider which of these phenomena is most like what we observe when the definite article is followed by a nominal beginning with a coronal consonant, and by a nominal beginning with a velar stop in Cairene Arabic. Accommodations will be described and analysed in terms of articulatory gestures and gestural phasing (see for example Gafos 2002), illustrated with some electropalatographic (EPG) and spectrographic data from two male speakers speaking Modern Standard Arabic. Impressionistic transcriptions of the auditory qualities of the sequences will also be given. Table 2 presents the test words used for this part of the study and the number of tokens collected from each of the two speakers.

Word	Gloss	Speakers		Number of tokens
		A	B	
<i>alsan</i>	‘most eloquent’	6	6	12
<i>alzam</i>	‘most necessary’	6	6	12
<i>alṭaf</i>	‘most kind’	6	6	12
<i>χassa</i>	‘to be mean’	6	6	12
<i>hazza</i>	‘to shake’	6	6	12
<i>haṭṭa</i>	‘to put’	6	6	12
<i>al-sahm</i>	‘the arrow’	6	6	12
<i>al-zaffa</i>	‘the wedding procession’	6	6	12
<i>al-tabaq</i>	‘the cover’	6	6	12

Table 2: Test words and number of tokens.

#### 3.1 Terminology

Relevant terms here are geminate types, coarticulation and assimilation. Regarding geminates, we distinguish ‘true’ geminates, ‘false’ geminates, and

‘fake’ geminates. ‘True’ geminates are typically defined as geminates which are ‘monomorphemic and non-derived’ (Davis 2011: 880, fn.7). They are also known in the literature as ‘lexical’ geminates because of their assumed non-derived status in the lexicon (e.g. Oh and Redford, n.d.). However, it is problematic to identify a geminate as ‘true’ or ‘lexical’ in a language exhibiting root-and-pattern morphology such as Arabic in which every occurring major class lexical item is said to be derived from an abstract consonantal root by the application of vowel patterns, each pattern being the phonological form of at least one morpheme. Our suggestion is therefore to define a ‘true’ geminate as one which is obligatory, contrasts (at least potentially) with singletons, and displays ‘geminate inseparability’ (Gafos 2002: 274) which means that the articulation cannot be released until the end of the geminate; we avoid the term ‘lexical’ geminate. ‘False’ and ‘fake’ geminates emerge on concatenation: ‘false’ geminates through the concatenation of two identical consonants (cf. Oh and Redford, n.d.), e.g. *bad dog*, and ‘fake’ geminates through assimilation of one consonant to another (usually following) consonant, e.g. *bad boy* pronounced as [bab bɔɪ]. ‘False’ geminates may also be referred to as concatenative geminates, while ‘fake’ geminates may be referred to as assimilatory geminates.

We will use the term ‘coarticulation’ as a generic term for overlapping gestures whether within a word or across a word boundary. The term ‘assimilation’ will be used for cases of coarticulation where the realization shows a complete change of phonetic category due to the total displacement of one gesture by another, for example when the English phrase *in bits* is pronounced [ɪm bɪts] with no evidence of a coronal gesture during the pronunciation of *in*. Non-assimilatory coarticulation is when there is what Jones (1972: 217–21) describes as ‘similitude’, which is due to gestural overlap across the boundary between two segments such that one segment influences the production of the other, or they both influence each other.

### 3.2 Within-word coarticulation – *alzam*, *alṭaf*

In the word *alzam* /ʔalzam/ ‘most necessary’, the /l/ is the first radical of the root which is brought into contact with the second radical as part of the manner of forming relatives on the /ʔaʔʔal/ (أَفْعَل) pattern (Hayward and Nahmad 1965: 88–90). The first syllable, /ʔal/, is therefore phonologically the same as the form of the definite article when prefixed to a nominal begin-

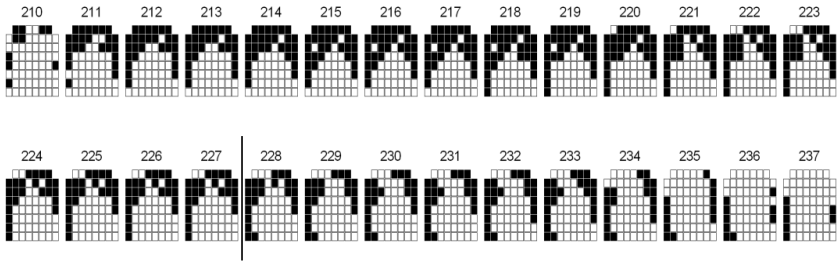


Figure 1: EPG frames of the /-lz-/ sequence in *alzam* – auditory impression [-lz-]; line indicates segment boundary.

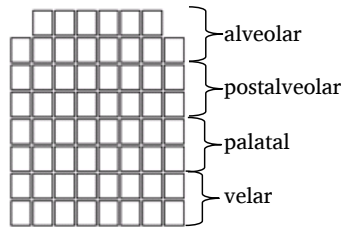


Figure 2: An enlarged blank EPG frame showing the articulatory zones. Right and left correspond to right and left in the speaker’s mouth.

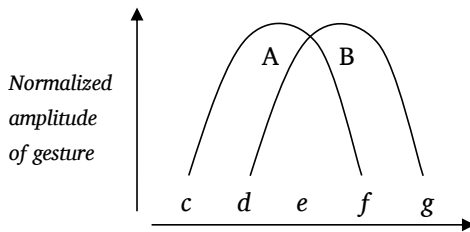


Figure 3: Gestures phased so as to overlap in time.

ning with a non-coronal consonant, e.g. *al-bint* /ʔalbint/ ‘the girl’. Figure 1 presents EPG frames of the /-lz-/ sequence in *alzam* produced by a male Libyan speaker from Tripoli speaking Modern Standard Arabic (Figure 2 shows the articulatory zones of an EPG frame). These EPG frames, and those in other figures below, are sampled at 10 ms intervals. In Figure 1 they reveal a gradual reduction in the amount of tongue contact during the /l/ from the frame of maximum contact (frame 218 with 31 contacted electrodes) such that by frame 227 the contact is almost identical, with 24 contacted electrodes, to the contact pattern at the onset of /z/ in frame 228 with 23 contacted electrodes; the difference is that a central channel starts to open up for the fricative in frame 228. During the realization of /z/, perseveration of the lateral pattern of contact can be seen at the back righthand side where there is the same gap for lateral airflow as can be seen during the realization of /l/. The articulation of /z/ here can be symbolized as [lz] (IPA 1999: 188), denoting simultaneous lateral and central airflow, although we must assume that lateral airflow is minimal given that the auditory impression is of [z].

In gestural terms, Figure 1 shows that the articulatory configurations for realizing /l/ and /z/ overlap to some extent in a real-time dynamic relationship of mutual influence which is strongest at the segment boundary. Figure 3 models coarticulation by representing the phasing of gestures such that gesture B begins (point *d*) before gesture A has been completed (point *f*). The interaction of the two gestures is greatest at point *e* where the amplitude of gesture B equals that of gesture A; we can identify point *e* in Figure 1 between frames 227 and 228.

In addition to accommodations of the primary articulation gestures involving the tongue tip and lateral margins, there is auditory and acoustic evidence for accommodation of the tongue body as well. The /l/ is realized with a ‘light’ timbre before /z/ in *alzam* but a ‘dark’ timbre before the emphatic /t/ in *altaf*. The influence of the /t/ can be heard in both vowels which have the low back [ɑ] quality found in realisations of /a/ in the environment of emphatics in Arabic, in contrast to the front [a] quality in other contexts. The emphatic pharyngealization gesture for the realization of /t/ is coarticulated with the gestures for the vowels and for /l/ with acoustic consequences in the form of prominent low-frequency resonances which can be seen in the righthand spectrogram in Figure 4. It is well-reported in instrumental studies of Arabic emphatics that the secondary articulation be-

gins earlier and finishes later than the primary articulation (see e.g. Watson 1999).

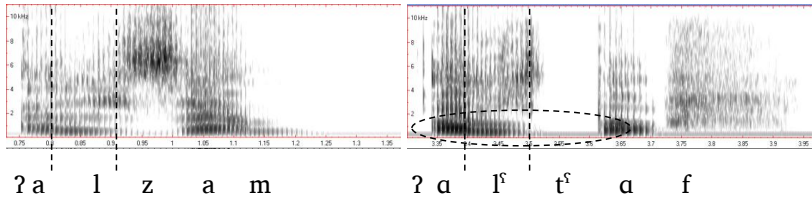
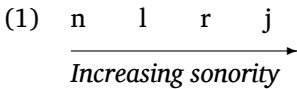


Figure 4: Spectrograms showing a front [a] vowel and clear [l] in *alzam* (left) and a back [ɑ] vowel and dark (pharyngealized) [l̥] in *altaf* (right); dotted ellipsis picks out the thick band of low-frequency resonance responsible for the ‘dark’ timbre.

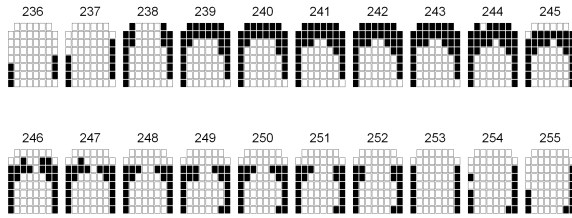
### 3.3 Coarticulation across a word boundary — *ħabil rafī*‘

Arabic displays accommodation of manner of articulation among lingual sonorants such that those lower down the sonority hierarchy optionally assimilate across a word or morpheme boundary to those higher up the hierarchy to form what we label ‘fake’ geminates (see also examples and discussions in Garbell 1958: 326–7, Watson 2002: 237–9, Heselwood, Howard and Ranjous 2011: 63–6). The relevant part of the sonority hierarchy is shown in (1).

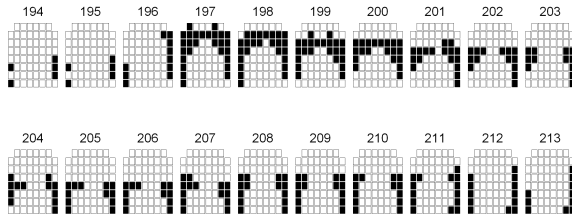


An example of coarticulation across a word boundary is provided in Figure 5 where EPG frames of the /-l#r-/ sequence in three productions of the phrase *ħabil rafī*‘ /ħabil rafi:ʕ/ ‘a thin rope’ are shown. The speaker is a female from Syria, speaking the standard Damascus dialect of Syrian Arabic.<sup>3</sup> The first production (a) exhibits the same kind of coarticulation as we saw

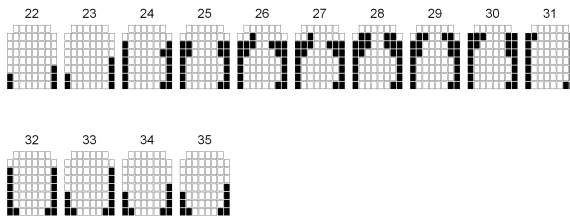
<sup>3</sup>Data reproduced from Heselwood et al. (2011: 84).



(a) Unassimilated /-l#r-/ with a short gestural overlap showing coarticulation<sup>4</sup> in frames 244–247 — auditory impression [-lɹ-]



(b) Unassimilated /-l#r-/ but with earlier inception of the gesture for /r/ — auditory impression [-lɹ-]



(c) Totally assimilated /-l#r-/ with no gesture for /l/ — auditory impression [ɹ:]

Figure 5: EPG frames showing a) some coarticulation, b) more coarticulation, and c) complete assimilation, in realisations of the sequence /-l#r-/ in *h̄abil raft̄*

<sup>4</sup>Jones' (1972) 'similitude'.

above in *alzam*. More extensive coarticulation is found in the second one (b), while the third one (c) is an example of complete assimilation resulting in a geminate central approximant [ɹ:]. Each will be described now in some detail.

In (a), frames 239–243 exhibit full alveolar closure and a gap at the back righthand side for the realization of /l/. In frames 46–252 we can see full lateral closures and a central open channel for an approximant realization of /r/; frames 244–247 show the transition from /l/ to /r/ where the two gestures overlap and influence each other. As in the case of *alzam*, the two adjacent consonants overlap but maintain perceptual distinctness. In (b), the lateral configuration for /l/ rapidly becomes more /r/-like through frames 197–200 while maintaining lateral openings for airflow until frame 204. Gestural overlap can account for this pattern in the same way as we saw above, the difference being that the gesture for /r/ begins earlier resulting in a realization of the sequence in which perception of the lateral is less clear. In terms of the diagram in Figure 3, point *d* is closer to point *c* in example (b) than in example (a).

The situation is rather different in 5(c) though. In this token, there is no perceptual or articulatory presence of a lateral consonant. The evidence is of complete assimilation with only a [ɹ]-gesture between the final vowel in *ħabil* and the first vowel in *rafiʕ*. In terms of the diagram in Figure 3, there is no A gesture at all, and thus no point *e*.

The *ħabil rafiʕ* examples show a range of degrees of accommodation of the final /l/ to the following initial /r/, from relatively short gestural overlap in 5(a) with a perceptually robust [l], through more extensive overlap in which [l] is less robustly present in articulatory and perceptual terms, to total assimilation in which there is no discernable [l]-segment in production or perception. The result of this total assimilation is a long [ɹ:] extending across the word boundary, our ‘fake’ or ‘assimilatory’ geminate. An important observation in relation to these variable productions is that they demonstrate gradience and optionality. That is to say, the phonology of Arabic allows speakers to use any of these variants at fake geminate sites. A further very important point is that the possibility of releasing the word-final consonant before forming the following word-initial consonant decreases as the degree of gestural overlap increases, reaching zero in the case of total assimilation. A pronunciation such as \*[ħabiɹ ɹafi:ʕ] is not attested in Arabic and we

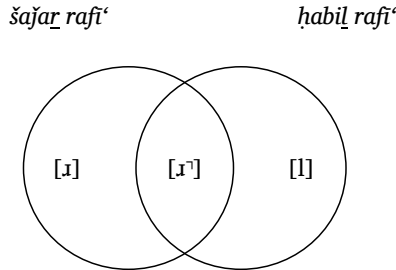


Figure 6: The main realizational possibilities for final /r/ in *šajar rafi'* (left circle) and final /l/ in *ħabil rafi'* (right circle).

have what Gafos (2002: 274) calls ‘geminate inseparability’.<sup>5</sup> Similarly in English, if there is assimilation of /n/ in *in bits*, it cannot be pronounced \*[ɪm<sup>✓</sup> bits]. A crucial question concerning tokens which exhibit total assimilation is whether the final consonant of the first word has changed its phonological identity: has the /l/ of *ħabil* become /r/, or can we justifiably and coherently say that the /l/ is realized as unreleased [ɾ̚] in this context? If /l/ has become /r/, then the realizational possibilities should be the same as for a word-final /r/ followed by a word initial /r/ as in *šajar rafi'* /*šaɟar rafi:ʔ*/ ‘a thin tree’: that is to say, if it is claimed that /l/ has become /r/, then it should behave exactly as /r/ behaves. The fact is that it does not. In *šajar rafi'*, although there is the option of not releasing the [ɾ] of *šajar*, and thus forming a ‘false’ (concatenative) geminate, there is also the option of releasing it which demonstrates that a ‘false’ geminate does not exhibit geminate inseparability. ‘Fake’ or ‘assimilatory’ geminates do not have this option because the assimilated consonant must be unreleased or remain unassimilated. Following Heselwood, Howard and Ranjous (2011: 95–6), we can represent the difference between ‘false’ and ‘fake’ geminates using Venn diagrams, as in Figure 6.

Although final /r/ and final /l/ can both be realized as unreleased [ɾ̚], they nevertheless both have unique realizations in their respective sets of possible realizations and are thus disambiguated. This means that while neutralization of the /r-/l/ opposition may occur phonetically in individual

<sup>5</sup> We use the tick ✓ to explicitly denote release of an articulatory constriction, whether audible or not.



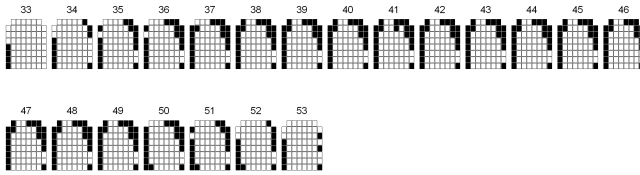


Figure 7: EPG frames showing the /zz/ coronal articulation in *hazza* — auditory impression [z:]

utterances, it does not occur in the phonological system because it is not obligatory. That is to say, in Saussurean terms, not all neutralizations which can be found in *parole* are neutralizations in *langue*.<sup>6</sup> To ensure that we do not misinterpret them to be so, we must take account of whole sets of possible realizations, not just those we observe on particular occasions.

### 3.4 ‘True’ geminates — *hazza*

‘True’ geminates are geminates that exhibit geminate inseparability and contrast, at least potentially, with singletons (cf. above). Figure ?? presents EPG frames showing the close approximation constriction for the realization of the ‘true’ geminate /zz/ in a token of the Modern Standard Arabic form I doubled verb *hazza* /hazza/ ‘to shake’ (same speaker as in Figure 1).

The frames in Figure ?? show a central channel for airflow narrowing transversely in the alveolar region. The contact pattern remains stable (see frames 38–49), indicating that a single articulatory gesture is executed and maintained between the two vowels.

### 3.5 Definite article plus coronal consonant — *al-zaffa*

EPG frames for the so-called ‘assimilated’ /l/ of the definite article plus coronal /z/ in *al-zaffa* [az:af:a] ‘the wedding procession’ can be seen in Figure ?. The speaker is the same as in Figures 1, 4 and ?.

The patterns of lingual–palatal contact in Figures ?? and ?? are almost identical, and the auditory impressions are of the same long [z:]. This is of

<sup>6</sup>For Saussure’s langue–parole distinction see Culler (1976: 29–34).

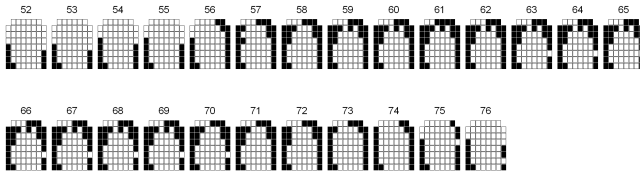


Figure 8: EPG frames for the underlined part of *al-zaffa* — auditory impression [z:].

course to be expected—nobody suggests that any trace of a lateral articulation can be observed in pronunciations of the definite article when it is followed by a word beginning with a non-lateral coronal consonant such as /z/. The question is therefore not whether there is evidence of [l] in *al-zaffa*, but whether the observed long [z:] should be analysed phonologically as containing an underlying /l/ which totally assimilates to the following /z/ in manner and aspect of articulation (in the case of words beginning with voiceless /t t̥ θ s ʃ/, assimilation of glottal state would also have to be postulated, and in the case of /θ ð ʒ/ assimilation of place of articulation), or whether it makes more sense to regard the phonological form of *al-zaffa* as /azzaffa/. Where we find clear examples of assimilation such as in *ḥabil raḥī* pronounced as [ḥabilɾ̥ ɾafiːʔ], we also find the possibility of unassimilated forms exhibiting various degrees of coarticulation consistent with real-time dynamic relationships between adjacent elements also seen between /l/ and /z/ in *alzam* in Figure 1, and between /l/ and /t/ in *alṭaf* in Figure 3. Total assimilation resulting in ‘fake’ geminates across a word boundary, like in *ḥabil raḥī*, is simply the limiting case of the element in the more dominant position exerting its maximum influence in real time but, crucially, without compromising the phonological identity of the assimilated element: /l/ remains /l/ even when realized as [ɾ̥] because of the other members of the set of possible realizations. In words such as *hazza* with ‘true’ geminates, however, the geminate is not a member of a set of alternative non-geminate realizations, and the same is true of *al-zaffa* and all other so-called definite article plus coronal consonant assimilations. Our contention is that they are not assimilations at all, but ‘true’ geminates which occur as phonologically determined allomorphs of the definite article.

Setting up /ʔal/ (or /l/) as the underlying form of the Arabic definite article, and deriving the geminated forms which occur in the context of a following coronal consonant from it through a process of assimilation, fails to account for the lack of optionality and gradience which real-time dynamic accommodations exhibit. There is no evidence at all of a real-time process of accommodation of /l/ to a following coronal of the kind we can observe in ‘false’ gemination when a speaker selects an item starting with a certain consonant and places it after an item ending in that consonant, or a consonant which can assimilate to it as in the example of *ḥabil rafti*‘ so as to produce a ‘fake’ geminate. Phonetic analysis of constructions such as *al-zaffa* strongly suggests that speakers do not select /ʔal/ (or /l/) and /zaffa/ and then put them into construction in real time. Rather, it suggests either that they select the syntactic element /azzaffa/ with its geminate /zz/ ‘ready-made’, or that speakers choose the definite article allomorph according to the initial segment of the defined word.

### 3.6 Definite article plus dorsal stop in Cairo Arabic

In modern Cairo Arabic, when a word beginning with /k/ or /g/ is preceded by the definite article, for example *il-kalb* ‘the dog’, *il-ḡaras* ‘the bell’, speakers have the option of pronouncing it either with /l/ ([ʔilkalb], [ʔilḡaras]) or with a geminated stop ([ʔik:alb], [ʔig:aḡas]) (see Watson 2002: 217–22).<sup>7</sup> This optionality could be the same kind as the optionality attending accommodations across a word boundary as in *ḥabil rafti*‘, that is to say an optionality in which a range of variants dependent on gestural phasing is implicated, or it could be a straight binary choice between a form with /l/ on the one hand, and a ‘true’ geminate form on the other. This question can in principle be answered by analysis of EPG data to see if there is any evidence of a gesture for /l/. Unfortunately, we do not yet have such data available.

## 4 Brief review of the historical development of the definite article

Part of the motivation for the assimilation analysis of definite article plus coronal consonant sequences is probably acceptance of the view that histor-

<sup>7</sup>In Cairo Arabic, as in many other dialects, the vowel in the definite article is /i/, not the /a/ of Modern Standard Arabic.

ically the /l/ assimilated to following coronals and that the underlying form of the article maintains an original /l/ in all contexts, an argument that is supported by Arabic orthography that represents the definite article as ⟨al⟩ (ﻻ) in all contexts. Voigt (1998) and Testen (1998) adopt this position, arguing respectively for /al/ deriving from a demonstrative or an asseverative \* *l* particle. There are, however, reasons for doubting this view, and several Semitic philologists have contested the claim that the definite article in Arabic is underlyingly /al/ from a historical point of view.

Kuryłowicz (1972: 131–2) argues that the historically recorded definite article with the principal allomorph /al/ is a relatively recent innovation. This is pursued by Zaborski (2000), who advances the intriguing proposition that the original article had three allomorphs according to number and gender: an *n*-based article for masculine singular, a *t*-based article for feminine singular, and an *l*-based article for plural. Since both /n/ and /t/ regularly assimilate, /l/ was selected as the orthographic form for the Arabic article as the consonant least prone to assimilation.

On the basis of historical reconstruction and discussion of the definite article in various Semitic languages, Wensinck (1931) and Ullendorff (1965) present cases for regarding the /ʔal/ form of the definite article as resulting from a historical process of dissimilation of non-coronal geminates: the Hebrew definite article is /ha/ with gemination of the nominal-initial consonant except where this is a laryngeal or pharyngeal; before laryngeals and pharyngeals, the form is /hā/ followed by a non-geminate. According to Ullendorff, the basic form of the Hebrew article is lengthening or tenseness with degemination and vowel lengthening before laryngeals and pharyngeals; according to Wensinck, the basic form of the Hebrew article is *hā-*. In the (vowel-less) Dadanite and Lihyanite inscriptions, the definite article is /h/ before all but laryngeals and pharyngeals, and is assumed (Ullendorff 1965: 635) to have induced gemination of the initial consonant. Before laryngeals and pharyngeals, gemination is dissolved by insertion of either /n/ or /l/, as in: *hlḥmq* and *hlḥmy* (Jausen II, 474, no. 158, cited in Ullendorff 1965: 636; cf. also Macdonald 2000: 40). Noting further that dialects in Oman have been identified as optionally geminating initial labials and uvular consonants (b, f, q) (Rhodokanakis 1908–11), and that several dialects geminate velar consonants (cf. Watson 2002 and others), Ullendorff argues that the definite article in Hebrew and Arabic may be more closely related than previously thought, that definiteness was originally expressed by gem-

ination or tensing of the initial consonant, with degemination of glides, laryngeals and pharyngeals through /l/.

Ullendorff's argument for an original geminate definite article was later dismissed by Wagner (1993) on the basis of evidence from Modern South Arabian. Wagner argued that Mehri showed no morphological gemination, and therefore that gemination could not have been an exponent of definiteness. Work has, however, shown that both Omani Mehri and its sister languages Šherēt and Ḥarsūsi do exhibit gemination of the initial C in definite nouns and adjectives, particularly where this C is voiceless and non-emphatic, as in Mehri: *tōmar* 'dates' > (a)t-*tōmar* 'the dates', *xīl* 'uncle' > (a)*xxayli* 'my uncle' (Watson 2012: 20–22).

## 5 Conclusion

We have argued that the geminates which occur in definite article plus coronal consonant constructions are not the result of synchronic assimilation and should instead be regarded as 'true' geminates, not assimilatory geminates. Our illustrative articulatory and acoustic data indicate that the geminate [z:] in *al-zaffa* is no different from that in *hazza*, and very different from within-word coarticulations involving /l/ and from 'fake' geminates resulting from assimilation of /l/ across a word boundary. Whether the Arabic definite article began historically with a ubiquitous /l/ which then assimilated to coronals, or whether /l/ was part of an alternation /n/~t/~l/ based on gender and number, or whether the marker of definiteness began as gemination and then developed an /l/-form in a process of historical dissimilation, makes no difference to our analysis, although of course it does make a difference to an account of how the current state of affairs arose.

The non-assimilatory account of the phonology of the Arabic definite article we have presented is better accommodated in a theoretical approach which does not assume invariant underlying phonological forms of morphemes from which observable variants are derived. The assumption found i.a. in generative phonology that a single morpheme must at some ultimate abstract level be instantiated by a single phonological form can be characterized as an example of a reification fallacy in which a single item in morphology is required to correspond to a single item in phonology. Setting up an underlying form with /l/ is very likely motivated by one or more of three factors. First is the fact that in written Arabic it is represented with

the letter corresponding to /l/ in all orthographic contexts, as mentioned above. Second is the widely-held view that the original form of the article had /l/ in all phonological contexts. Third is the fact that, in formulating a phonological rule to derive surface forms, it is relatively simpler to derive the geminate variants from an underlying /l/ because they can all be specified by the single feature-value [+coronal] with the [l] variant occurring ‘elsewhere’ (see Kiparsky 1973). Taking each of these motivations in turn: regarding the first point, it is often risky to base phonological analysis on orthographic evidence; regarding the second point, the original form of the definite article may or may not have had an /l/, the arguments for and against remain inconclusive; as for the third point, there is little if any justification for assuming that the simplest rule we can come up with bears any relation to what language users actually do in real time when speaking. To our knowledge, there is no evidence from available data that Arabic speakers, when saying *al-zaffa*, begin with /ʔal-zaffa/ and then assimilate the /l/ to the /z/. If that was the case, we would expect to find real-time dynamic influences of the kind seen in *alzam*, *altaf* and *habil rafi* as the articulatory gestures for realizing /l/ adapt to the local circumstances. In our opinion, the facts of the definite article in Arabic are best accounted for in terms of phonologically conditioned allomorphy, not by derivation from a single invariant form.

There is an interesting further consequence of our analysis for the notion of a ‘true’ geminate which we only have space to touch on here, but which we would nevertheless like to point out. It relates to the point made above about the problematic nature of the definition of a ‘true’ geminate as monomorphemic and non-derived. In a case such as *al-zaffa* the definite article morpheme has been prefixed to a noun, resulting in an obligatory, non-gradient and inseparable geminate [z:]. It is clearly not monomorphemic, and is clearly derived in the sense of coming about due to prefixation. Similarly, in a case such as *kassara* ‘to smash (s.th.)’ in which the obligatory non-gradient inseparable geminate [s:] is classed as a ‘true’ geminate, a morpheme with the function of intensifying a verb has been affixed to *kasara* ‘to break (s.th.)’. *kassara* is thus grammatically derived from *kasara* by addition of a morpheme. There are therefore strong grounds for regarding these two geminates as belonging to the same type in Arabic. Our contention is that they are both ‘true’ geminates in the revised typology of geminates presented in Table 3, which does not appeal to derivational relations as a criterion.

	TRUE	FALSE	FAKE	PSUEDO
	<i>hazza</i> <i>kassara</i> <i>al-zaffa</i>	<i>šaġar rafi'</i> Eng. <i>bad dog</i>	<i>ħabil rafi'</i> Eng. <i>bad boy</i>	Coll. <i>hazz</i> (?)
Inseparable	✓	✗	✓	✓
Obligatory	✓	✗	✗	✓
Potential contrast with singleton	✓	✓	✓	✗

Table 3: A revised typology of geminates

If *kassara* contains a true geminate, then so do *al-zaffa*, *al-šams*, *al-tīn*, *al-nahr* and all words containing the definite article followed by a coronal consonant.

The category of ‘pseudo’ geminate covers those final long consonants in colloquial forms of Arabic resulting from vowel apocope, giving e.g. /hazz/ compared to MSA /hazza/. If there is no possibility of commutation with a singleton \*/haz/ because of syllable weight requirements for monosyllabic words, then the long consonant represents a neutralization between geminate and singleton for which ‘pseudo geminate’ may be an appropriate and useful term. However, further research is needed to confirm whether such neutralization does in fact occur.

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# Spreading *which* word? Philological, theological and socio-political considerations behind the nineteenth-century Bible translation into Yorùbá

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## Abstract

The nineteenth century saw not only a spread of Christianity throughout West Africa, but also the translation of Christian texts into local African languages. In present-day Nigeria, a small group of Anglican African and European missionaries responsible for translating the Scriptures into Yorùbá documented their progress and considerations in journals and letters. In this paper I reconstruct the considerations behind the translations and the often unexpected linguistic, religious, and political repercussions of missionary work. I show that the missionaries, by committing Yorùbá to writing, developing the Christian vocabulary, and by linguistically reinterpreting elements of native theology and cosmology, reconceptualising the native population's world, effectively wielded linguistic power over their target audience. By the examples of the Yorùbá translations of key Christian terms ('prayer', 'God', 'Holy Spirit'), I illustrate that frequently political and religio-cultural considerations governed linguistic choices while involuntary concessions to Muslim and native culture had to be made nevertheless. At the same time, as translation always entails the transfer of the message into the target language's cultural sphere, the act of translation meant relinquishing control over the message to Yorùbá Christians, thus partly handing over the missionaries' interpretational authority. The reinterpretation of the deity Èṣù as the devil backfired on the missionaries because it allowed converts to retain elements of their old beliefs in their lives. Thus, I argue that Yorùbá Christians were not mere passive recipients but also active and empowered creators of the message delivered to them.

## 1 Translating the message

“A missiologist [...] is a theologian who is *bilingual*.” (Mazibuko 2003: 226)

Great names spring to mind when Bible translations are discussed: the seventy translators and eponym of the Septuagint, the Carthagian Tertullian, who in the earliest days of Christianity developed the Latin Christian vocabulary, and eventually Martin Luther, whose Bible translation into the vernacular was a seminal step during the Reformation. Yet, even from the very beginning, as David Jasper remarks,

the Bible has always been a translated text, and indeed, within its own pages there are already translations. In Mark 15:34, Jesus last words from the Cross, ‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?’ are translated into Greek from Aramaic (2005: 107).

In contrast, in Islamic history, the translation of the Qur’an has generally been eyed suspiciously. As a literally revealed text, seen as relayed to the Prophet Muhammed by Allah, the Qur’an is regarded “untranslatable since it is a linguistic miracle with transcendental meanings” (Abdul-Raof 2005: 162). Arabic is held as the indispensable medium for the revealed message. A perceived intrinsic relationship between form and meaning thus causes translations of the text to be corrupt and has for a long time meant that Muslims across the world, irrespective of their native language, have encountered the Qur’an in Arabic. Here lies a significant difference between Islamic and Christian traditions; for the latter, the multilingual origins and composite nature of the Scriptures have generally meant an, if not unchallenged then at least receptive, approach to translation in order to ‘spread the word’.

Thus, Christian missionary efforts and translation have traditionally gone hand in hand. Announcing the Good News to all nations, as Jesus requests of his followers in Matthew 28:19–20, has been understood to mean translating the Scriptures and other Christian texts such as hymn books and prayer books into a formidable number of local native languages. It should be noted at this point that writing was not the only medium to transport the Christian message. Writing from Lékí on the Lagos peninsula, British missionary J. B. Read refers to a “wordless book” (23rd October 1877, CA2 O79 4) with

four coloured pages, black, red, white, and gold. The sequence of the colours symbolises Christian soteriology: black stands for the sinfulness of man, red for Christ's sacrifice, white for sanctification, and gold for the eschatological promise of eternal life (cf. Peel 2003: 168). Far from being reliant on verbal discourse or the literacy of the audience, the book with the coloured pages proved an immensely powerful tool of evangelisation. Initial verbal explanation was naturally required, but the immediacy of the symbolism of the colours and the—perhaps intended—coincidence with elements of Yorùbá symbolism and the non-verbal Yorùbá communication system of the *àrokò*, consisting of mostly symbolic gifts constituting and reassuring the relationship between sender and recipient, accounted for the great impact of the wordless book.

Despite such examples of non-verbal strategies, the written word, preferably in the readers' mother-tongue, traditionally has been the main medium of evangelisation. Particularly for Protestant Christians an individual's immediate access to the Bible's message has been of paramount importance, an heirloom of the Lutheran notion of scriptural primacy. According to Pughach (cf. 2012: 37), for nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries in Africa, many of them Germans with a distinct pietist background, nothing could bring the Good News alive to the native population better than providing them with the text in their own mother tongue.

Translation is not, however, a one-way street. Nor is it limited to linguistic aspects. Rather, the interdependency of linguistic forms and the culture in which they are developed and used, means that adopting the local native language is to a certain extent tantamount to adopting local cultural forms. In a process of "radical indigenization far greater than the standard portrayal of mission as Western cultural imperialism" (Sanneh 1990: 3) linguistic as well as cultural connotations, etymologies, forms and structures are transferred from the 'receptor' context to the translated message.

The context of the nineteenth-century translation of the Scriptures and other Christian texts into Yorùbá presents no exception. As elsewhere, German and British missionaries worked on the translation supported by the linguistic and cultural expertise of African agents. As Lamin Sanneh (1990: 5) accurately remarks, "it does not take long before what is a calculated, simple, short step brings the translator into the quicksand of indigenous cultural nuances". This paper will give a taste of the missionaries' dance on this quicksand by reconstructing the translation process using information

gathered from Church Missionary Society (CMS) incoming correspondence of the Yoruba Mission and letters to the General Committee and Editorial Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS).

## 2 Source material

The majority of the source material for this paper consists of African and European CMS agents' letters and journal extracts, kept in the Society's archive at the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham. When the CMS was founded in 1799, it was felt that "it is the duty highly incumbent upon every Christian to endeavour to propagate the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen" (resolution passed on foundation meeting, quoted in Keen 1999: 8).

Initially, the CMS endeavoured to fulfil this duty in Sierra Leone, to where former West African slaves and their descendants had been relocated by their British liberators. In the early 1840s, the Yorùbá-born among the inhabitants of Sierra Leone started returning to their home in the area of what today is Southwestern Nigeria (Figure 1), which subsequently led the CMS to establish the Yoruba mission in 1844 in order to further promote Christianity in West Africa.

As Peel remarks, "for most of the nineteenth century [CMS] agents were [...] expected to write journals or 'journal extracts' for dispatch to [the] headquarters at Salisbury Square in London" (Peel 2003: 9) in order for the Society's Committee of Correspondence to be able to monitor missionary progress and conduct. In addition, the missionaries corresponded with CMS officials by letters, in which personal matters or urgent issues would be discussed.

The archival filing system for the documents reflects the historical development of the mission in West Africa:

[The Yoruba mission] was set up as an administrative unit in 1844 [...]. The earliest documents for the Yorùbá area, however, are in the Sierra Leone mission [...], as that mission covered all work in West Africa until 1844 (Keen 1989: 2).

Accordingly, the documents for the Sierra Leone mission used in this paper can be identified by the shelf mark CA1, whereas the Yoruba mission correspondence is filed under CA2. In addition, every missionary's correspon-

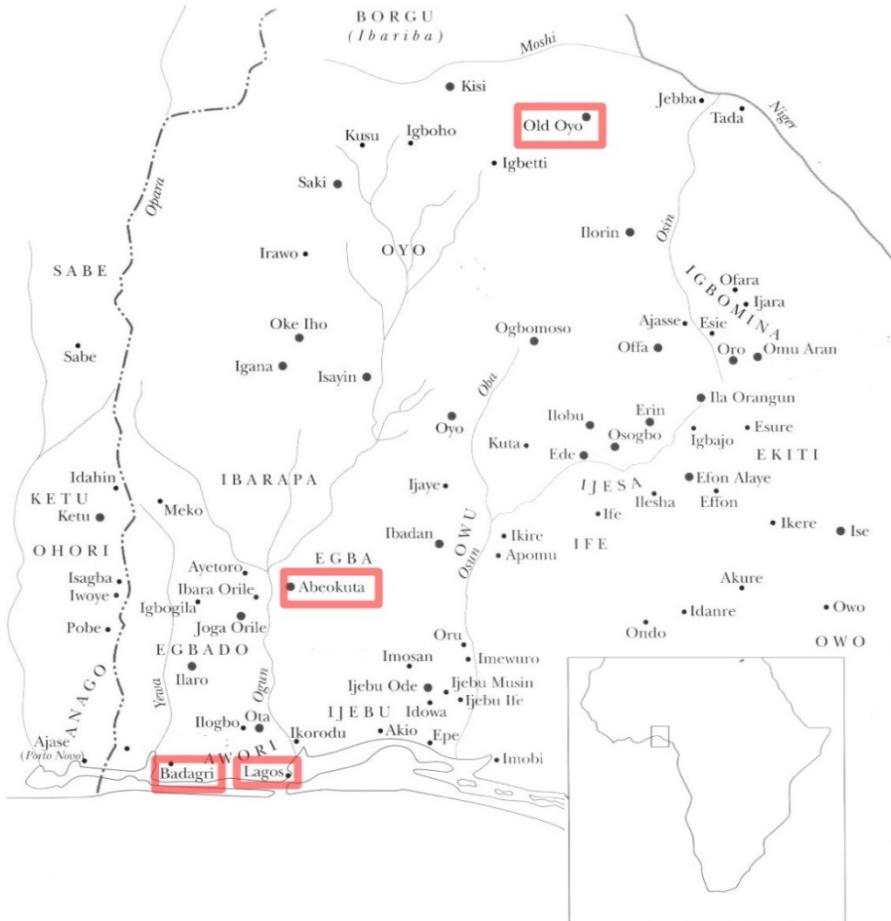


Figure 1: Map of Yorùbáland  
(adapted from: <http://www.randafricanart.com>)

dence was filed under an individual file number; Samuel Ajayi Crowther's Yorùbá mission correspondence, for example, can thus be found under CA2 O31.

Only a comparatively small group of missionaries were involved in the translation process in the early years of the Yorùbá mission. For the reconstruction of the philological and theological considerations behind the translation of Christian texts into Yorùbá and the repercussions on the development of Yorùbá Christianity, I focused on the correspondence of the Yorùbá missionaries Samuel Ajayi Crowther and Thomas King, the German agents Charles Gollmer and James F. Schön, and the Englishman Henry Townsend, involved in editorial work.

In addition to the CMS material, the BFBS archive in the University Library in Cambridge proved to be a valuable resource for this paper. Founded in 1804, the Society, not unlike the CMS, was very much a child of its time, which saw the foundation of a number of mission and bible societies (cf. Canton 1904: 3). Its objective in its philanthropy and catholicity was in accordance with its founders' efforts against the slave-trade and for the spread of the Christian faith: "To print the Scriptures without note or comment, to scatter them broadcast, not only in [the British Isles] but throughout the peoples of the world" (Canton 1904: 4). The Society's archive, amongst others, holds Samuel Ajayi Crowther's and Charles Gollmer's correspondence with the Society on the Yorùbá translation of the Scriptures and also letters by the Society's Editorial and Translations Department. The documents contain information on the translation timeline, the people involved in the various stages of the process, and financial and sales figures.

The archival work on which this paper is based involved transcribing relevant passages of this handwritten material. As far as possible, I have kept the original orthography and punctuation in my transcripts in order to document contemporary and idiosyncratic language use. Equally, I have not adjusted the spelling of place names or personal names, for example of deities, to modern Yorùbá spelling. Yorùbá was given a written form by Christian missionaries. Standardised orthography thus developed throughout the nineteenth century, which means that, particularly in early Yorùbá mission correspondence, the spelling of proper names varies.

### 3 Committing Yorùbá to writing

In early nineteenth-century Yorùbáland writing was virtually non-existent. A “few scraps of Arabic writing” (CA2 O85 227), as Henry Townsend mentions on 25th March 1845, were not uncommon because they were felt to be charms with apotropaic powers. Presumably especially in the coastal regions traders were familiar with English writing (cf. Sanneh 1983: 129). The *babaláwo*, Ifá diviners, used ideograms and symbols on carvings and written in the sand during divination. A systematical written form of the regional varieties of the language spoken in the area, however, did not exist and transmission and memorising of traditions and historical knowledge was oral.

Initially, the European missionaries coming to Yorùbáland relied on interpreters for everyday conversations with the native population as well as in church services. On 18th May 1845, for example, Henry Townsend writes about his church service in Abẹ̀òkúta: “I then engaged in prayer. Mr. Marsh [an Ègbá catechist] following me in the Yorùbá language” (CA2 O85 228). Still in Freetown, Samuel Crowther started to translate the first chapters of the Gospel of St. Luke and the Acts for very practical reasons:

According to the Instructions of the Parent Committee, to commence preaching in the Yoruba language, in the Mission in Freetown, which I desire to put into practice as soon as possible, I commenced making some translations (CA1 O79 10).

While these first attempts were initially meant to avoid *ad hoc* translations during service, there was an appeal to devising a standardised translation into the local language. Translator interpretations and insufficient language proficiency on the part of the European missionaries constituted a threat to a consistent evangelisation and dissemination of the Good News.

Since the cultures in Yorùbáland were still by and large pre-literate in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the teaching of literacy and the essentials of a Western education came in close conjunction with the evangelisation of the native population. Apart from basic literacy training by means of the Yorùbá primer (*Iwe Ekinni*), which contained, for example, the newly devised Yorùbá alphabet, translated passages from the gospel of St. Luke and the Lord’s Prayer (*àdúà Olúwa*), the syllabus in the Abẹ̀òkúta mission station for example consisted of lessons in scripture history, geography, arithmetic, and English grammar and syntax (cf. Thomas King, 26th



December 1851, CA2 O61 42). Learning to read the Bible and other religious texts was a central part of preparing prospective converts for baptism. “It [...] seems very likely,” Peel explains, “that the large investment of effort required to become a ‘book person’ helped to fix converts in their new Christian identity” (Peel 2003: 230). A less positive stance towards Western education existed as well. Certainly, the civilisation mission inherent in introducing Western education could be seen to have an assimilatory effect, weeding out African oral culture and introducing the West as the cultural and religious benchmark. It is hardly surprising that Samuel Crowther, still in Sierra Leone, reports an attitude, particularly amongst older Yorùbá, that “book learning [was] for white people” (11th February 1837, CA1 O79 1) only.

While it remains debatable, therefore, “whether missionaries educated Africans to suppress them or to advance their welfare (there was indeed something of both)” (Sanneh 1983: 128), literacy, and also having access to the Scriptures in their own language, had an unquestionable impact on the interaction between the various social groups in Yorùbáland. Samuel Crowther certainly felt it to be “a very high favour conferred on [his] nation, that they possess the word of God in their own tongue” (1843, CA1 O79 10; exact date uncertain).

### 3.1 ‘*Clothing sounds into letters*’

Crowther therefore took on the pioneering task of devising a notation system for his native language. For an African whose first language of literacy was English, choosing the Roman script for committing his mother tongue to writing seemed unquestioned.<sup>1</sup> The only alternative script in the area was Arabic. Its close association with Islam<sup>2</sup> and the fact that there was no significant rate of literacy in Arabic in any case, would have made it an ahistorical choice not serving the Christian cause.

The phonemic inventory of English is to a large extent similar to that of Crowther’s mother tongue. However, there are a number of phonemes in

<sup>1</sup>My research so far has not discovered any correspondence or secondary literature in which the issue is explicitly addressed.

<sup>2</sup>In the case of Swahili, which already had a literary tradition before the beginning of the colonial period, this association with Islam led the Swabian missionary Ludwig Krapf to adopt the Roman script for his dictionary of Swahili. Mission schools subsequently continued to discourage the use of the traditional Arabic script.

Yorùbá which have no equivalent in English, for example the voiced and unvoiced labio-velar plosives [g̃b] and [kp̃] as well as the nasalised vowels [ĩ], [ũ] and [õ]. Finding a graphemic equivalent in the Roman script proved a demanding task. Attempts were made to express the Yorùbá phonemes using several letters of the Roman script but initially in a very unsystematic manner, as Crowther's first translation of Luke 2:14<sup>3</sup> shows:

“Ogo ni fu Olorung li oke-orung, ati li aiye alafia ife hin ohre si enia.”      “Ogo ni fun Ọlọrun loke orun ati ni aye alaafia, ife inu rere si eniyan!”  
 (“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”)  
 (16th January 1844, CA1 O79 11a)      (modern Yorùbá bible)

In the 1844 translation the nasal vowel [ũ] is still rendered in two different ways: in one instance the nasalised manner of articulation is not represented in writing at all (⟨fu⟩), in the other it is represented by ⟨ng⟩, the English graphemisation of the phoneme [ŋ] (⟨Olorung⟩).

Charles Gollmer, who in the first years of the Yorùbá mission edited Crowther's initial translations and added an extensive philological and theological commentary, also struggled with the task “to ascertain the natural sounds, and to cloth them into the proper letters” (25th September 1844, CA1 O103). He could draw on the phonemic and graphemic inventory of his native German for this task:

I was led by a plain and common sound [presumably the phoneme [ɛ]], to adopt the German [...] Vowel ‘ä’, which some sought to express by the letters ‘ai’, and others by ‘eh’ (25th September 1844, CA1 O103).

Gollmer aimed at a one sound–one letter representation for Yorùbá orthography. In his commentary on Yorùbá orthography from 1847 (CA2 O43 94) he indicates that Crowther had initially rendered the phoneme [g̃b], a sound “beginning with g, flowing over and finishing in b” (CA2 O43 94), as ⟨gb⟩; Gollmer, however, in accordance with his own rule, preferred the notation ⟨b̃⟩, thus introducing the diacritical marks into Yorùbá orthography.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Unless otherwise indicated I quote from the King James Bible.

<sup>4</sup>The voiceless equivalent [kp̃] Gollmer represented as ⟨p⟩; it could not be confused with /p/ because the latter does not exist in the Yorùbá phonemic inventory.

The phoneme [ʃ], however, Gollmer suggests, should be rendered as ⟨sh⟩, “[a]s this sound is very common in the language and as it is desirable not to accumulate diacritical marks” (CA2 O43 94). Another major philological achievement of the Swabian missionary worth mentioning in this context, apart from introducing diacritical marks, is the notation of accents. Yorùbá is a tonal language and thus intonation patterns are relevant for distinguishing meaning. In 1847, Gollmer is still uncertain about a sensible strategy to fix intonation in Yorùbá orthography but nevertheless offers suggestions:

acute Accent to denote Elevation, whilst the Grave accent points out depression of voice, [...] Syllables without without [sic] either of those two marks must be considered of the Even voice (CA2 O43 94).

I would like to draw attention to two details at this point. The initial orthographical and grammatical inconsistencies shown above eventually led, in Henry Venn’s words, to the

Establishment of a Missionary Philological Committee for certain purposes connected with the preparation of foreign versions of the Scriptures, and for adopting an uniform system, as far as possible of orthography in these languages which are being committed to writing (2nd June 1848, BSA/E3/1/2/2 (General Committee letters Vol.2)).

The Philological Committee under the aegis of James F. Schön reviewed Yorùbá orthography and edited the translated passages where they felt it necessary.

This step indicates that evangelising the native population encompassed the missionaries’ meticulous, and in the true sense of the word philological, work of developing a less transient medium for the oral Yorùbá culture and studying and ‘developing’ the language by committing it to writing.

Also, Charles Gollmer, as pointed out above, was a native speaker of German and only started learning Yorùbá in early 1844 (cf. 20th February 1844, CA1 O103). In September 1844 he admits that “acquirement of the Yoruba language has taken up by far the greatest portion of my time during the quarter” (journal ending 25th September 1844, CA1 O103). Yet, in the same year Gollmer remarkably feels up to the task of translating the Lord’s Prayer, the

Ten Commandments, and the first two chapters of the Gospel of St. Matthew. The Missionary Philological Committee as well Charles Gollmer's dedication and alacrity concerning the task at hand make telling examples of the considerable external, non-African influence on the development of the language.

The significance of the step of giving the dialects which would later make up the Yorùbá language a written form can hardly be overestimated. The act of fixing the language, its words, sentences and idioms, in a lasting medium certainly must be called a milestone in the region's language and religio-cultural history. The ephemeral spoken word received a stable form. Its content and meaning could now be transmitted across time and space. For Peel, this constituted part of the "intrinsic 'magic' of writing" (Peel 2003: 223) and closely connected with the use of writing and ideograms in Muslim and Ifá divination respectively. The stable and physical form of the written words pointed to the actually existing power of their content. Consequently, written Christian texts, for example the Bible or the Yorùbá Primer, were seen as desirable instruments for unlocking the Europeans' perceived power. Moreover, granting access to this power by teaching the willing how to read and write certainly sent, if not a shock wave, then at least a tremor through a hierarchical, gerontocratic society.

It should be mentioned at this point that the positive assessment of giving an oral language a written form presented here has an ideological counterpart in discourse history. This is closely linked with the notion of the primacy of the spoken word and evaluates committing a language to writing as an act of pruning. Sound and visual performance crucial for memorising and (re-)telling of stories and traditions in oral cultures are lost in writing. Authors like Vansina (1985) and Sindima (1999) have heavily criticised what they feel is a process of impoverishing oral cultures by 'reducing' a language to writing. Also, and this is particularly relevant in the present context, introducing a European writing system and thereby often eradicating already existing systems like ideograms and other non-verbal communication systems, like the Yorùbá *àrokò*, has been criticised. It is in this spirit that Sindima remarks "[that] this 'blessing' Africa received through European writing must be seriously questioned, or at least seen from another perspective" (Sindima 1999: 113).

### 3.2 Standardising Yorùbá

In light of Sindima's criticism, the socio-political implications of committing Yorùbá to writing cannot be ignored. In the early nineteenth century, no homogeneous language was spoken in the area today called Yorùbáland. Instead, regional varieties existed which were to a certain extent mutually intelligible. Equally, the various 'tribes' in the area did not think of themselves as sharing a common identity, let alone a common ethnonym. The ethnic groups referred to themselves by autonyms such as Ègbá, Òyó or Ijesha. The notion of a 'nation' in the European sense<sup>5</sup> with a common name could hardly have evolved in the turbulent early nineteenth-century world of civil wars and slave raids.

The situation was different, however, for those living in diaspora in Sierra Leone, Brazil, Cuba or Haiti. Cultural and linguistic similarities became more relevant than the differences. Àkú was the term used for and by former slaves originating from Yorùbáland.<sup>6</sup> When Crowther published his 'Vocabulary of the Eyo or Aku Language' in the early 1830s, he took the meaning of the term Àkú even one step further while at the same time narrowing it down: He treated the diaspora ethnonym Àkú like a *totum pro parte* for the dialect of Òyó; the appellation *Yorùbá* would eventually perform the same task.

Originally, Peel argues, the Hausa term *Yaruba* was applied to the most Northern of ethnic groups in Yorùbáland, the Òyó, with whom the Hausa-speaking population in the area of the upstream Niger were most familiar (Peel 2003: 283). Samuel Crowther and his colleague, the German missionary and philologist Jacob Friedrich Schön, in their journals of the 1841 Niger expedition speak of the *Yorriba* (3rd July 1841, CA1 O79 32) and *Yaruba* (29th September 1841, CA1 O195 72) respectively to refer both to the Òyó and the various groups inhabiting the wider geographical area of Yorùbáland. The influence of their writing and the fact that the appellation Àkú had to a large extent only been a diasporic nomenclature meant that "the term Àkú hardly made it back to Yorùbáland" (Peel 2003: 284).

It is also worth pointing out that Crowther's mention of "the border of

<sup>5</sup>Elaiwu/Mazrui, for example, offer a definition of the term as "a stable, historically developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture, and language in common" (1993: 437). Such a concept is clearly tailored to European political history and can only be applied with some reservations to the African context.

<sup>6</sup>Peel indicates that the appellation Àkú originates from "their mode of greeting, 'o ku'" (Peel, 2003: 284).

Yorriba” (27th September 1841, CA1 O79 32) adds a spatial dimension to the scope of the ethnonym: Not only the language of Ọ̀yọ́ and later the whole of Yorùbáland and the people living in the area are subsumed under the term; a geo-political component was introduced. This development corresponds to Sara Pugach’s observation that in light of contemporary European nationalism “language was an external projection of the nation” (Pugach 2012: 26). In the West African context, as mentioned above, however, the concept of a geo-political unit with a common language and shared culture was not readily applicable. The military conflicts in Yorùbáland after the fall of the once politically stabilising Ọ̀yọ́ empire in the last decades of the 18th century had rendered the area war-ridden and disjointed.

The missionary endeavour to develop a written standard for Yorùbá can therefore be seen as more than mere practicality. It had political intentions and effects as well. The sociocultural role or status of a particular language or variety develops through the language users. This development is not a conscious process. If, therefore, a conscious decision is made to influence this role, this constitutes an “intervention in the self-adapting process of language” (Karam 1974: 106). The regional variety of the language on which the orthography and certain element of lexis of the Yorùbá Bible and other Christian texts was based was that of Ọ̀yọ́, interspersed with elements from other dialects. With the not-so-distant memory of the Ọ̀yọ́ empire still in people’s minds, the variety was perceived as prestigious and possessing a purity that other varieties lacked (cf. Peel 2003: 286). These associations with the Ọ̀yọ́ variety indicate that it was chosen as the desired standard for the missionaries’ translations and the language-engineering work involved because language was recognised not only as a medium of communication but also as a societal resource and status symbol.

Other ethnic groups in Yorùbáland, especially the Ègbá, objected to the normative stipulations of choosing the Ọ̀yọ́ variety as the written standard. Particularly the double use of the term *Yorùbá* as denoting both the Ọ̀yọ́ variety and people, and a larger group, which included the Ègbá, was cause for discontent. They objected to the overtone of continuing Ọ̀yọ́ dominance, particularly in light of the threatening rise of the Ìbàdàn empire in the late 1840s. With its rapid extension, Ìbàdàn was seen as the successor to Old Ọ̀yọ́ and its important defeat of Muslim troops from Ìlọ̀rín in 1840 instilled in the “inhabitants of Ìbàdàn the attitude that they were the saviours of Yorùbáland” (Ajayi 1974: 153). Ègbá discontent of being called Yorùbá and

through the term being politically and culturally associated with their enemy Ìbàdàn remained a potential for conflict in the area and was not lessened by the fact that the British administration sided with Ìbàdàn in the 1850s, increasing Ìbàdàn's military power and political influence.

#### 4 Developing Yorùbá Christian vocabulary

Translating lexemes, units of meaning, is at a first glance probably the most straight forward aspect of translation. In many cases we ask ‘What does X mean in language Y?’ and we are able to consult a dictionary to find the direct equivalent. Problems arise in cases where no linguistic equivalent of an object or concept in the source language exists in the target language. In these cases in particular a translator might reach an impasse of a theoretical nature, namely the notion that translation should not be possible at all. The concept of linguistic relativity, in essence telling us that “each language has a distinctive way of segmenting its experience by means of words” (Nida 1969: 20), can be read to suggest that these differences in conceptualising the world and clothing these concepts in words rule out the possibility of equivalence between languages and therefore the possibility of translation. How then can we account for the fact that people nevertheless translate texts?

Pym (2010: 9) offers an avenue of escape out of this deadlock. “One suspects,” he states, “that equivalence was never really a question of exact values.” He invokes Nida’s notion of dynamic equivalence instead. Rather than focusing on formal aspects of the translation, that is, on finding the direct equivalent, dynamic equivalence focuses on evoking effects and images in the reader of a translation which are similar to those of people reading the source text. Nida thus shifts the focus away “from the form of the message to the response of the receptor” (Nida 1969: 1). In short, Nida suggests that a translation has the best effect if the target audience is familiar not only with the words used but also with the imagery they evoke.

Nida’s approach has been heavily criticised, particularly by translators of religious texts, as “profoundly simplistic” (Prickett 1993: 8). One does not, however, have to fully accept Nida’s approach to recognise that if the recipients’ cultural context is not respected in the translation, the Scriptures become mere literature and cannot be interacted with in the way the translators intend. Research into Swahili Bible translation by Peter Renju can

serve as an example at this point. Renju explains that in initial attempts to translate the term ‘covenant’ a word in Swahili was used which represented a promise or pledge, however, without serious social or political consequences should it be broken. The Swahili term could not convey the binding nature of this covenant and the severity of a possible breach. Correspondingly, the recipients of the translation could not be aware of the immense scope of God’s covenant with Noah and the momentousness of the promise given in Genesis 9:9<sup>7</sup> for the Jewish and Christian faith. It takes, therefore, translators who are acutely aware of the constructionist nature and relativity of meanings and sensitive to the multilayered nature of their source text to navigate their metaphorical ship through the rocky cliffs of target language vocabulary, reader response, and socio-historical origin of the source.

Apart from their function to convey the denotational meaning, possible lexemes in the target language—particularly in ideological texts in the broadest sense—have to be considered with regard to aspects of their connotational meaning, like register, etymology, and reception history. In short, the translators position the target text through the choice of lexemes in the target language, thereby at the same time positioning their message and themselves as social actors.

In the following I am going to discuss these two aspects of lexeme translation with regards to the translation of the Scriptures into Yorùbá. The considerations behind this aspect of the translation process were frequently not only of a philological but also theological and political nature. Already existing religious vocabulary from Islam and the native religion in the area presented opportunities for Christians to position themselves in relation to these religions by either accepting or rejecting the words in question as representations of Christian concepts. Where no Yorùbá words were found suitable, the translators resorted to creating new Yorùbá lexemes, or attempted to express unfamiliar concepts through existing, familiar lexemes. Exemplarily, I am going to discuss the translations of ‘prayer’, ‘God’, and ‘Holy Spirit’, retracing the source material from which debates and discourses were relevant for the translation, and the philological, theological, religio-political explanations and justifications the missionaries gave to back their choices.

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<sup>7</sup>“And I will establish my **covenant** with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.”



#### 4.1 ‘Prayer’

One issue for the translators was the existence of Muslim religious vocabulary in the area, usually borrowed from Hausa, the language of Muslim troops invading northern Yorùbáland. The existence of a second Abrahamic religion in the region, despite its status as a scriptural monotheism and a shared religio-conceptual history, was not a welcome sight for Christian missionaries; Islam was not perceived as a possible ally against the polytheistic ‘heathenism’ of *òrìṣà* worship.

On the contrary, the missionaries liked to emphasise their moral and intellectual superiority over the Muslims they encountered. In many ways, Islam was more accommodating to traditional religious customs than Christianity, which led the missionaries to feel that “in the common practice of Yorùbá Muslims [Islam] came [too] close to [...] paganism” (Peel 2003: 209). Also, the fact that the Qur’an was only available in Arabic to Yorùbá Muslims meant that the level of literacy and knowledge of the Qur’an was low amongst them, a state of affairs which the Christians used to expose and ridicule Muslims (cf. Peel 2003: 209). John Christian Müller, when a Muslim is pointed out to him, reveals thus not only his personal attitude when he “[tells] the people plainly this Mahommedan is no Messenger of God, neither does he know God himself” (12th April 1848, CA2 O72 6).

While the missionaries might not have approved of Muslims in Yorùbáland, those involved in translation work could not ignore the Muslim cultural and linguistic influence. In his first translation of Luke 1:13, Samuel Crowther translates the angel’s words *διότι εἰσηκοσθη ἡ δεησις σου* “Your **prayer** has been heard”, as “*Ọlọrun bho adua re*” (CA2 O43 94), literally “*Ọlọrun/God hears your prayer*”.<sup>8</sup> Charles Gollmer, when writing his critical commentary on Crowther’s translation, however, remarks “*Adua Prayer Hausa used by the Mohammed[ans] perhaps *ibèbè* a begging here better*” (CA2 O43 94).

Gollmer expresses his dislike of the Hausa word *àdúà* and his preference for the Yorùbá word *ibèbè*, which translates as ‘begging’ or ‘beseeching’. Despite the absence of an explicit causal link between the Hausa origin

<sup>8</sup>The Yorùbá language does not express the passive voice in a verb form. It is possible to express passive-like meaning by using a generic subject like ‘a’ (we) or ‘won’ (they). In the case of Luke 1:13, however, the hearer cannot be expressed through a generic subject because *ọlọrun*/God is the only possible hearer. Therefore, the active voice is the only option to express the intended meaning.

and Muslim use of àdúà, and his suggestion of an alternative translation, it does not take a great leap of the imagination to come to the conclusion that Gollmer preferred *ìbèbè* because he wanted to stay clear of any associations with Islam.

A second instance also points in this direction of interpretation: in Luke 1:10 Crowther translates “all the assembled worshipers were **praying** outside” as “*bhobho ijjo enia pejo nkiron liakokò*”. Again, Gollmer, after giving an etymological explanation of the contracted form “nkiron [ $<$ ] ni ikiron have a praying—ikiorun—a saluting the sky or heaven” (CA2 O43 94) points out the Muslim use of the word *ikiorun* and subsequently suggests the Yorùbá phrase word “ibaolorunso a talking speaking with God fr[om] i-ba-Olorunso” (CA2 O43 94, highlighting in original).

Despite the anti-Islamic sentiments among the missionaries, however, Gollmer’s suggestions for new linguistic inventions were not particularly successful. Samuel Crowther, in line with his use of *àdúà* in Luke 1:13, in his 1850 translation of ‘The Book of Common Prayer’ “settled on *adura*, which denotes individual petitionary prayer” (Peel 2003: 195, highlighting in original), thus using the term the Yorùbá population must already have been familiar with. Furthermore, the modern Yorùbá Bible<sup>9</sup> also renders the two passages above as

“Gbogbo ijọ awọn eniyan si “nitiri ti **adura** rẹ gba”  
ngbadura lode ni akoko.”

Luke 1:10, modern Yorùbá bible

Luke 1:13, modern Yorùbá bible

For Peel, the reason for the fact that the missionaries in their translations still used terms associated with or originating from Islam, was that in doing so the Christians could “take the full advantage of the semantic ground prepared by Islam” (Peel, 2003: 195), even if this meant the tacit admission of certain common elements in both religions, despite the explicit distancing from Islam in the area.

<sup>9</sup>Consulting British and Foreign Bible Society archive material on Yorùbá translations of Christian texts throughout the second half of the 19th century as well as more recent editions will shed additional light on the consistency of the use of *àdúà/àdúrà* compared to other possible terms.

## 4.2 ‘God’

While the missionaries wanted to repudiate any association not only with Islam but also with the ‘heathen’ “foolishness and superstition” (Samuel Crowther, 11th February 1837, CA1 O79 1) of native customs and rituals,<sup>10</sup> certain elements of the Yorùbá lexicon and conceptualisations of the world proved to be useful when developing the Christian vocabulary. Among the most crucial was certainly the choice for the Yorùbá name of the Christian deity. One of the few elements among most regional varieties of Yorùbá beliefs and rituals was the notion of a creator god, a *deus absconditus*, quite apart from and above the *òrìṣà*<sup>11</sup> and who, depending on the region and which aspect of the deity the speaker wanted to emphasise, was called by a different Yorùbá phrase name, describing him as supreme ruler (*Olódùmarè*), lord or master (*Olúwa*) or owner and inhabitant of the sky (*Ọlórùn*) (cf. Idowu 1962: 33–37 *passim*).

For the missionaries the concept of a supreme deity, irrespective of the question if it was introduced by Islam, earlier Christian contact, or had already existed, was a welcome sight. It would not only provide a base for introducing the notion of a monotheistic faith on a conceptual level but also facilitate translation work. The task at hand was to choose a Yorùbá name for the Christian God which would be recognisable and meaningful to the native audience yet would clearly distinguish the Christian God from the *òrìṣà*. In Luke 1:6, Samuel Crowther translates:

And they were both righteous before **God** [Greek: θεος], walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the **Lord** [Greek:

<sup>10</sup>I hesitate to use the term ‘religion’ in this context for two reasons. Firstly, compared to Christianity, which appeared on the scene in the form of Protestant missionaries and for the sake of evangelisation projected a certain image of uniformity and internal cohesion, Yorùbá *òrìṣà* worship and the related rituals displayed considerable regional variation. Therefore, it seems inaccurate to speak of ‘a native religion’ as if the homogeneity indicated by term had indeed existed. Secondly, and partly connected to the previous point, worshipping an *òrìṣà* was not seen as an activity distinct from other activities of daily life. Thus, the term ‘religion’ does not without reservations apply to the relationship between *òrìṣà* and devotee. Even in modern Yorùbá, Peel reminds us, the “word for religion – *ẹsin* from *sin* [to serve] [...] refers primarily to the world religions...” (Peel, 2003: 89).

<sup>11</sup>The view that “God is not a god” (Peel, 2003: 117) was not widely held in the East of Yorùbáland. Significantly, Muslim influence in the South-East before the arrival of the missionaries had been negligible, which has been believed to suggest a connection between the elevation of a creator over the other *òrìṣà* and the monotheistic influence of Islam (cf. Idowu, 1962: 37).

κύριος] blameless.

as “Awon mejeji si she oloso[?] ni waju *ọlọrun* nwon [?] ni bhobho ofin on *ilamma Oluwa li aileghan*”. Gollmer approves of the name *ọlọrun* for the Christian God because “Ọlọrun he that has the sky or heaven the owner or possessor of heaven is applied to God the Creator of All things only” (CA2 O43 94). He admits that the native population might call “their idol” (CA2 O43 94), their chief deity, by this name but the main argument in favour of the name was that it was solely reserved for one deity and not used for any other members of the ‘heathen’ pantheon.<sup>12</sup> As already indicated above, in many areas in Yorùbáland *ọlọrun* was not necessarily seen as above and apart from the *òrìṣà*. In addition to the Muslim influence which Idowu suggests (cf. Idowu 1962: 33–37 passim), the missionaries thus equated *ọlọrun* with the Christian God, thereby degrading the (other) *òrìṣà* to mere divinities.

Gollmer, accordingly, was less pleased with the term *Oluwa*. Corresponding to the Greek term κύριος and the English term ‘Lord’, *Oluwa* can be used to denote a secular ruler or person of rank. Therefore, when Crowther translates τὸν ναὸν τοῦ κυρίου (Luke 1:9), “the temple of the Lord“, as “*ille ọlọrun*”, “house of *Ọlọrun*/God”, Gollmer indicates that he approves of this change because “ille Olorun is plainly understood ‘House of God’ whilst ille Oluwa might be thought the house of some other master or Lord” (CA2 O43 94).

### 4.3 ‘Holy Spirit’

“There is no word in Yorùbá language to express Holy Ghost” (CA2 O43 94). While this statement by Charles Gollmer can hardly be surprising, it nevertheless presented a challenge for the missionaries involved in translation. Unlike the examples discussed above, in the case of ‘Holy Spirit’ the translators had to find suitable Yorùbá equivalents not for one but for two words which would—used as a unit—have to convey the complex and thoroughly Christian concept of the Holy Trinity and the part in it played by the Holy Spirit.

The less problematic part of the translation was certainly the translation of ‘ghost’ or ‘spirit’. Rather than attempting to find a Yorùbá equivalent

<sup>12</sup>Samuel Crowther, however, uses *ọlọrun* with a lower case *o* as a plural in his 1853 translation of Genesis 3:5, “and ye shall be as gods”: “*enyin osi dabi ọlọrun*” (BSS 467.E57). The use of the divine name with plural meaning resembles the plural in the Hebrew אֱלֹהִים.

lent for ‘ghost’ or ‘spirit’, Crowther uses the Yorùbá word *ẹ̀mí*, which translates into English as ‘breath’, ‘breeze’ or ‘life’. *Ẹ̀mí* thus corresponds with the Hebrew רִיחַ and the Greek πνευμα, which are both used in collocation with the Hebrew and Greek word for ‘holy’ קָדוֹשׁ (e.g. Isaiah 63:10: אֶת-רִיחַ קָדוֹשׁ) and ἅγιος (e.g. Matthew 29:19: ἁγίου πνεύματος). Moreover, the Yorùbá word *ẹ̀mí* does not only denote breath or a light breeze as physical phenomena. In Yorùbá anthropology, *ẹ̀mí* is the divine breath of *ọ̀lórún* given to a human being before they are born (cf. Abimbola 1971: 78), hence the third meaning, ‘life’. Both aspects, the correspondence with the original languages and the existence of a similar concept in Yorùbá culture, with which Samuel Crowther was almost certainly familiar, must have made *ẹ̀mí* the most straightforward choice.

Translating the term ‘holy’ proved to be a more challenging endeavour. Chapman (2005: 578) describes ‘holiness’ as a property “associat[ing] an object with what is divine in the sense of giving to it an association with a power that derives from beyond this world”. Moreover, the concept has traditionally been seen to stand in opposition to the profane,<sup>13</sup> the everyday experience (cf. Jödicke 2006: 876).<sup>14</sup> Apparently, the missionaries did not find a satisfactory Yorùbá equivalent for this concept in the linguistic frame of *òrìṣà* worship. It would not do justice to the missionaries’ diligent and zealous work to dismiss this as deliberate ignorance as Idowu (1975: 86) does in claiming that “[t]he missionary had no use for the religion which he had pre-judged, before he left home, to be an expression of benightedness [...]”.

Even Yorùbá native speaker and former *òrìṣà* devotee Samuel Crowther mentions in his translation of the Lord’s Prayer that Yorùbá lacks a direct equivalent of the Greek ἅγιος (cf. Peel 2003: 197). In his first service held in Yorùbá on 9th April 1844 in Freetown, he preaches from Luke 1:35:<sup>15</sup> “*Ohung ohworh ti aobih ni inoh reh li aomakpe li Ommoh Olorung*” (CA1 O79 11a). Here he still uses the word *ohworh*,<sup>16</sup> ‘honour’ or ‘respect’, to translate ἅγιος. Similarly, in his translation of Luke 1:49<sup>17</sup> “...*owo si li oruko re*”,

<sup>13</sup>Prominently discussed by Mircea Eliade in his treatise on “The sacred and the profane”.

<sup>14</sup>Rudolf Otto’s ‘The idea of the Holy’ renders it an altogether irrational experience beyond human understanding. Otto’s approach has been challenged in particular by notable figures of the philosophy of religion like Friedrich Schleiermacher, who sought to emphasise the immanence of the Christian God in the world.

<sup>15</sup>“...therefore also that **holy** thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

<sup>16</sup>in modern Yorùbá *òwò*

<sup>17</sup>“...and holy is his name”

Crowther's word of choice is again *òwò*, which Gollmer in his commentary translates into English as 'esteemed' (CA2 O43 94). It appears, however, that for Crowther *òwò* did not convey the full meaning of the original and was thus not one of the Yorùbá words he felt were "very expressive of the Greek" (1843, exact date uncertain, CA1 O79 10). The missing element was the reference to the distinct nature of 'holiness', the opposition to the profane already mentioned above. Similarly as in the case of *Olúwa*, Samuel Crowther felt the word did not set apart mundane honour and esteem from respect owed to God (cf. Crowther 1843, exact date uncertain, CA1 O79 10). Also, the word did not convey the idea of an intrinsic property but rather describes people's conduct towards the object or being referred to as *òwò*.

Samuel Crowther chose to use the word *mímó* instead. Unlike *è mí*, *mímó*, far from being an immediate equivalent of the Hebrew (שׁוֹרֵף) or the Greek (ἅγιος), according to Gollmer translates as "clean, pure, holy, and [is] in this [the latter] sense only applicable to God" (CA2 O43 94). It has a secular meaning and can be used to describe, for example, a clean surface or clean clothes. Beyond this secular use, Charles Gollmer points out, Yorùbá Muslims employ the word in combination with *oba* (king) to describe Allah. Apart from Luke 1:49, in which he decided to keep *òwò*, Crowther uses *mímó* throughout the Gospel of St. Luke. In Luke 1:70, τῶν ἁγίων προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ('of his holy prophets') is rendered "*woli re mimo*". The 'holy covenant' in Luke 1:72 (διατηκῆς ἁγιας αὐτοῦ) Crowther translates as "*majemmu re mimo*".

*Mímó* in Crowther's translation consequently cooccurs with *è mí* to denote the Holy Spirit. *È mí mímó* fills both Elizabeth in Luke 1:41 and her husband Zacharias in Luke 1:67 as annunciated by the angel in Luke 1:35.

In Yorùbá, the Holy Spirit has thus become 'clean, pure breath or life'. This meant a considerable semantic shift towards Muslim thought, incorporating notions of ritual purity and cleansing into the Christian concept of holiness. Similarly, adopting an element of Yorùbá anthropology meant another step unto Sanneh's quicksand of cultural nuances (1990: 5). These concessions to Islam and *òrìṣà* worship aided the appropriation of the Christian faith in Yorùbáland. Nevertheless, as Peel concludes, "[*è*]mi *Mímó* [...] must have seemed a very strange coinage to those Yorùbá who heard it for the first time" (Peel, 2003: 264, highlighting in original).

## 5 Old beliefs in new shape

The final aspect of translation I would like to discuss is the fate of the *òrìṣà* in this process. Perhaps the most telling example is the story of the *òrìṣà Èṣù*. Originally, *Èṣù* was an ambiguous figure in the Yorùbá pantheon. He was seen at the same time as an executor of divine will—hence his epithet *Èlégbá(rá)*, ‘helper’<sup>18</sup>—and a “trickster who might spoil any sacrifice” (Peel 2003: 263). However, in his 1843 “Vocabulary of the Yorùbá language“, Samuel Crowther lists *Èṣù* as “Satan, demon, adversary, fiend” and *Èlégbára* as “God of mischief, Satan”. How did this change come about?

*Èṣù-Èlégbára* was an ambiguous, obscure, and not easily comprehensible *òrìṣà*, for his worshippers perhaps as much as for the missionaries who encountered him in the native population’s everyday lives. He was ascribed apotropaic power (cf. McKenzie 1997: 231) but at the same time enforced punishments for *Òrúnmilà*, deity of the Ifá divination and mediator of *Ọlórún*’s will, for example if sacrifices were not offered as prescribed. *Èṣù-Èlégbára* was therefore dreaded as a force of chaos and the unforeseen (cf. McKenzie 1997: 101). His statues in the *Ègbá* area were often of an ithyphallic nature whereas in other areas they could be aniconic, consisting of a rock or large stone (cf. McKenzie 1997: 60).

It might thus have been the shape of the statue in question which lead the native Yorùbá Thomas King to write in his letter from Abéòkúta on 27th October 1857 about “a muddy demon of the most disgusting shape and form called *Eṣu* [sic] (devil)” (CA2 O61 1). Charles Gollmer refers to the *òrìṣà* in a similar fashion when on 10th October 1858 he tells the story of a Yorùbá man who:

was [sic] decided to leave the service of Satan for the service of Christ and [who] now wishes to give up his Idols and join the people of God. [The man claimed] that the light of the Gospel had prevailed over Heathen darkness and that Faith in Christ had conquered the mighty Bulwork of superstition. Among the Idols delivered [was] *Eṣu* [sic] the Devil...(CA2 O43 129).

*Èṣù* was in the missionaries’ minds and words, reduced to his negative qualities of the trickster and force of chaos.

<sup>18</sup>McKenzie (1997: 44) has the following to say about the *òrìṣà*’s name: “In the coastal area, *Èlégbara* seems to have been often preferred to *Eṣu* as a name for this *òrìṣà*. Another name for *Eṣu-Èlégbara* was *Agba*, The Old One”.

This reinterpretation of *Èṣù* was not only restricted to how the missionaries referred to the *òrìṣà* in their English writing. The identification of *Èṣù* with the Christian devil entered into the active Yorùbá Christian vocabulary.<sup>19</sup> A few examples from the 1857 collection of Yorùbá hymns *Orin, ati iyin, si ọlọrun* ('Songs and praise to God') with English translations (CA2 O87 88 A/B) can illustrate this:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| “Gbagbara ọwọ <b>Eṣu</b> fu wa e.”    | “Take away strength from the <b>Devil</b> for us.”<br>(from Hymn 2, written by J. Pratt)           |
| “Iwọ <b>Eṣu</b> , a bo ọwọ rẹ o.”     | “Thou <b>Satan!</b> we are delivered from thee.”<br>(from Hymn 14, written by J. Pratt)            |
| “Awa o ti b <b>Eṣu</b> la fọrun e...” | “We would no more with the <b>Devil</b> go to the other world.”<br>(from Hymn 6, written by Ayena) |

Apart from this identification of the *òrìṣà* with the Christian devil, the sheer frequency with which *Èṣù* appears in the collection of Yorùbá hymns is remarkable. He is mentioned eight times in the compilation of 15 hymns of which a third are not longer than four lines. Indeed, the devil became a prominent element in Yorùbá Christianity. The prayer of the former *ba-baḷàwo* Akibode already partly quoted above shows the devil as an external, personal enemy with a strong physical presence and power in the mind of Yorùbá Christians:

It is just that when a strong man comes to another strong man's house, and fight with him so much that the former succeed that of the latter. So that he take him away and tied him well with his chains, dig a pit and throw him in and then take the children and tied them separately but not so much as the father, so the father try chance and loose the children one by one, telling them to run away home till the children all gone, and only the father

<sup>19</sup>It is unfortunate, therefore, that Thomas Wright did not include into his annual letter from Lagos the original Yorùbá version of the convert Akibode's prayer: "I found that thy word is true and send all my children to thee from the devil but I alone remain there" (25th November 1872, CA2 O97 14).



remains in the pit. When the strong man came and have a peep in [peeped into] the pit and found that the children are got out by the father he tied him more and more so that the father couldn't move (Thomas Wright, 25th November 1872, CA2 O97 14).

Akibode here expresses his feeling of having been overwhelmed by an exceptionally strong man and—with his children—bound, carried off from his house and thrown into a pit. Evoking familiar images of displacement and slavery, Akibode in this physical, graphic description clearly refers to the devil spiritually binding him and his children and keeping him away from God. As indicated above, it would be interesting to see the original Yorùbá version of the prayer in order to find out Akibode's exact words. Peel hazards a guess as to the Yorùbá rendering of 'strong man'. He suggests the word *alàgbàrà* (cf. Peel 2003: 258). The word, apart from sounding remarkably like Èṣù's epithet *Elégbàrà*, also contains the word *Agbà*, the name of an *òrìṣà* worshipped near Lagos which Peel identifies with Èṣù (cf. also McKenzie 1997: 44).

Akibode's prayer as well the Yorùbá hymns quoted above thus lead us to two preliminary conclusions on the fate of Èṣù: Firstly, Èṣù as the devil played a prominent role in Yorùbá Christianity. His importance exceeded that of Èṣù in *òrìṣà* worship and that of the devil in the missionaries' post-enlightenment protestant tradition. This can be explained by the reinterpretation of Èṣù not only as the devil but by the extension of the enemy stereotype to the entirety of the *òrìṣà* as the "collective work of Satan" (Peel 2003: 264). Secondly, Yorùbá converts and to a certain extent the Yorùbá missionaries, who were naturally considerably more familiar with *òrìṣà* worship than their European colleagues, perceived the *òrìṣà*, Èṣù in particular, as a real force to reckon with and which was active in the world. This created a tension between "the modern view that *òrìṣà* have no external reality" (Peel 2003: 260), and the perceived continued reality of the world of the *òrìṣà*, kept alive by the linguistic identification of Èṣù as the Christian devil.

It is this tension that I would like to focus on now. Apart from the perceived spiritual benefits for the individual, converting to Christianity in nineteenth-century Yorùbáland could have a number of this-worldly advantages for the convert. Prominent among these were the opportunity to receive a Western education, which became increasingly important with the rise of colonial influence on the area, and a welcome economic relief. Worshipping *òrìṣà* was a costly affair; one had to pay the *babaḷàwo* for their div-

ination, sacrifices often consisted of expensive livestock, and buying statuses could involve investing considerable amounts of cowries. In a time of slave raids, civil wars, and the resulting displacement and loss of property and land, the dire need for guidance was felt as much as the economic plight.

One can only imagine, therefore, how welcome the sight of the missionaries preaching the “freeness of the gospel” (George Meakin, 11th April 1857, CA2 O69) must have been in the eyes of many of the poor Yorùbá. However, converting to Christianity clearly also had disadvantages for the convert. The community elders and *babaláwo* in the hierarchical gerontocratic societies of Yorùbáland were less than happy when people broke rank. Conversion upset existing power structures and withdrew valuable income from the diviners. For many converts it also meant severing family bonds and exposing themselves to persecution through their own families. CMS correspondence abounds with cases like that of a young convert who was repeatedly poisoned by his own family before finding shelter in the mission station (cf. Thomas King, 24th November 1850, CA2 O61 38) or the case of a woman who “for refusing to associate with her husband in his idolatrous worship, was severely beaten by him [after he cut] her primer to pieces” (Thomas King, 27th October 1857, CA2 O61 1). For those in power, conversion could mean losing the benevolence and support of other chiefs and elders and divine legitimacy for their power, as the example of Oṣiṣẹ, chief of Akāṣi, shows:

With deep feelings of regret he spoke of the hindrances in his way, how that as a chief, he must come into contact with the request of the elders and *babalawo*. ‘My office and situation,’ he said, ‘is a great hindrance to me [...]’ (Thomas King, 1st October 1850, CA2 O61 38).

Moreover, *òrìṣà* worship in the eyes of many could not easily be abandoned. Upon asking members of the public why they were unwilling to convert to Christianity, Henry Townsend had to acknowledge that “[they] have but one reason to offer, ‘it is their custom, their fathers did so and so must they’ ” (25th July 1845, CA2 O85 229). The customs and traditions of their forefathers offered people a cosmological and anthropological framework which could explain the world, account for contingencies and give those referring to it a narrative of origin and purpose.

With the spiritual and this-worldly benefits presenting an incentive for prospective converts on the one hand and the fact of how deeply *òrìṣà* worship was woven into the fabric of community and family structure and traditional patterns of explaining the world on the other, it is hardly surprising to find a man in conversation with James White suggesting “he would worship God in conjunction with his other [sic] idols” (9th June 1852, CA2 O87 34). While White of course replies that “[no] man can serve two masters” (9th June 1852, CA2 O87 34), the reinterpretation of *Èṣù* meant that the *òrìṣà* could still play a meaningful role in converts’ lives. Demonising the *òrìṣà*, linguistically identifying specifically *Èṣù* with the Christian devil, made it possible for them to still be relevant albeit in a new guise, now as bogeymen instead of objects of devotion. In fact, as Walls (2007: 125) puts it, the “native significance of the divinity component [i.e. *oriṣa*] is reflected in the very rigour of the rejection that demonizes it”. In focusing their conversion experience on turning their backs at their gods as the ultimate enemy, Yorùbá Christians still interacted with the *òrìṣà* as points of reference. Meyer describes a similiar situation for the Ewe in Ghana. The wish to turn away from the devil and ‘darkness’ became central to converts’ statements (cf. Meyer 1999: 99).

Meyer goes on to point out that the Pietist missionaries in Ghana were thoroughly displeased by this focus on the devil and demons in their converts. The same was true for the Yorùbá mission. As mentioned above, the heritage of the enlightenment in—particularly the European—missionaries’ Christian tradition welcomed a more ethical, more abstract and internal approach to evil rather than the personalised, external figure of the devil. However, as Meyer (1999: 110) remarks, “...conversion did not bring about what professional theologians and social scientists tend to expect, namely rationalisation and disenchantment”. Rather, Yorùbá Christians integrated traditional aspects of belief into their new faith and the devil became a distinguishing element in Yorùbá Christianity. Possibly underestimating the continuing significance of the *òrìṣà* in the life of Yorùbá Christians, the missionaries, through the linguistic mapping of the devil onto *Èṣù*, rendered possible a link between the old and the new faith.

## 6 Concluding remarks

This paper started by pointing out the differences between Islamic and Christian traditions of translating religious texts. The exceptional nature of religious texts as far as translation theory is concerned does not only lie in the notion of the texts as divine revelation or divinely inspired. As Long (2005: 7) indicates, it is also:

their function as behaviour models for individuals, communities or whole cultures [which results in] the most compelling reasons for the translation process to be a serious and well-thought out undertaking.

Thus, the missionaries in Yorùbáland embarked on an ambitious journey when they set out to spread the word in Yorùbá. As illustrated above, the CMS correspondence bears witness to the various considerations and debates and the diligent and zealous work behind this undertaking.

By way of conclusion, I would like to reiterate certain observations made during my research. The first observation is that the group of people involved in the actual translation work was relatively small. Most prominently among them were certainly Samuel Crowther and Charles Gollmer. Beside them, Henry Townsend was concerned with the process to a certain extent and the African missionary Thomas King contributed to the Bible translation in the 1850s. If we include the philological committee who reviewed translations before they were printed, the number of people is still negligible compared to a native population of roughly two million (cf. Peel 2003: 242).<sup>20</sup> This small number of people, many of them non-native speakers of any Yorùbá dialect, nevertheless played a crucial role in committing a hitherto oral language to writing and in choosing and developing the standard for the written language, with the political consequences outlined above. They also introduced a substantial part of the Yorùbá Christian vocabulary; even if one accepts a merely mildly relativistic position and admits that the words we use and the context in which we use them, shape our conceptualisation of the world, it becomes clear that this small group of people had a tool of considerable religious and political power at their hands.

<sup>20</sup>Peel refers here to the population in the 1890s. However, the number can still be used as a point of reference in the present context.

A second observation at this point can be made when looking at the examples of *àdùrà* and *òlórùn*. In these cases the missionaries' interpretational authority was curbed by the need to make concessions to the existing cultural and religious context. Instead of clearly distancing their faith and their teachings from Islam and *òrìṣà* worship, Crowther, Gollmer, and their colleagues were forced to make use of the semantic ground already prepared in order to make themselves understood and give the Christian message a tangible and meaningful place in Yorùbáland.

The third observation which can be made regards the linguistic reinterpretation of *Èṣù* as the devil. Here, we could see plainly that the results of their translation work could backfire on the missionaries, or rather their original teachings, in unexpected ways. As indicated above, the fact that the devil became a significant element of Yorùbá Christianity was a thorn in many a missionary's side. The missionaries, with their highly efficacious arsenal of moral authority and political influence which resulted in the capability to reshape the conceptualisation of the world, nevertheless surrendered part of this authority and influence through the translation process. Translation inevitably entails the transfer of the message into the target language's cultural sphere. Concessions and adaptations to bridge the gap between the source language and the target language are necessary, as the example of the 'Holy Spirit', which became 'pure breath', demonstrated. The translation process involves partly relinquishing control over the message to the speakers of the target language. Furthermore, the debate and the final decision on the form of Scriptural proper names in Yorùbá to a certain extent allowed for the target language in the translation process to determine the terms of how the Christian message would be conveyed. Without wanting to overemphasise this example, it seems valid to call it at least an illustrative example of how translation can allow speakers of the target language a more immediate access to the message. This access is empowering and can lead, as the example of *Èṣù* showed, to an emancipation process, which while not necessarily conscious, nevertheless means reclaiming a certain amount of control over how the message of the translated text is incorporated into the target language and culture.

Thus, Walls (2007: 91) is correct in saying that "Christianity in Africa cannot be treated as a colonial [or missionary] leftover". While not denying the tremendous influence the Christian mission in Yorùbáland had, not only the religious and political but also on the linguistic landscape, it seems nev-

ertheless appropriate to view the native population as target audience of the translation not only as recipients but also as creators of the message. Therefore, Charles Gollmer, in a letter from Abẹ̀òkúta, provides the appropriate closing words:

I am thankful to say there are many Yorùbá-reading Christians here, our converts, who as much appreciate and love their Yorùbá Scriptures (as far as they are translated), as a true English Christian can appreciate and love his English Bible. [...] I may say the Bible, the word of God, as everywhere so here, is the safe and sure foundation of our Missionary superstructure; and therefore the work stood firm whilst floods and winds of persecution vainly sought to overthrow it; and so it will endure beyond the decay of the builders, for it is eternity born and destined (1st December 1858, BSA/GI/3/8/1857–1863).

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# *Selling an Education.* Universities as commercial entities: a corpus-based study of university websites as self-promotion

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## Abstract

The current socio-political landscape, coloured by cuts to public funding and an increase in tuition fees, has meant that universities can no longer rely on an education to sell themselves. The result is an increased focus on language with text producers manipulating its evaluative resources as a means to a promotional end. The main concern here is whether this drive towards distinctiveness is in fact a reality, or whether it remains a distant utopian vision of the institutions that are struggling to free themselves from the shackles of standardisation. In order to investigate the likelihood of a common promotional discourse among UK universities, a collocational profile is built around the higher education keyword RESEARCH to see how this, the basic service that universities offer, is promotionally packaged by the company it keeps.

Starting from a corpus comprising data mined from the institutional websites of thirty-nine mission group members, this study explores the data using a methodologically fused Critical Discourse Analytic–Corpus Linguistic approach. It is hoped that, in identifying the collocational behaviour of individual lexical items, and locating these keywords as a point of contact in the dialectical relationship between language and the marketised society, these findings will go some way towards making transparent the semantically opaque.

## 1 Introduction

This paper can be considered a localised linguistic investigation into the UK higher education keyword RESEARCH. It attempts to reveal how micro patterns around this high frequency noun are reflective of macro-level social phenomena, where business-like lexis is firmly assimilated in the ‘institutional discourse of self-promotion’ on university websites (Mautner 2005a: 111). This study engages in the dialectical relationship between language

and society, taking its motivation from recent political developments in higher education in the UK. This is mostly to do with reforms introduced as part of the 'Coalition Government's White Paper' (DBIS 2011), which acted as the catalyst for a more competitive system. As a result, universities have come to operate in an increasingly competitive marketplace where they offer the same basic service: RESEARCH and TEACHING (Anyangwe, 2012; Brown and Carasso 2013). It is imperative, then, that these institutions tackle the 'challenge' of promotionally packaging 'intangible products' to prospective students (Morrish and Saunston 2013: 61) in order to differentiate from competitors and create a 'unique selling point'. This difference is more important than ever considering an education can no longer sell itself; language is, by implication, the driving force behind institutional differentiation. Indeed, in the marketised context, universities are required to manipulate promotional language as a means to an end. This quest for differentiation is met, ironically, via regulatory bodies, such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) 'Distinct in Higher Education' Project whose resulting 'The Distinct Framework' prioritises universities' communication of distinctiveness online (*distinct.ac.uk* 2013). The very existence of such bodies is perhaps telling of a prevailing move to standard discourses not only on university websites, as is the concern for this paper, but also university discourse in general.

Crucially, though, these recent developments are part of the wider ideological machinery within which the promotional cog has been whirring for quite some time. Indeed, Wernick (1991) first pointed to the 'promotional university', at work within a business-like and entrepreneurial agenda, shortly before Fairclough's (1993) Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) of the trend. Since then, marketisation has gained overly pejorative connotations, a notion exemplified in the creation of the Council for the Defence of British Universities (CDBU 2013). Here the nominalised 'defence' constructs marketisation as an enemy that, having infiltrated higher education lines, needs combatting. Importantly, this is contrasted with the expected positive evaluation of products; a tactic employed on university websites to counteract charges of student as consumer. These tactics have become so entrenched that they are 'naturalised' and 'no longer perceived as marked' (Mautner 2010: 2). What this study aims to contribute to the promotional language debate within higher education discursive practice is the value of the discursive profile as a window to ideology. More specifically

how a seemingly non-evaluative keyword, RESEARCH, is packaged as a product by the collocational company it keeps and the ideological baggage that collocates offload onto this node. In line with this, the research questions that motivate this study are:

- How do evaluative adjectives behave in phrases where RESEARCH is the head?
- Do they offer a product description with a ‘unique selling point’ (USP) via evaluative adjectives? Or:
- Is there evidence to suggest that mission groups are truly homogeneous, building a common promotional discourse?

The study begins by laying the groundwork for an integrated Critical Discourse Analytic–Corpus Linguistic methodology. It is shown that this two pronged approach is both complementary and necessary in order to bridge the gap between the socio-cultural and the computational. After commenting on the makeup of my corpus and the concordance-based analysis, I then set out the case for a discursive profiling of high frequency keywords as a way into the data. It is argued that a focus on the keyword RESEARCH for its high frequency, as opposed to cultural currency, is more telling of the ideological baggage that collocates offload onto the seemingly ‘neutral’ node. What follows is a comparative collocational analysis of the keyword’s two most frequent modifying promotional adjectives *quality* and *world* across the mission groups. In light of my results, the concepts of semantic opacity and malleability are discussed before I conclude with some implications of the study for the discourse of self-promotion and distinctiveness as universities go forth in their quest to be the best.

## **2 Critical Discourse Analysis and the marketisation of UK universities: then and now**

The application of Critical Discourse Analysis to uncovering the implications that marketisation has had on British universities’ discursive practices was first proposed by Fairclough (1993; 1995). Motivated by questions of interdiscursivity, Fairclough investigated the notion that the boundaries between ‘orders of discourse’ and ‘discourse practices’ (1993:141) are becoming blurred in higher education contexts, whose fuzzy-edged discourses are

increasingly permeated by a promotional agenda not dissimilar to that of advertising. Indeed, commenters have gone on to charge promotion with the ‘colonization’ (Bhatia 2004: 83) of discourses with particular reference to academia, though Fairclough prefers hybridity in his account of the university prospectus as a ‘new hybrid partly promotional genre’ (1993: 141). The merits of this research are evidenced in the proliferation of follow-up linguistic inquiries into higher education printed materials of different countries (Askehave 2007; Hartley and Morpew 2008; Osman 2008; Symes 1996; Teo 2007; Xiong 2012). Indeed, the approach adopted here shares a critical discourse analytic concern for making clear often opaque ideologies, in particular how market practices permeate university discourses to further institutions’ self-promotion as part of the dialectical relationship between language and its social context. Yet if we are to accurately assess the extent to which marketisation manifests at the micro level of lexical choice, it makes sense to study those online outlets that universities have now turned to in order to sell an education: institutional websites.

Critical discourse analysts’ reluctance to defy convention and move away from non-electronic data is, perhaps, down to the ‘paucity’ of data they prioritise (Piper 2000: 76). Indeed, whilst Benwell and Stokoe (2006) recognise the value of web-based data to the study of universities’ marketisation, they choose to ignore how the potentiality of the web promotes corpus-based studies by limiting their analysis to one homepage from one university website. For these studies CDA’s largely qualitative orientation suffices since neither deal with an extensive dataset, nor do they set out with the intention of doing so. However, as an isolated approach, CDA does not readily facilitate corpus-based analysis (Baker et al. 2008; Baker 2012; Mautner 2005a, 2007, 2009). To overcome this mismatch between a critical discourse analytic approach and a sizeable corpus, this study combines CDA with corpus linguistics (henceforth CL) as a way into the textual and social analysis of the data.

## **2.1 Towards a methodological fusion: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Corpus Linguistics (CL)**

This study straddles both CDA and CL in its approach to the promotion of an education. Importantly, this is proposed to ‘supplement’, rather than ‘displace’, conventional CDA methods (Koller and Mautner 2004: 217). While CL tends not to focus on the social aspect of text construction, it facilitates

CDA's commitment to the social by revealing instances of repeated usage that, in turn, expose 'hidden meanings' (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 123). Thus, CL allows CDA to go beyond intuition and so is taken to be a doubly powerful approach, due to its synthesis of quantitative and qualitative, which provides a sharper focus on discourse. Discourse is used in Gee's (2011) sense of the word as discourse with a big 'D' that embodies much more than language alone but is, nevertheless, shored up by traces at the micro linguistic level, in this case how recurrent ideologies seep into high frequency keywords. CL promotes the profiling of keywords as 'nodes around which ideological battles are fought' (Stubbs 2001: 188). Thus, keywords are an obvious point of entry for a collocational study that, in highlighting RESEARCH as the node around which one aspect of the macro-level discourse of self-promotion manifests itself, hopes to provide insights into how it is the collocates, more so than the node itself, that offload ideology.

### 3 Constructing the corpus: university websites

#### 3.1 The selection criteria: which universities?

The university system in the UK comprises a number of different 'tiers'. However, this study aims to move away from the stigma attached to the stereotypical 'university' versus 'ex-polytechnic' binary divide whose temporality privileges heritage as an institutional marketing tool (Bulotaite 2003). Of course, tiered distinctions can only be diminished to a point since the notion of "*selling* an education" in itself implies competition, thus maintaining hierarchy (Hyland and Tse 2009: 17). Esteem lineage has firmly taken root in the UK university system so much so that its inherency is unavoidable. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this investigation, the division of universities into *groups* is considered to be a more neutral distinction given that member institutions of the groups under analysis are self-affiliated rather than self-imposed by external commenters. Crucially, though, it is important not to overlook institutions' reputational idiosyncrasies; universities' personal identities have perhaps become a prerequisite for survival in the market economy (the Distinct Project 2012).

This study explores the discursive practices of those groups so-called the university 'mission groups'. According to the *Universities UK (UUK)* website, these comprise universities who 'are diverse in their missions and location'

and ‘have formed groups with common interests’ (2013). The notion that these groups act as central vehicles for the promotion of ‘common interests’ is hugely important to this study since it allows for the investigation of linguistic commonalities and linguistic variation across groups (inter-group) and within groups (intra-group). Indeed, it allows us to identify whether mission groups are truly homogeneous or whether it is just in a name. Do they build a common promotional discourse that makes one group distinct from another, or are commenters’ predictions that ‘mission groups are bearing the brunt of institutions’ growing need for a strong individual identity’ (Beer and Purcell 2012) reflected in individual institutions’ self-promotion as opposed to collective representation?

The UK has 115 universities (*UUK* 2013), the majority of which (85) are affiliated to a mission group. This study analyses a corpus of data derived from the institutional websites (Section 3.2) belonging to a cross-section of member institutions from the four mission groups (Table 1). Universities included in the corpus have been selected via stratified sampling, taking each distinct group and sampling at random within that group using the online sampling tool *random.org*, but proportionally to the group population so as to increase the representativeness of the findings. In total, the corpus represents 39 universities (see Appendix); 35% of the total number of UK universities (115) and 47% of the total number of UK ‘mission group’ members (85).

Mission Group	Total number of member universities	Total number of universities sampled
1994 Group	15	7
Million +	22	10
Russell Group	24	11
University Alliance	24	11
<b>Total:</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>39</b>

Table 1: Total number of mission group member universities sampled relative to the total number of mission group member institutions in the UK

### 3.2 Data: University Websites

University websites are an obvious data choice for two reasons. First, institutional websites, fuelled by ideology, have become the central vehicle

for universities' self-promotion. This is not surprising given the Internet's unique potential to communicate a significant amount of content to a vast audience at the touch of a button. Universities are, then, able to monopolise websites as a means to an end since they facilitate the mediated representation of self, personal to the institution not the individual. It is hoped that this specialised corpus will uncover whether the discursively constructed self has become so entrenched that these sites constitute '*fully* promotional texts in their own right' (Askehave 2007: 725). This may, in turn, suggest that marketisation has moved on from, and perhaps displaced the need for, the kinds of printed materials initially analysed by Fairclough (1993; 1995). Second, the Internet's ephemerality lends itself to the investigation of developments that have gained currency in the socio-political context and whose discursive territory CDA attempts to chart. In this way, the marketisation of higher education, as a topical issue, is likely to manifest on university websites, creating the need for their existence. This study aims to fill the gap between CDA and web-based corpora and can be seen, in some respects, as a response to Mautner's (2005b: 809) call 'to get wired'.

However, the ephemeral nature of the web poses a methodological problem. The issue herein is that, on the completion of this study, the corpus of university websites is likely to exist as a snapshot of texts that have since been revised. For this reason, attempts have been made to impose some fixity on the state of flux the web finds itself in: text has been downloaded (see Table 2) to show data as it was when accessed in September 2012. More specifically, the textual data has been mined from the homepage and "About us" page, as topical areas of university websites that have been shown to be a defining feature of the genre (Caiazza 2010; Morrish and Saunston 2010; 2013). This is to create comparability between different university websites areas, determining what is frequent common ground in their website structure so as to compare like with like:

- University homepage
- "About us" page
- School of English homepage
- School of English "About us" page

A caveat is required here regarding the hyperlinked interconnectivity of websites. As the name suggests, this 'web' of pages makes their navigation highly subjective so that it would be almost impossible to knowingly

replicate the paths taken by prospective students. To this end, the corpus construction can be considered partly, yet unavoidably, introspective.

Mission Group	Webpages included in the corpus			
	Homepage	“About us”	SofE Homepage	SofE “About us”
1994 Group	508	13,845	1,062	2,938
Russell Group	1,793	24,108	1,641	6,780
Million +	1,160	17,415	1,288	3,284
University Alliance	961	13,065	1,569	4,337
<b>Total:</b>	<b>4,422</b>	<b>68,433</b>	<b>5,560</b>	<b>17,339</b>

Table 2: The size in words of corpus data derived from university websites’ topical areas according to the four mission group sub-corpora relative to the total number of mission group member institutions in the UK

### 3.3 Corpus breakdown

The four university mission groups represent the four different sub-corpora that make up this corpus-based study. Table 2 outlines the size of each of these sub-corpora in words. Although it may not be considered sizeable by corpus linguistic standards, for a study that is partly CDA-oriented, a corpus of this size is relatively exceptional. Indeed, CDA studies have often been criticised for cherry-picking atypical texts from which to base claims that are, accordingly, over-generalised and introspective (Koller and Mautner 2004; Mautner 2005a, 2007, 2009; Orpin, 2005; Piper 2000; Stubbs 1996). As a result, this corpus is not readily compatible with conventional CDA methods alone.

The computational analysis software, *Wordsmith Tools 6.0* (Scott 2011), provided an entry point into the evaluative environment of the node RESEARCH (and also TEACHING, see section 4) with a particular focus on evaluative adjectives that occur to the left of the node (L collocates). In order to identify salient linguistic patterns around the node, concordances were generated with a span of 5 words L-R (on the left and on the right), to find recurrent evaluative L collocates. The system adopted for representing collocates is in italics and using superscript to highlight position (*collocate*<sup>L1</sup>) whereas the node is in small caps (NODE<sup>N</sup>).



#### 4 A higher education keyword: the case of RESEARCH

The decision to map the discursive territory of RESEARCH is based mostly on frequency; it is the second most commonly occurring noun in the entire corpus (see Table 3). Whilst RESEARCH is the keyword driving the profiling, its semantic network shall not be overlooked. Initially, the profiling of EDUCATION was also proposed. However, it is argued that RESEARCH is such a hub in the promotion of an education that it is also a marker of teaching with the two concepts being, to a certain extent, mutually reinforcing. Indeed, this was a facet of the White Paper (DBIS, 2011):

We want there to be a renewed focus on high-quality teaching in universities so that it has the same prestige as research.

— Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2011: 2)

This is echoed by Elton (2011: 68) who points to ‘an overall unity of teaching and research’ and, crucially, on university websites themselves with one 1994 Group member promoting ‘a belief that teaching and research are synergistic’ (*University of Leicester 2013*).

By taking frequency as evidence of a word’s typicality, this study conflicts with those in the Firthian (1957) tradition that approach texts with a set of intuitively gleaned keywords to be profiled in light of their socio-cultural significance (Caldas-Coulthard 1995; Fairclough 2000; Krishnamurthy 1996; Mautner 2005a). It is not a coincidence that RESEARCH fails to be glossed here as a ‘cultural’ keyword (Stubbs 1996) or ‘buzzword’ (Mautner 2005a). Unlike those buzzwords, such as *enterprising* and *entrepreneurial*, assimilated into academe from business contexts (Mautner 2005a), RESEARCH is not considered ideological in itself. It should be noted, though, that RESEARCH has emerged as ‘a major signifier of institutional value (Brown and Carasso 2013: 7) and so is not entirely polarised from culturally salient keywords. Nevertheless, it is argued that, on the face of it, RESEARCH is tacitly ideological; it is only by entering its collocational environment that we become aware of its ideological load. Crucially, this does not mean that that this load is diluted. Indeed, this study explores how the collocational environment of RESEARCH acts as a product description manipulated by text producers to further their self-promotional agenda. Exploring overly marketised higher education buzzwords, such as *entrepreneurial* and *customer*, would be ultimately contradictory to a focus on self-promotion; universities do not want to be seen as

actively market-oriented and so it is likely that they these words, for their connotations, will be absent in a corpus of university websites. The point is whether such descriptions constitute a ‘unique selling point’ (USP) in line with the individualisation prioritised by marketisation. This is essential considering the ‘challenge’ of promoting RESEARCH as an ‘intangible product’ (Morrish and Saunston 2013: 61) that students buy into as part of the commodification of knowledge (Becher and Trowler 2001).

	1994 Group	Alliance	Russell Group	Million +
1.	university	university	university	university
2.	research	students	research	students
3.	students	research	students	research
4.	English	school	world	education
5.	world	staff	school	campus
6.	campus	education	student	courses
7.	school	courses	English	school
8.	teaching	student	teaching	English
9.	year	world	UK	London
10.	staff	business	city	teaching

Table 3: Noun wordlists of the top 10 most frequent nouns in the sub-corpora

RESEARCH can be considered a product due to its privileged position in the noun wordlists (Table 3). Most importantly, though, is how RESEARCH undergoes a process comparable to nominalisation. *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* suggests its etymology does not strictly satisfy Biber et al.’s (2002: 88) criteria that suffixation is the typical instance with nominalisation: the ‘re’ prefix creates a new noun (research c.1577) from the previously introduced noun ‘search’ (c.1400) (*OED*). What is important about how RESEARCH is used in the data, however, is the lack of human agency. RESEARCH as a process is back grounded, making questionable institutions’ priorities: do institutions want to be seen as doing RESEARCH, or is it more about doing something that is quality assured (Section 5) or worldly (Section 6)? As the two most frequent evaluative L collocates of RESEARCH, *quality* and *world* shall be explored to unpack their promotional function as product descriptors to suggest that an education cannot sell itself. Rather, in the marketised context, institutions are required to manipulate promotional language as a means to an end. The fact that institutions see the need to

evaluatively modify RESEARCH (only 6% of constructions with RESEARCH as head of the noun phrase are non-evaluatively modified in the entire corpus) is telling of a general consensus among mission groups that RESEARCH alone is not enough to fulfil their self-promotional needs.

## 5 A Quality Assured education? The collocational behaviour of *quality* on university websites

The idea that RESEARCH is a product that students can buy into is entrenched by its recurrent packaging alongside the evaluative attributive adjective *quality*<sup>L1</sup> (see Table 5). This gives the impression of—to quote the title of the Government’s White Paper—‘students at the heart of the system’ (DBIS 2011) since it centralises the importance of customer satisfaction in the drive towards value for money. To this end, promises of performativity are inextricably linked to the regulation and control imposed by bodies such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). What is important to this study is whether the move by such bodies to encourage market competition, and thus self-promotion, in order to safeguard quality, compromises product differentiation. Indeed, concerns have been voiced about the threat that these prescriptive regulators pose to institutions’ use of unique linguistic constructions to meet their promotional ends (Gibbs and Knapp 2002: 49). To investigate this, the collocational behaviour of *quality*, as one of the two highest collocates of RESEARCH, and a marker of value, shall be explored in an attempt to identify how its connotative impact attempts to encourage students to invest in their product.

Initially, a wordlist has been generated using *Wordsmith Tools 6.0* (Scott 2011) for each of the sub corpora (Table 4) in order to establish the extent to which the mission groups prioritise QUALITY. This list appears to point towards a lack of inter-group variation in institutions’ representation of RESEARCH value, though this remains to be seen. At this stage, however, it is fair to say of this initial projection that there are some commonalities in mission groups’ prioritisation of QUALITY. This may be indicative of how QUALITY is realised similarly in linguistic constructions alongside the product to which it adds value: *quality*<sup>L1</sup> + RESEARCH.

*Quality*<sup>L1</sup> collocates most frequently (31%) with the adjective *high(-)*<sup>L2</sup> as a modifier preceding some other head of a noun phrase which *high*<sup>L2</sup> also modifies: ‘high quality research’ (1994 Gp. Birkbeck. About.), ‘high-quality,

research-led education’ (Russ. Gp. Bristol. About.); ‘high-quality, research-led teaching’ (M+. Gp. Bedfordshire. About.). The need to specify *high*<sup>L2</sup> is perhaps mostly to do with rank given that quality alone is typically used as shorthand for something that is high quality. It is noteworthy that, in these constructions, RESEARCH is deemed such a marker of success that it is employed as an adjective evaluating the product as opposed to the product itself; RESEARCH is at once the modifier and the modified. That it modifies the head noun EDUCATION reiterates its interrelatedness with RESEARCH and TEACHING as three mutually reinforcing higher education keywords where one implies the other. This notion is exemplified by exploring the collocational environment of RESEARCH-LED: where this node is employed as an L1 adjective, RESEARCH-LED premodifies the head noun TEACHING in 35% of constructions. It seems, then, that the word *quality* does not have to be directly deployed to mark value. Instead, its semantic ‘spill over’ is such that RESEARCH too has come to connote quality. Quality, though ‘ambiguous in denotation’, is clearly ‘rich in connotation’ (Mautner 2005a: 95).

Sub corpus	Rank in wordlist	Frequency	
		n	%
1994 Group	94	25	0.13%
Million +	72	43	0.18%
University Alliance	60	41	0.21%
Russell Group	65	67	0.19%

Table 4: Frequency of QUALITY in the four sub corpora where percentage is the frequency of QUALITY in corpus as a whole

Similarly, another common evaluative L1 collocate of *quality*<sup>L1</sup> is the superlative form. That is, the recurrent patterning of *highest*<sup>L2</sup> + *quality*<sup>L1</sup> (see Table 5): ‘highest quality teaching’ (1994 Gp. Leicester. About.); ‘highest quality research’ (Russ. Gp. Queen Mary. About.); ‘highest quality education’ (UA. Sheff. Hal. About.). This develops the previously stated point of *high* as rank marker, its co-occurrence with *quality* proving a doubly powerful force in the promotion of the product. These adjectival phrases connote something of remarkable *quality*. Yet it is not so remarkable considering it is used in mostly questionable the truth value of the proposition and is ultimately contradictory since it makes generic that which was intended to

differentiate. The notion that the use of *quality* is generic across university websites is exemplified by Mautner (2005a: 105) who identifies *quality* as a ‘keyword [that is] characteristic of contemporary higher education discourse’.

Sub corpus	L1 collocate of <i>quality</i>	Frequency
1994 Group	high	56%
	high-quality	
	highest	12%
Million +	high	21%
	high-quality	
	highest	2%
Alliance	high	51%
	high-quality	
	highest	12%
Russell Group	high	15%
	high-quality	
	highest	9%

Table 5: Percentage frequency of *high(-)* and *highest* in the four sub corpora noting that the percentage frequencies of *high(-)* are collective.

These adjectival constructions most frequently modify the head words RESEARCH (13%) and TEACHING (15%) (see Fig. 1). This gives weight to the argument that “universities are spending more and more time [...] developing marketable “products” (Askehave 2007: 724); the products in this case being research, teaching and education. Indeed, the recurrence of the verbs *offer(-ing)* and *providing* and the noun phrase *a provider* (Fig. 2) uphold the idea that higher education and, more specifically degree certificates, are packaged as a purchasable product and so enter into a metaphorical ‘shopping mall of education’ where prospective students can pick and choose the most attractive deal from those on ‘offer’. It can be said that there is a common inter-group marked structure that pervades university websites’ discursive practices:

$$\text{Offer(-ing)/Providing} + \text{high}^{L2}/\text{highest}^{L2} + \text{quality}^{L1} + \\ \text{EDUCATION}^N/\text{TEACHING}^N/\text{RESEARCH}^N$$

Using the *British National Corpus (BNC)*<sup>1</sup> as a reference corpus highlights the markedness of this structure as a defining feature of university websites. A KWIC<sup>2</sup> search returns limited results for the following collocates: *quality teaching* (8 tokens) and *quality research* (6 tokens). Interestingly, in 5 out of 6 tokens for *quality research* the L1 collocate is *high*. Likewise, for *quality teaching* 2 out of the 8 tokens collocate with *high(-est)*. There are stronger collocational ties between *high + quality* (852 tokens) without an educational head word. This is perhaps suggestive of the somewhat uneasy marriage of business–academic contexts in the traditional sense. Tracing the context in which quality most frequently occurs in the *BNC* is evidence of this (Fig. 3). It is noteworthy that, out of the 65 different *BNC* sub-corpora, the third and fifth most frequent sub-corpora in which *high + quality* occurs are adverts (637 tokens/million) and commerce (337 tokens/million). Thus, there is evidence of a two-pronged point of contact between a) language and promotion and b) language and business. In relation to the latter, quality assurance is defined as ‘the maintenance of a desired level of quality in a service or a manufactured product’ (*OED*). This exemplifies the idea that higher education discursive practice increasingly draws upon business-related lexis. Further, quality relates to ‘rank or position in (a) society. Frequently with the modifying adjective, as high [...]’ *OED*. Quality is being used almost as a performance indicator; in an attempt to differentiate, university websites are attempting to make performance measurable by institution. In fact, differentiation is discouraged as a result of universities conforming to a common discourse. Ultimately, the generic references to quality in the language of university websites could be the product of assembly line academia where ‘[...] academic activity is modelled on industrial production’ (Mautner 2005a: 105).

Yet, this begs an interesting question considering business discourse is based on product differentiation. These overused generic tactics of univer-

<sup>1</sup>The British National Corpus comprises 100 million words of written (90%) and spoken (10%) data that are synchronic in nature having been gleaned from general sources of British English of the late twentieth century. Though designed to represent a wide cross-section of current British English, the corpus construction spanned from 1991 to 1994 which might help to explain the lack of similarity of terms with my specialised corpus of university website discourse.

<sup>2</sup>Key word in context (KWIC) is a display format in computational corpus analysis that displays the occurrences of a particular user-specified term or phrase, the node, in its immediate context. The node is highlighted in the centre of the display with its context either side in an L–R span.

sity websites, although semantically similar, are somewhat different to business discourse where product positioning is driven by a USP, or multiple. In the *Cambridge Business English Corpus*<sup>3</sup>, *high* retains the abstract denotation found on university websites (Nelson 2006: 226). It is suggested, then, that such semantically opaque lexical items are intentionally deployed by universities as agenda-furthering devices since their inherent connotative fuzziness means that they cannot be contested.

<p>technology and services. We offer a          how we will continue to achieve          of world changing research and          Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008 and          engaged in leading-edge research and          lot more to UEA than          the School of English is well-reputed for its          their primary purpose to be          with world-class facilities. We offer          well established reputation for providing</p>	<p><b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b></p>	<p>, research-led <u>teaching</u> that  <u>research</u> that <u>benefits</u>          , inspirational <u>teaching</u>  <u>research-led teaching</u>  <u>teaching</u>. High  <u>teaching</u> and excellent          of <u>teaching</u>, wide range of  <u>research</u>, others concentrate on          education, <u>research</u>,  <u>teaching</u>, learning and <u>research</u></p>
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Figure 1: Sample concordance of *high quality* in the entire corpus

<p>with world-class facilities. We <u>offer</u>          international university <u>offering</u>          we are dedicated to <u>providing</u>          investigating our options for <u>offering</u>          a long and proud history of <u>providing</u>          well established reputation for <u>providing</u>          long and proud history as a <u>provider</u> of          with a proud tradition as a <u>provider</u> of</p>	<p><b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high-quality</b>  <b>high quality</b>  <b>high quality</b></p>	<p><u>education</u>, <u>research</u>          student experience  <u>educational</u> programmes  <u>educational</u> programmes          , progressive and inclusive  <u>teaching</u>, learning and  <u>education</u> in north London  <u>education</u> and a focus on</p>
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Figure 2: Sample concordance of *high quality* in entire corpus to show verb lexemes *offer* and *provide*

<sup>3</sup>The *Cambridge Business English Corpus* (BEC) is a 200 million word corpus of spoken and written business English drawn from a range of global sources including business meetings, minutes, reports, proposals, presentation and articles.

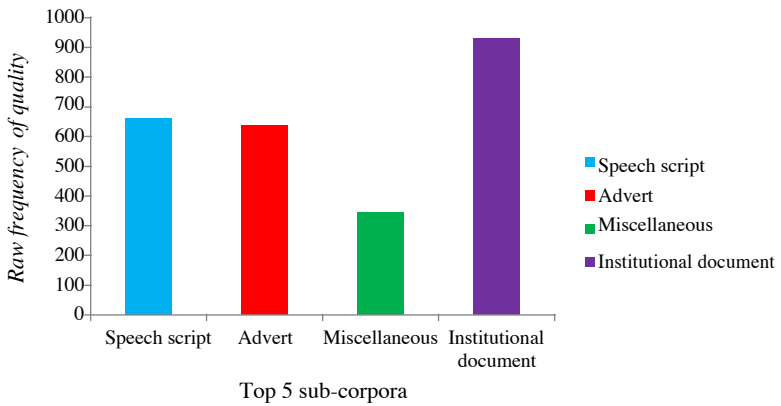


Figure 3: Top 5 BNC sub-corpora in which quality most frequently occurs

## 6 Competing in a global arena: The collocational behaviour of WORLD on university websites

The higher education landscape in the UK is one that is as much oriented towards students from outside the European Community as it is Home Participation rates (Bohm et al. 2004). The changing student demographic is itself evidence of this with the percentage of international students making up the total student population almost doubling between 1979–80 (7.6%) and 2011–12 (14.5%). International students can be expected to pay fees of up to £25,000 per year for some undergraduate courses (*Education UK*). This makes tapping into the overseas market a lucrative investment for UK universities who saw their public funding significantly reduced in reforms outlined in the Coalition Government’s White Paper (DBIS 2011). Indeed, it would not be overstating the case to suggest that ‘many institutions are effectively dependent on their ability to attract such students’ (Brown and Carasso 2013: 6). It is not surprising, then, that these concerns are both reflected and reinforced in the discourses of university websites.

Notions of quality and value lend themselves to this globalised context where institutions’ abilities to compete successfully in a global arena have come to rely on higher quality, value-added products. In the corpus, this



manifests itself most markedly in terms of *worldly* value; worldliness is currency and international visibility key for those universities unwilling to be superseded by the ‘super-league of global universities that are now engaged in battle for intellectual talent and academic prestige’ (Wooldridge 2005). The most significant marker of prestige and rank, irrespective of mission group affiliation, is WORLD:

Sub-corpora	Rank
1994 Group	5
Million +	13
University Alliance	10
Russell Group	4

Table 6: Rank of WORLD in sub-corpora noun wordlists

It is clear that institutions are keen to market themselves and, perhaps, most importantly, their products as competitors in a global ‘educational arms race’ (Graddol 2006: 40). The high rank of WORLD (Table 6) across all four mission groups reflects the impact that globalisation has had on the institutional agenda; ‘participation in the global exchange of information is now a prerequisite for promotion’ (Hyland and Tse, 2009: 18). However, there is some difference; Russell Group and 1994 group members prioritise their global agenda (WORLD is the fourth and fifth most frequent noun respectively) to a greater extent than those belonging to the other mission groups. This notion is reflected in the language found on these groups’ websites. The Russell Group outlines their aim for universities to make “impact through their *world-leading* research and education” (2013), whilst, on the homepage of their website, the 1994 Group claims to “bring together 11 of the UK’s *world-class* universities” (2013). The behaviour of WORLD in these instances, as a premodifying evaluative adjective, permeates university websites. This difference should not be downplayed. There is an order in frequency of the use of WORLD such that it follows the higher education ‘esteem’ lineage with these mission groups. The Russell Group make most use of WORLD as the most esteemed group closely followed by the 1994 Group as second most esteemed.

### 6.1 *World*<sup>L2</sup> + RESEARCH<sup>N</sup>

The product that is most commonly packaged with global interests in mind is RESEARCH<sup>N</sup>. Indeed, a collocational analysis of the node RESEARCH<sup>N</sup> identifies *world*<sup>L2</sup> as the most frequent premodifying evaluative adjective, occurring seventy nine times. That is, 10% of all RESEARCH<sup>N</sup> constructions will contain *world* as collocate. However, *world* does not behave evaluatively in all of these instances. Rather, the concern is with those constructions where *world* is found as an L2 collocate—this is true for almost half (49%) of the instances—since it is absent in L1 position. All thirty nine occurrences of *world* as an L2 collocate of RESEARCH<sup>N</sup> can be considered evaluative making it the most frequent evaluative L2 collocate in the corpus as a whole (Table 7) and across the four sub-corpora (Table 8).

Evaluative adjectives of RESEARCH <sup>N</sup> (L2 collocates)	Frequency
<i>world</i>	39
<i>internationally</i>	12
<i>high</i>	9
<i>leading</i>	7
<i>quality</i>	6
<i>cutting(-edge)</i>	5

Table 7: Evaluative adjectives used as L2 collocates of RESEARCH<sup>N</sup> in the corpus

Although *world*<sup>L2</sup> is the most common evaluative L2 collocate of RESEARCH, it is noteworthy that *internationally*<sup>L2</sup> is the second most. A combined force, they constitute 65% of all L2 evaluative collocates of RESEARCH (Fig. 4). This builds the semantic profile of RESEARCH<sup>N</sup> so that it is a product with a golden global standard to which institutions should aspire. The strict collocational profile of RESEARCH would suggest that most institutions attain such a standard. In actual fact, the high use of *world*<sup>L2</sup>, in particular alongside *leading*<sup>L1</sup> (Section 6.2), makes questionable the truth-value of the proposition as one that may not be strictly truth-conditional. Rather, over time it has become assimilated into the discourse of university websites as a ‘conventional way of expressing an evaluative meaning’ (Stubbs, 2007: 165).

Indeed, if receivers recognise its promotional content they may not be inclined to contest it since marketised discourse has become ‘naturalised’ so that it is ‘no longer perceived as marked’ (Mautner 2010: 2).

University Alliance		1994 Group		Russell Group		Million +	
World	7	World	13	World	14	World	5
Internationally	2	High	4	Internationally	3	Internationally	4
Quality	2	Internationally	3	Leading	3		
Best	1	Leading	2	High	3		
High	1	Highest	2	Cutting(-edge)	3		
		Cutting(-edge)	2				

Table 8: Evaluative adjectives used as L2 collocates of RESEARCH<sup>N</sup> across sub-corpora

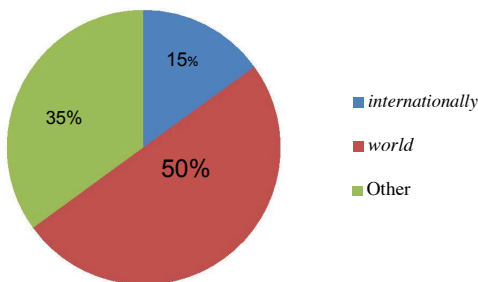


Figure 4: Evaluative L2 collocates that are INTERNATIONALLY and WORLD in the corpus

### 6.2 World<sup>L2</sup> + leading<sup>L1</sup> + RESEARCH<sup>N</sup>

The analysis thus far in this section has shown *world* to be the most frequent evaluative L2 collocate of RESEARCH. This implies that the L1 in such constructions does not exist as a vacuum devoid of matter. Rather, the L1 collocate is such a necessary component that it is often compounded to that which precedes it: *world*<sup>L2</sup>-*leading*<sup>L1</sup>. Of the 32 occurrences of *leading*<sup>L1</sup> in the corpus, twenty three exist alongside the L2 collocate *world*<sup>L2</sup> (72%) to form the construction (Table 10, Figure 5):

$$\text{world}^{L2} + \text{leading}^{L1} + \text{RESEARCH}^N$$

The implication is that  $\text{world}^{L2} + \text{leading}^{L1}$  is being employed as a marketing strategy to signal the high quality of the work the university is producing. This contributes to the idea of  $\text{RESEARCH}^N$  as a ‘product’ that can be ranked and modified to advance claims of quality. Indeed,  $\text{RESEARCH}^N$  is evaluated as  $\text{world}^{L2} (-)\text{leading}^{L1}$  in 33% of the constructions in which it occurs. Yet this also begs an interesting question as to what other ‘products’  $\text{world} + \text{leading}$  constructs modify. Most significant are those ‘products’ that are not projected into the global arena. In particular, this absence is marked for  $\text{TEACHING}^N$  and  $\text{EDUCATION}^N$  whose semantic profiles do not denote worldliness in any of the mission groups. This is in sharp contrast to  $\text{high}^{L2} + \text{quality}^{L1}$ , an evaluative construction that is used freely to modify the nodes  $\text{TEACHING}^N$ ,  $\text{EDUCATION}^N$  and  $\text{RESEARCH}^N$  (see section 5). It seems that  $\text{world}^{L2} + \text{leading}^{L1}$  is, for the most part, reserved for  $\text{RESEARCH}^N$ . Perhaps this is the notion that ‘research performance [has] emerged [...] as a major signifier of institutional value’ (Brown and Carasso 2013: 7) being mirrored at the level of discourse. This is traceable by examining how this construction is used in general use via the *BNC*:

Sub-corpus	Node: $\text{RESEARCH}^N$		
	$\text{leading}^{L1}$ frequency	$\text{world}^{L2} + \text{leading}^{L1}$ Freq.	%
Million +	5	5	100%
University Alliance	4	4	100%
1994 Group	5	4	80%
Russell Group	18	10	56%

Table 9: Percentage of L1 collocate leading that is preceded by L2 collocate world to form the construction  $\text{world}^{L2} + \text{leading}^{L1} + \text{RESEARCH}^N$

Stepping back from the data, it is important to investigate whether the collocational patterns identified in this corpus are represented in general language use. Running a *BNC* search for the node  $\text{WORLD}(-)\text{LEADING}$  returns just twelve hits:  $\text{WORLD-LEADING}$  (2) and  $\text{WORLD LEADING}$  (9). It is noteworthy that of these twelve instances, two occurred in the commerce sub-corpus, two in the institutional documents sub-corpus and one instance in the ad-

vert sub-corpus. Further, WORLD(-)LEADING collocates with QUALITY and RESEARCH:

the work we've done is of very high quality and, and certainly  
WORLD LEADING (institutional doc)

SmithKline Beecham is a WORLD-LEADING, RESEARCH-based phar-  
maceuticals company (advert)

Although the BNC is almost silent on WORLD(-)LEADING, perhaps due to the difference in time between the 1990s and the present day, it can tell us a great deal about WORLD and its semantic profile. It is most likely to collocate with a superlative adjective ('largest', 'biggest', 'greatest', 'oldest', 'fastest', 'easiest', 'toughest', 'richest', 'finest') that connotes rank and implies competition. This highlights the priority of universities to develop a competitive edge over other institutions in a bid to secure students' custom (Askehave 2007; Melewar and Akel 2005). The limited representation of WORLD(-)LEADING in the BNC reinforces its markedness; this construction seems to be an adjectival compounding predominantly used in higher education discourses. Nevertheless, the discursive practice on university websites is so saturated with promises of *world leading* RESEARCH that it undermines its potential as a 'unique selling point'. Ultimately, it means that institutions' self-promotion rests on some rather abstract claims for uniqueness (Morrish and Saunston 2013). These claims are reinforced through other orders of discourse, in institutional documents such as the White Paper (DBIS 2011) and on the website of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE 2013). In this way, a study by Hemsley-Brown (2011) found that university applicants recycle specific nouns, adjectives and phrases found on the British Council website and that of their target university when writing personal statements. These findings recognise how the discourses on institutional higher education websites and those specific to a university intertextually develop out of one another and so are mutually reinforcing.

## 7 Making sense of the semantics: opacity and malleability

It has been questioned whether markers of the quality and worldliness of RESEARCH are semantically transparent given their overuse and common promotional function on university websites regardless of mission group affiliation. The fact that the modifying evaluative adjectives *high*<sup>L2</sup>, *highest*<sup>L2</sup>

*quality*<sup>L1</sup> and *world*<sup>L2</sup> *leading*<sup>L1</sup> are at once ideologically loaded and semantically empty is perhaps a result of their entering into lots of phraseological expressions where RESEARCH is the head. Indeed, Carter (1998: 38) posits that the frequency of co-occurrence between one word and another is revealing of how ‘core’ that lexical item is. There is evidence to suggest that *quality* has emerged as a buzzword, though not one that is restricted to a particular semantic field. Indeed, Stensaker (2007: 100) sees the contemporary currency in ‘quality as fashion’, pointing to overuse in a range of discourses and thus its extensive connotative base. Crucially, whilst RESEARCH cannot be considered ideological in itself, its co-occurrences with those buzzwords that are salient in the marketised context is likely to taint its semantic load so that it too is assimilated into the macro-social context as key. It would not be unfair to say, then, that *quality* is a keyword distinctive on university websites and higher education discourse generally. Tracing this construction in general use via the BNC, and noting OED definitions, alerts to the seeping of semantics from business into academe with *quality* and *worldly value* permeating discourse boundaries so much so that their semantics become blurred rather than distinct.

The ‘malleability’ (Mautner 2005a: 103) of keywords<sup>4</sup> is tapped into by text producers as an agenda furthering device; they negotiate the tension between opacity and transparency, specific enough so that their RESEARCH represents something ‘unique’ enough to sell an education and ambiguous enough to be naturalised as common sense. The ambiguity of the attributive adjectives *high quality* and *world-leading* suggests that institutions prioritise their business-facing and globalised agendas ahead of RESEARCH. Thus, the denotation of RESEARCH is diluted by its ambiguous collocates.

## 8 Conclusion

Ultimately, this discursive profile of the evaluative phraseology around the higher education keyword RESEARCH has revealed this to be a product around which the institutional discourse of self-promotion manifests itself. The importance of this should not be downplayed since it provides evidence for the case that an education can no longer be relied upon to sell itself. Rather, the increasingly competitive higher education landscape creates the need for

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<sup>4</sup>Keywords so-called for their high frequency in the corpus rather than their socio-cultural significance, as in the Firthian tradition.

universities to carve out distinctiveness in the language used on their institutional websites. Whilst there are traces of an attempted discourse of competition between university mission groups, by nature evaluation contrasts one thing with another (Stubbs 2007: 166), the overriding trend toward standardisation is such that universities are catapulted toward a centralised middle.

The discovery of keywords based on their high frequency in the corpus, as opposed to their cultural currency in the Corpus Linguistic sense of the term, is equally as revealing of the words' ideological load. Indeed, highlighting RESEARCH as the node around which one aspect of the macro-level institutional discourse of self-promotion is realised provides useful insights into how collocates offload ideology. It is argued that RESEARCH, a high frequency keyword, is assigned ideology (it is the done to) whereas cultural keywords generally are the assigners of ideology (the doers) having been born out of their undoubtedly value-laden context. Collocates are just as constitutive of ideology as the node itself since they themselves may be 'buzzwords', as is the case with *quality*<sup>L1</sup> + RESEARCH<sup>N</sup>. It should be realised how the strict collocative potential of seemingly 'neutral' nodes alongside buzzwords take away their non-evaluative nature. It would be interesting to investigate how buzzwords, such as *enterprising* (Mautner 2005a), are present in a corpus of media texts but absented from a specialised corpus of institutional university websites in order to negotiate the tension between being market-oriented but not actively seen as doing so.

It is clear from the sub-corpora noun wordlists that research is a product that is most privileged for all four of the university mission groups on their websites, making differentiation a priority (see Table 3). Crucially, this noun is non-evaluatively modified in only 6% of constructions. The heavy ideological load assigned to research is mostly to do, then, with the company it keeps in terms of the evaluative adjectival modifiers *high*<sup>L2</sup> + *quality*<sup>L1</sup> (RESEARCH<sup>N</sup>) and WORLD<sup>L2</sup> + LEADING<sup>L1</sup> (RESEARCH<sup>N</sup>). These are recurrent promotional constructions that are used consensually by institutions irrespective of mission group affiliation. However, there is some difference with the use of WORLD; the more esteemed Russell Group and 1994 Group prioritise their global agenda to a greater extent than the University Alliance and Million+ Groups (see Table 8). Although the former use *world* more frequently, the collocational behaviour within these constructions is used in the same way as the latter two groups. Nevertheless, this does not close the

gap between a competitive marketised context and the need for further differentiation; the vacuum remains due to the generic promotional discourse that overrides what very little difference there is. This analytical trend looks set to stay given that these constructions also permeate the institutional websites of the mission groups and higher education regulatory bodies, such as the HEFCE, in a mutually constitutive intertextual dialectic. Further, the repeated use of such constructions stretches their semantic value to the point that the rich connotations assigned to *quality* and *world* entrenches their ambiguity and delay moves to redress this semantic opacity precisely because this intertextuality naturalises their use to the point that they are no longer marked. This is manipulated by text producers so that self-promotion is ideologically coded as selfless promotion to hide the concerns expressed by Michael Farthing, chair of the 1994 Group, that students are positioned as ‘consumers purchasing degree certificates’ (BBC News, 15 November 2011).

It has been shown that business-like language has made inroads into the discursive practices found on university websites. This is achieved via the synthesis of quality and worldliness as two key sites of marketisation. Indeed, the BNC, as a twenty year old language repository, provided a diachronic perspective on the influx of these constructions into academia, absent then but present now in this study’s specialised corpus. However, universities should come to recognise that their self-promotion is about more than just tapping into generic business terminology. If universities are to effectively sell themselves and embrace their individual identity, then they need to remove their hands from the promotional ‘discourse kits’ shared by all. This may be easier said than done if it is a case of some universities playing catch up once those considered to be ‘the best’ change their discourse. Nevertheless, the recycling of the same adjectives, and reliance on an ‘abstract claim for uniqueness’ (Morrish and Morrish 2010: 81), discourages the distinctiveness at the core of many successful business negotiations where a unique selling point is prioritised. As it stands, mission groups are, to a great extent, homogeneous, contradicting claims that there has been a move towards member institutions embracing the stance ‘All for one and none for all’.



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## Appendix: Universities sampled according to mission group affiliation

Mission Group	Member universities sampled
1994 Group	Birkbeck, University of London Goldsmiths, University of London Royal Holloway, University of London University of East Anglia University of Leicester University of Surrey University of Sussex
Million +	Birmingham City University Edinburgh Napier University Middlesex University Staffordshire University The University of Greenwich University of Central Lancashire University of East London University of Bedfordshire University of the West of Scotland University of West London
Russell Group	Cardiff University Newcastle University Queen Mary, University of London University of Bristol University of Edinburgh University of Exeter University of Glasgow University of Leeds University of Manchester University of Nottingham University of Southampton
University Alliance	Bournemouth University Cardiff Metropolitan University Coventry University Glasgow Caledonian University Liverpool John Moores University Manchester Metropolitan University Nottingham Trent University Sheffield Hallam University Teesside University University of Hertfordshire University of the West of England

# Gestural phasing of tongue-back and tongue-tip articulations in Tripolitanian Libyan Arabic

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## Abstract

This paper adopts the framework of Articulatory Phonology to explore the timing patterns of two-stop clusters in Tripolitanian Libyan Arabic (TLA), a colloquial form of Arabic used in everyday spoken communication in Tripoli. By means of electropalatography (EPG) and acoustic analysis, the influence of syllable position and speaking rate on the inter-gestural coordination of the clusters /gt/, /gd/, /kt/, and /kd/ is investigated. The data were collected from one male speaker of TLA who repeated the target words in a carrier sentence three times, and in two speaking rates: normal and fast. The results provide evidence that syllable-initial (onset) clusters are coordinated differently from syllable-final (coda) clusters. The coordination pattern in syllable-initial clusters is characterised by an overlap between the gestures of the first consonant (C1) and the second consonant (C2) in the cluster. This is the result of the simultaneous closure of the tongue-body (TB) gesture, and the following tongue-tip (TT) gesture. Another coordination pattern in onset clusters allows a short delay between the release of C1 and forming the closure of C2. This coordination is marked by a short inter-consonantal interval (ICI) 5–15 ms in duration, between the two articulatory closures. On the other hand, the coordination pattern in syllable-final clusters is distinguished by a longer ICI separating the two consonantal gestures. The syllable-final ICI emerges as a result of the long delay between the release of C1 and forming the closure of C2. The duration of this ICI is between 30–50 ms. As speaking rate is increased, the duration of syllable-initial clusters decreases. However, the coordination pattern remains stable in /gt/, /gd/ and /kt/, but more gestural overlap between the two consonantal gestures is observed in /kd/. In coda clusters, the increase in speaking rate results in a decrease in duration of C1 and C2, some reduction in the percentage of contact, particularly in the velar region and finally, a tighter coordination between the two gestures. This leads to the decrease in the duration of the ICI in syllable-final clusters.

## 1 Introduction

The objective of this study is to investigate how two-stop clusters in Tripolitanian Libyan Arabic (henceforth TLA) are coordinated. It also aims to investigate how this coordination is influenced by two factors: syllable position (syllable-initial, henceforth SI, clusters vs. syllable-final, henceforth SF, clusters) and speaking rate (normal vs. fast). A considerable amount of literature has focused on studying the inter-gestural coordination in consonant clusters in different languages, and has examined the factors that influence this coordination. For example, Catford (1977: 200) points out that in a sequence of two stops, it is normal that the closure of the second stop is formed before the release of the first. It has been said that the coordination of gestures is influenced by many factors such as syllable position (Browman and Goldstein 1988: 140), place of articulation (Byrd 1996: 240, Chitoran et al. 2002: 34), speaking rate (Byrd 1996: 160), stress patterns (Tilsen 2011: 657) and grammatical factors (Gafos et al. 2010).

Syllable position is one of the main factors that plays a role in the way consonantal gestures are organised. SI clusters have been described as having different spatial and temporal characteristics distinguishing them from SF clusters (Browman and Goldstein 1988). Onset clusters have greater spatial displacement and exhibit stability compared to coda clusters (Pouplier and Marin 2010). SI clusters are also said to exhibit the c-center organisation in which consonantal gestures are organised globally with the vowel gesture (Browman and Goldstein 1988; Byrd 1996). The consonants in a complex onset are coupled with the vowel in an in-phase relation (Browman and Goldstein 2000) and are in a competitive mode with each other to avoid the two consonantal closures being overlapped and to secure the perceptual recoverability of C1 by releasing it (Chitoran et al. 2002). The c-center for SI clusters has been confirmed for a number of languages, including English (Byrd 1996; Marin and Pouplier 2010), Italian (Hermes et al. 2008), Romanian (Marin 2013), and French (Kühnert et al. 2006).

There have been only a few studies on timing in Arabic. In Moroccan Arabic, it has been observed that in certain environments, a vowel like element appears in onset sequences (Harrell and Brunot 2004). While Dell and Elmedlaoui (2002) and Gafos (2002) analyse this vocoid as a transition between the two consonantal gestures, Boudlal (2001) interprets it as a short vowel. In one of the recent studies on the relationship between syllable



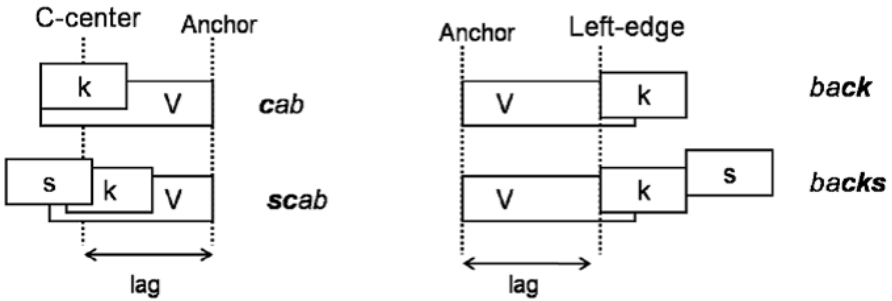


Figure 1: The organisation of complex onset and codas in English, as proposed by the c-center hypothesis (from Marin and Pouplier: 2010).

structure and temporal patterns, Gafos et al. (2009) use 3D Electromagnetic Articulation to distinguish between complex onsets (e.g. CCV) and simplex onsets (e.g. C#CV, where '#' indicates syllable boundary) in Moroccan Arabic. Their results support the simplex onsets proposal.

Coda clusters, on the other hand, are said to be organised locally, not forming a global organisation with the preceding vowel, in an anti-phase relation with the vowel, and they are not in a competitive mode with each other (Browman and Goldstein 2000). Figure 1 shows the timing patterns of SI and SF consonant clusters as proposed by the c-center hypothesis.

Coda clusters are also described as showing reduction in magnitude: duration and percentage of contact (Byrd 1996: 210). According to Krakow (1999) the reason behind these differences lies in the way these syllables are articulated in different positions. While syllables in initial position exhibit tighter constrictions and stability, a number of studies report that there is some weakening in the constriction or loss of the stop completely in syllables occurring in final position, (Manuel and Vatikiotis-Bateson 1988; Kent and Read 1992). A large body of literature has also reported the influence of speaking rate on intergestural coordination. For example, using electromyographic data, Gay (1981) reported a decrease in segment duration and an increase in the velocity of articulators in fast speaking rate. The increase in speaking rate also results in target undershoot where articulators fail to reach their targets due to restrictions on their speed, particularly in fast speaking rate (Lindblom 1963). One of the most important influences of speaking rate on intergestural coordination is the increase in the amount of

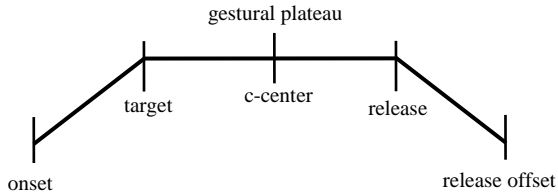


Figure 2: Landmarks in gestural life (from Gafos 2002)

gestural overlap reported in many studies such as Byrd and Tan (1996), although some studies claim that the relative timing of some gestures remains stable despite the change in speaking rate (Kent and Netsell 1971; Kent and Moll 1975). The contradictory results of the relationship between the increase in speaking rate and target undershoot could be related to variability between speakers (Flege 1988).

Unlike English which only allows stop clusters in SF (e.g. *apt*) because traditional accounts do not require them in onsets (See Heselwood 2007 for an alternative view), TLA allows up to two stop consonants in SI and in SF position. Despite the amount of literature published on articulatory timing in different languages, and how it is influenced by factors such as syllable position and speaking rate, in reviewing the literature, only a few acoustic studies investigating TLA were found (e.g. Ahmed 2008, Kriba 2010), and there was no study that used EPG to explore articulatory timing in TLA. The aim of this paper is to investigate the inter-gestural coordination patterns of two-stop clusters in TLA.

## 2 Methodology

Articulatory Phonology as proposed by Browman and Goldstein (1986, 1988, 1989 and 1990a, 1990b, 1992) and Gafos (2002) is the framework adopted in this study. In Articulatory Phonology a gesture is “a spatio-temporal unit, consisting of the attainment of some constriction at some location in the vocal tract” (Gafos 2002: 270). An articulatory gesture has the following landmarks: onset, target, c-center, release and release offset (Gafos 2002). Figure 2 shows the landmarks of an articulatory gesture.

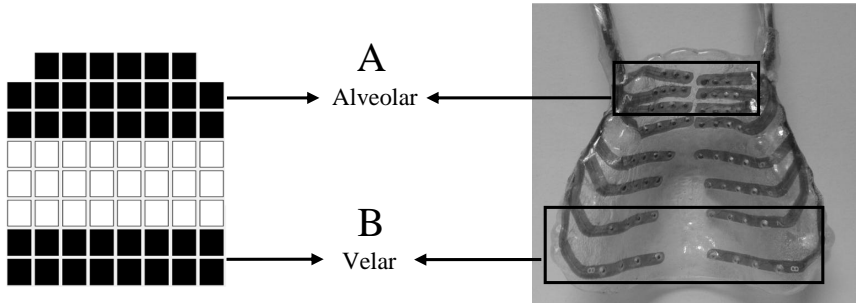


Figure 3: EPG plate (right) with computer generated display (left) showing a complete closure at the alveolar region (A) and a complete closure at the velar region (B). Black squares record tongue contact and white squares mean no contact.

The onset refers to the onset of movement of the articulator towards a target. The articulator then achieves its target for some time before the release starts. The mid-point between attaining the target and starting the release is called the c-center. This is when the articulator reaches the maximum contact. The release offset marks the end of the gesture.

In the case of oral stops, these landmarks adequately fit in constrictions formed at the lips, the TT with the alveolar ridge and the TB with the velum. In consonant clusters, the timing of release of the first stop (C1) and achieving the target constriction of the second (C2) determines the pattern of coordination, i.e. whether there is an overlap, synchronicity or a delay between the two gestures. EPG is used to record the duration and percentage of contact between the tongue and the palate. Figure 3 shows the EPG plate used in this study.

The custom made artificial palate is known as “the articulate palate”. It is very thin and fits against the speaker’s hard palate. The palate contains 62 electrodes distributed equally on both sides. The electrodes are arranged in eight rows with each row containing eight electrodes, except for the front row which contains only six electrodes. Starting from the front, the first three rows (1–3) measure the alveolar region contact, the next three rows (4–6) measure the palatal region contact, and the last two rows (7–8) measure the velar region contact (Articulate Assistant user guide 2003–2007: 31). The plate is connected to a ‘multiplexer’ which is connected to EPG serial inter-

face SPI V.2.0 with a palate scanner EPG3.V2. The scanner is then plugged into a PC. To analyse the recording, the software ‘Articulate Assistant’ is used. This software displays place and time of the tongue contacts with the palate. Every frame of 10 ms intervals shows real time articulatory events aligned with a spectrogram and waveform display. The tongue-palate contact patterns can be analysed and presented in tables and graphs. Despite not providing any information about the behaviour of the tongue when it is not in contact, EPG is a very suitable and convenient tool for this investigation.

### 3 Data

Data (Table 1) were collected from one male native speaker of TLA. The target words were embedded in the carrier sentence /matgu:li:f \_\_\_\_\_ halba/ “don’t say \_\_\_\_\_ too much”. The target words are frequently used in TLA, apart from /nakd/ which could be related to /nakad/ in Standard Arabic. It is worth mentioning that the CCVC words come from the verbal CCVC template and the CVCC from the nominal CVCC form. These words are part of a larger dataset to investigate the gestural phasing of clusters including clusters with /b/, /t<sup>s</sup>/ and /d<sup>s</sup>/. These clusters were excluded from this study, because either the closure is not captured by the EPG, as in /b/ or the more complex factors involved in the production /t<sup>s</sup>/ and /d<sup>s</sup>/. The target words were repeated two times each, and in two speaking rates: normal and fast.

Cluster	Syllable-initial		Syllable-final	
	Word	Gloss	Word	Gloss
/gt/	/gtal/	“he killed”	/wagt/	“time”
/gd/	/gdar/	“he was able”	/ʕagd/	“tying”
/kt/	/ktab/	“he wrote”	/nakt/	“unpacking”
/kd/	/kdab/	“he lied”	/nakd/	“boring”

Table 1: Stimuli in IPA phonemic transcription with glosses

To facilitate the acoustic analysis, the target words were placed between two words, the first one ends with a fricative and the second one starts with a fricative. Because TLA allows up to two consonants in SI and in SF, more than two can occur across a word boundary. In this case, it is more likely that

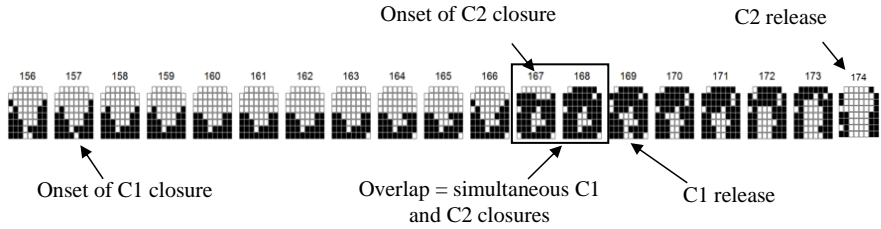


Figure 4: EPG frames showing a simultaneous overlap between a TB gesture and a following TT gesture

an insertion will take place. The long vowel /i:/ preceding the target word helps to eliminate vowel insertion before the target cluster. The sentences were printed on  $10 \times 20$  cm cards. All clusters in SI position were followed by the open vowel /a/. Using this particular vowel helps to minimise the interference with the trajectory of the consonantal gestures (Chitoran et al. 2002: 11), and to control the contextual effect of the vowel environment (Dixit and Flege 1991). For each cluster, four EPG measurements were made. These were: onset and offset of closure for C1, onset and offset of closure for C2, the amount of overlap between the closure of C1 and C2, and finally, the amount of delay between the release of C1 and forming the closure of C2. It is worth noting that C1 and C2 refer to the first and second member in a cluster, regardless of syllable position. The onset of closure of C1 or C2 was measured from the first frame in which the TB or the TT gesture reached the target and formed a complete closure. It is worth mentioning that the percentage of contact, despite a closure formed, is rarely 100% in the velar region. This means that, in most cases, only the last row will have a complete seal. The offset of closure of C1 or C2 was marked by the first frame where the closure seal at the alveolar or velar region was broken. The amount of overlap was measured by how many frames there were in which there was a simultaneous closure of C1 and C2 at the alveolar and velar regions. Figure 4 shows the EPG measurements taken when there is an overlap between the two closures.

More frames with a simultaneous constriction indicate more overlap between the two closures. Finally, the delay was defined as the frame(s) between the release of C1 and forming the closure for C2. Figure 5 shows the

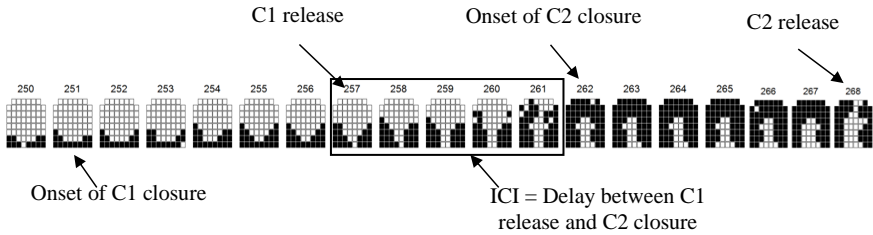


Figure 5: EPG printouts showing a delay (ICI) between the release of a TB gesture and forming a closure by a TT gesture. The ICI lasts between frames 257–261 inclusive.

measurements when there is a delay between these two closures. The open juncture frames are characterised by having no complete alveolar or velar seal. An increase in the number of these frames reflects a lesser degree of overlap between the two closures. It is worth mentioning that the measurement of the duration is of the hold phase only, i.e. it excludes the duration of VOT in SI clusters and the release of C2 in SF clusters.

## 4 Results

Results are divided into two sections. In the first section, the influence of syllable position on the duration and the coordination patterns of the two consonantal gestures is presented. The second section shows the results of the influence of the increase in speaking rate on the duration and the coordination pattern of the same gestures.

### 4.1 Results of the influence of syllable position

The duration of SI clusters and the duration of SF clusters in normal speaking rate are shown in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively. For ease of comparison, measurements in fast speaking rate are inserted between two brackets.

The average duration of SI clusters is 179 ms. Apart from /kt/, C1 seems to always move to the right. With the exception of /kt/, the duration of C1 is always longer than C2. The average overlap duration is 15 ms. Some clusters exhibited more overlap (e.g. /gt/ and /kt/) compared to zero overlap in

Word	No. of syllables per second	Dur. of C1	Dur. of Overlap/ ICI	Dur. of C2	Overall dur. of cluster	SD	Percentage of decrease in dur. in fast rate
/gtal/	4.7[6.0]	110[95]	-20[-25]	97[75]	187[145]	17[8]	[22%]
/gdar/	4.3[6.0]	104[89]	-10[-15]	85[65]	179[139]	15[6]	[22%]
/ktab/	4.5[6.0]	95[67]	-20[-20]	98[75]	173[122]	14[7]	[29%]
/kdab/	4.8[6.0]	103[65]	10[-20]	65[72]	178[129]	13[8]	[28%]
Average	4.5[6.0]	103[82]	-15[-20]	86[72]	179[136]	13[9]	[24%]

Table 2: Average number of syllables per second, duration of C1 and C2, and the amount of overlap (in minus) or ICI in SI clusters produced in normal speaking rate. The results of fast speaking rate and percentage of decrease are between brackets.

Word	No. of syllables per second	Dur. of C1	Dur. of Overlap/ ICI	Dur. of C2	Overall dur. of cluster	SD	Percentage of decrease in dur. in fast rate
/wagt/	4.4[6.6]	65[55]	50 [8]	60[60]	175[123]	6[4]	[34%]
/ʕagd/	4.5[7.2]	80[60]	30 [8]	70[60]	180[128]	5[14]	[38%]
/nakt/	4.9[7.2]	90[68]	30[15]	80[49]	200[132]	3[6]	[33%]
/nakd/	5.0[7.2]	90[63]	30[15]	85[56]	201[134]	8[6]	[32%]
Average	4.7[7.0]	81[62]	35[12]	74[56]	189[130]	6[8]	[34%]

Table 3: Average number of syllables per second, Duration of C1, ICI and C2 in SF clusters. The results of fast speaking rate are placed between brackets.

/kd/. In this particular cluster, the average duration of ICI is 10 ms. In SF clusters, the average duration of the target clusters is 189 ms. There was no overlap between the two closures in SF clusters. The average duration of ICI is between 30 ms in /gd/, /kt/ and /kd/ is 50 ms in /gt/ with an average of 35 ms. Despite the fact that the duration of SF clusters is always longer than SI clusters, when the duration of the ICI is subtracted, SI clusters, apart from /kt/, are always longer. Regarding the pattern of coordination, in SI position, the two closures, apart from /kd/, are overlapped. This is the result of forming the closure of C2 before the release of C1. This pattern of coordination led to the masking of the C1 release. The simultaneous overlap between the velar and alveolar closure lasted between 10 ms in /gd/ and 20 ms in /gt/ and /kt/. When there is overlap, the two gestures are very cohesive and exhibit high percentage of contact, particularly at the alveolar region. Figure 6 shows the pattern of intergestural coordination of /gt/ in SI

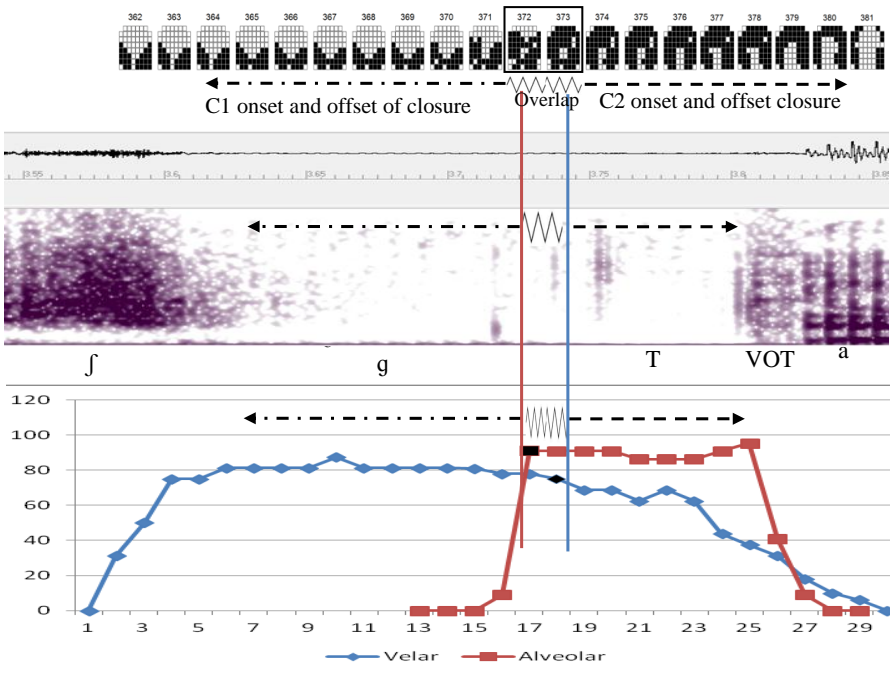


Figure 6: Acoustic and EPG printout of the /gt/ cluster in the word /gtal/, showing an overlap (in zigzag pattern) between the tongue-back gesture (blue/diamonds) and the tongue-tip (red/squares) closure lasting 20 ms (frames 372–373 inclusive).

position. When there is no overlap between the two consonantal gestures, as in the coordination of /kd/ in /kdab/, the pattern is characterised by a short delay between the release of C1 and forming the closure for C2. Despite the release of C1, the two gestures show high percentage of contact, and are tightly coordinated that they allowed only the release of C1.

In SF, on the other hand, the two closures are pulled apart compared to their pattern in SI. The loose coordination between the two gestures caused the delay between the release of C1 and forming the closure for C2. The TB gesture is also reduced in magnitude. In SF cluster /gt/, the two gestures are coordinated in a less tight fashion. For example, the TB gesture and the TT gesture in /gt/ are more loosely coordinated compared to the rest of SF



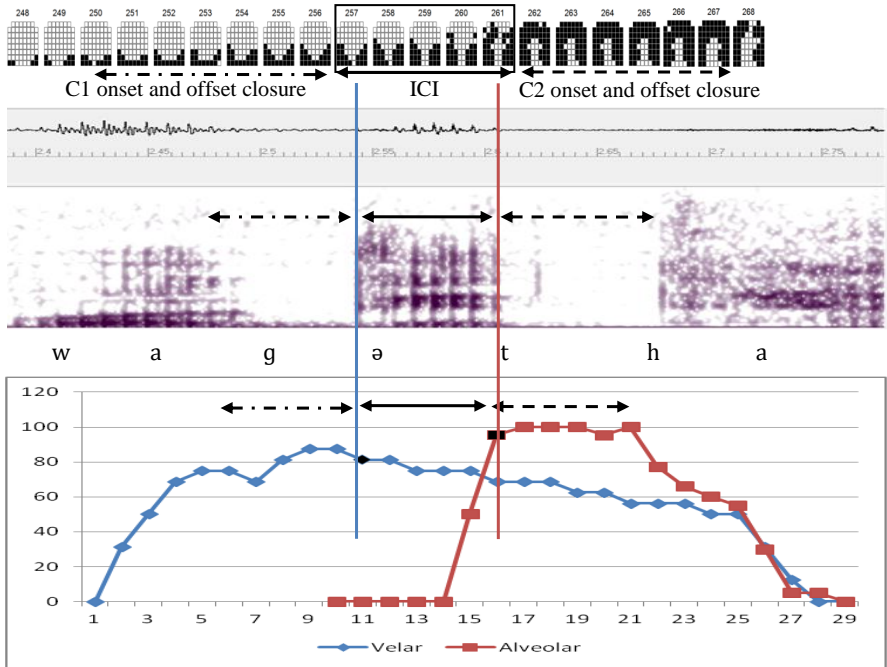


Figure 7: Acoustic and EPG printout of the /gt/ cluster in the word /wagt/, showing a long delay between the release of velar gesture (frame 257) and the forming alveolar closure (frame 262). The ICI lasts between frames 257–261 inclusive.

clusters. Figure 7 shows the intergestural coordination pattern of /gt/ in SF.

#### 4.2 Results of the influence of speaking rate

In the sentences carrying SI clusters, the average number of syllables per second increased from an average of 4.5 in normal speaking rate to 6.0 in fast speaking rate. The average duration of SI clusters decreased by 24%. The average duration of overlap also increased from 15 to 20 ms. The coordination pattern of SI clusters shows that the TB gesture and the TT gestures become more cohesive in fast speaking rate. The influence on the amount of overlap is more noticeable in /kd/ which showed no overlap at all in nor-

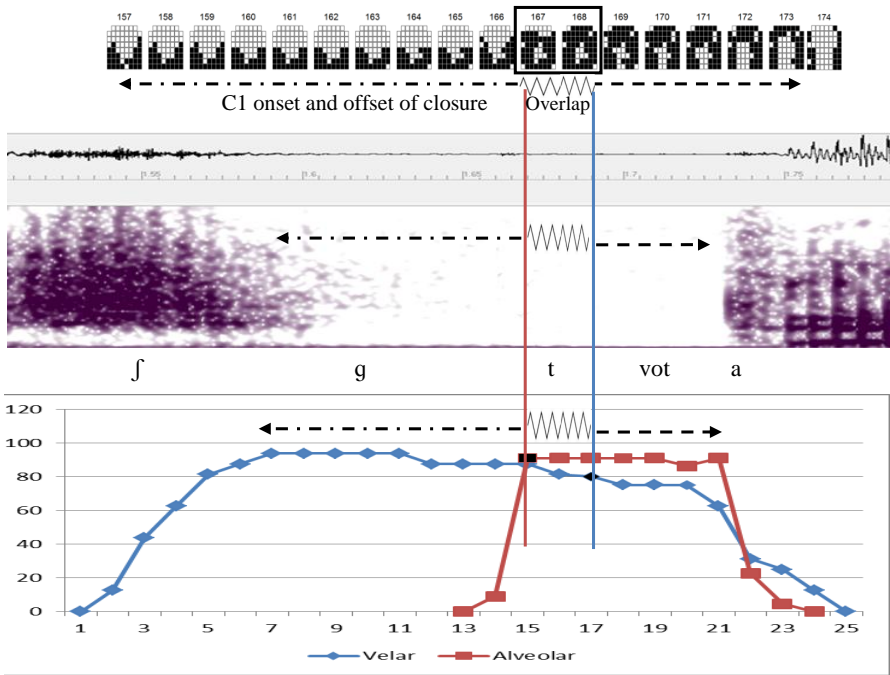


Figure 8: Acoustic and EPG printout of the /gt/ cluster in the word /gtal/ produced in fast speaking rate. The figure shows an overlap between the velar and the alveolar closure lasting 25 ms (frames 167–168)

mal speaking rate and exhibited 20 ms of overlap in fast speaking rate. The maximum overlap is of /gt/ in /gtal/ in which the release of the TB gesture is delayed 25 ms after forming the closure by the TT gesture. Figure 8 shows the intergestural coordination pattern of /gt/ in syllable-initial position.

In SF position, the average number of syllables per second has also increased from 4.7 to 7.0 syllables. The average duration of the target clusters decreased by 34%. The average duration of ICI decreased noticeably from an average of 35 ms in normal speaking rate to an average of 12 ms in fast speaking rate. The shortening of the ICI is more evident in /wagt/. Figure 9 shows the pattern of coordination of the cluster /gt/ in the word /wagt/.

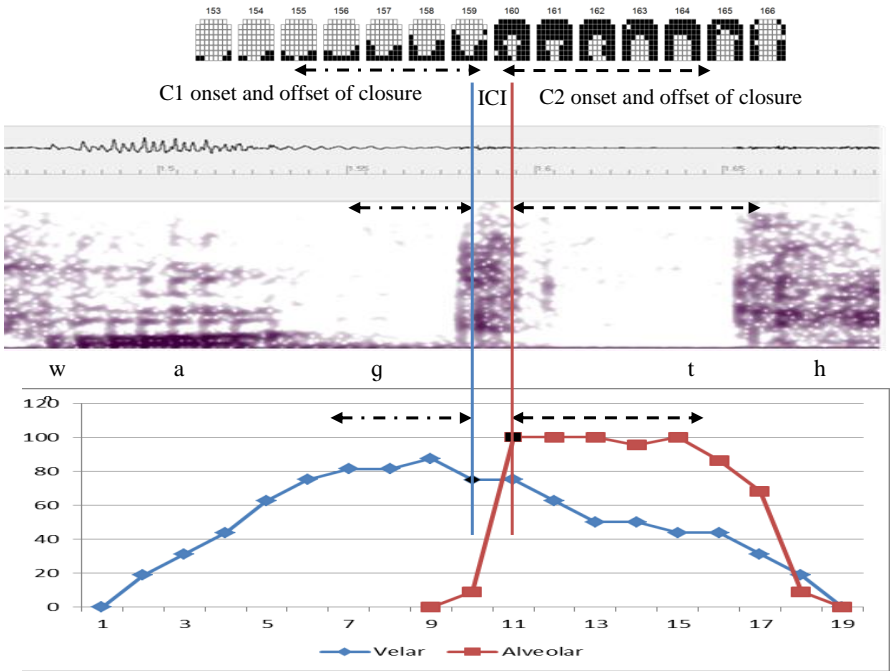


Figure 9: EPG printout of the /gt/ in /wagt/ produced in fast speaking rate. Although C1 was released, the two gestures show a more cohesive coordination compared to normal speaking rate. The ICI lasts for less than 10 ms.

### 5 Discussion

The present results suggest that there are two general patterns of gestural coordination in two-stop clusters in TLA. These coordination patterns are influenced by syllable position and speaking rate. SI clusters are very cohesive as a result of the overlap between the TB gesture and the following TT closures. In this pattern, forming the closure for C2 takes place before the release of C1. Although in back-to-front clusters C1 is expected to be released, due to the need to enhance the perceptual recoverability of the word (Chitoran et al. 2002). C1 release is masked by C2 closure. That is why the cluster appears on the spectrogram as one long hold phase followed by one acoustic release. However, this was not the case in /kd/ where C1 has an

acoustic release. The release of C1 in this cluster could be motivated by three possible factors. The first is perception. To ensure perceptual recoverability, /k/ is released. Another factor that could have influenced the coordination of /kt/ and /kd/ is voicing. It may be the case that to facilitate the start of voicing of C2 in /kd/, C1 intraoral pressure is released so that voicing can be easily initiated. In /kt/ where the two stops are voiceless, there is no need to release the intraoral pressure because there is no voicing. The last fact which could have motivated the release is the fact that /d/ is actually /ð/ in Modern Standard Arabic, i.e. it is originally a fricative not a stop. In anticipation of a partial blockage of the air, the /k/ was release. SI clusters were more resistant to decrease in duration compared to SF clusters. This could be related to the fact that SI clusters are articulated differently from SF clusters (Krakow 1999) for many reasons such as perception (Goldstein et al. 2007) and stress patterns (Tilsen 2011).

In SF, the long duration of ICI arises because of the less cohesive coordination between the two gestures. Further evidence of the less tight coordination in SF clusters is the reduction they exhibit, particularly in the velar region. This could be the result of the velocity of the back of the tongue, the fact that the syllable is not stressed, or the economy of gestures. Finally, the ICI is mostly voiced, because the adjacent stops are voiced. However, in SF /kt/, the ICI is voiceless due to the voicelessness of adjacent consonants. As a result of the increase in speaking rate, the duration of both SI and SF clusters decreased. A strong relationship between speaking rate and degree of overlap has been reported in the literature (e.g. Miller 1981). Because SI clusters were overlapped already in normal speaking rate, they remained stable when speaking rate was increased. However, the two gestures of /k/ and /d/ exhibited more overlap in fast speaking rate. The decrease in the duration of ICI in SF clusters is the result of the two gestures becoming overlapped or more cohesive. In SF clusters, the TB gestures showed more reduction in magnitude and lower percentage of contact in fast speaking rate. The demand on the articulators to achieve their targets in a certain time frame could result in target undershoot. The answer to the question of why the same reduction is not observed in SI could be attributed to many factors such as the “domain-initial strengthening” (Keating et al. 2004). It could be also related to the longer duration and shorter transitions which lead to tighter coordination observed in SI.

## 6 Conclusion

This study investigated the patterns of inter-gestural coordination of two-stop clusters in TLA. The influence of syllable position and speaking rate were also taken into consideration. Results show that SI clusters are organised differently from SF clusters. The main difference lies in the amount of overlap allowed in different positions. In SI, the coordination pattern is characterised by an overlap between the closures of C1 and C2. As a result, the release of C1 is typically absent. A less cohesive coordination was also observed in SI clusters. This pattern is marked by a short delay between the releases of C1 and forming the closure for C2 giving rise to a short ICI. In SF clusters, a lesser degree of overlap between the two closures is observed. The pattern of coordination is characterised by a delay between the release of C1 closure and forming the closure of C2. This results in the insertion of a longer ICI between the two gestures. As speaking rate increases, a decrease in the duration of C1 and C2 is noticeable. The pattern of coordination, however, remains stable in SI clusters. More overlap, however, was observed in /kd/. SF clusters seemed to be more affected by the increase in speaking rate. Consonantal gestures in SF clusters exhibited tighter coordination, shorter durations, and some reduction in the total percentage of contact in the velar region. In addition, this pattern of coordination usually resulted in shortening the duration of the ICI to make the two gestures more overlapped. While SI clusters did not show any differences in their internal cohesiveness, SF clusters showed some variability. It seems that the increase in speaking rate causes the gestures to become more in-phase. The coordination of the TB and TT gestures in SI clusters (/gt/, /gd/ and /kt/) clusters appeared to be more resistant to the increase in speaking rate, apart from /kd/, where the gestures are already in-phase relationship. The present findings are quite consistent with other research which found influence of syllable position and speaking rate on intergestural coordination. Additional studies using more clusters containing emphatic stops and using electromagnetic articulography to capture the timing of the lip closure are needed. Another possible topic to investigate is the influence of order of articulation, front-to-back vs. back-to-front, on intergestural coordination.

## Acknowledgements

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# An interview with Marina Manfredi on the use of systemic functional linguistics, and other ways of teaching translation studies

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Interviewer: MARILENA DI BARI  
*The University of Leeds*

Marina Manfredi is a tenured Researcher in English Language and Translation at the University of Bologna (Italy). She is a member of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) and the European Society for Translation Studies (EST), as well as of the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS).

She has been working in Bologna since 2003 as a lecturer and researcher on theory and practice of translation, from English into Italian, of specialized and literary texts, in particular colonial and postcolonial. In her courses, she has introduced an innovative way of applying Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory to the teaching of Translation Studies. On this topic, she published the monograph “Translating Text and Context: Translation Studies and Systemic Functional Linguistics” (Vol. 1, 2008; Vol. 2, forthcoming). During her career, she has also given a number of talks and published chapter articles on the previously mentioned topics, as well as on other interests of hers such as the study of lexical and grammatical metaphors in popular science texts, and audio-visual translation.

Marina was invited to give a talk entitled “Applications of appraisal theory for the analysis of text types in translation” at the Centre for Translation Studies, University of Leeds, where this short interview took place. The interview transcript is as follows:

**Marilena Di Bari:** *Your talk was on applying the Appraisal Framework to translations from English into Italian in different types of texts such as literary texts, tourist guides and press magazines. Can you please summarize what are the main differences between these two languages, and how does Systemic Functional Linguistics help such analysis?*

**Marina Manfredi:** Of course there are differences between English and Italian, between the two language systems, which pose translation problems.

For example, the translation of the English typical long strings of nouns—due to the fact that English makes a large use of pre-modification, while Italian of post-modification. This makes the Italian target texts (TTs) usually longer than the English source texts (STs), which in turn poses problems of fluency and also of space constraints, especially in magazines, subtitles, and so on.

To offer another example, the lack of the Saxon genitive in Italian is also a problem for translators, because a direct translation would most often produce a clumsy translation.

However, in general, when dealing with translation, rather than focusing on aspects linked to contrastive inter-lingual problems, I think it is more important to focus on differences in the use of lexico-grammatical structures because of different rhetorical strategies, communicative strategies and expectations, so differences in the target and source speech communities, according to different text types.

Once again, just to offer some examples, let's think about the use of repetition, in fact a cohesive device in English, while in Italian very often considered a sort of redundancy. So, is the function of repetition to be rendered in another way? Function is important. Or, for example, some text types such as argumentative texts in the field of human sciences in Italian tend to make use of more explicit cohesive devices than English STs. There are text types—think about tourist guides—where the English reader is addressed in a more direct and informal way through different lexico-grammatical structures, while Italian texts of the same type tend to be more impersonal and more formal. Or some text types prefer hypotaxis instead of parataxis, etc.

In light of this, I think that a grammar that can be a useful tool for translators is not formal, and not even contrastive, but rather functional. That's why I claim that SFL can be a fruitful tool for translation practice, and not only for translation analysis, as I tried to show in my talk.

Once the translator has identified the function, realized by certain language structures in the ST, he or she can try to reproduce it in the target language (TL) using, of course, different language structures. What is important is the meaning, and I use this word in functional terms, not as a synonym with content. It refers, indeed, to the three kinds of meaning according to Halliday (ideational, interpersonal and textual) that any kind of text realises.

Actually, a systematic modelling of Italian grammar in an SFL framework

does not exist, as it does for example for French or for Spanish, at least to my knowledge. However, as for practical experience, many aspects of the Hallidayan model can be applied to Italian as well. For example, Halliday himself said that every language has in its grammar some systemic constructions to realise relational processes with different structures precisely.

I can offer a practical example of the usefulness of an SFL approach to translation, linked to what I was saying at the beginning. If you consider nominalisations in terms of ideational grammatical metaphors, it can be very useful, even from a practical point of view, to be able to unpack them to render their function in Italian TTs, again to avoid clumsy translations. In that case textual meanings could be lost, but sometimes a compromise is necessary while translating.

**MDB:** *You also have experience in teaching such interesting connections between Systemic Functional Linguistics and translation studies at the university. What would you say are the difficulties and potentialities?*

**MM:** As for difficulties, the main problem when adopting an SFL approach in teaching is that many students lack a background knowledge, and I'm not talking about SFL, but about linguistics in general. Like Mona Baker regretted some years ago, also in Italy there are still universities that rely on just practice when training translators, and practice is mainly based on intuition without any systematic approach.

I suggest that, maybe, an SFL approach could be a possibility, not the only one, but a meta-reflection of this kind could be particularly useful and fundamental to make students aware of language choices in STs, first of all, and of the translation choices they are asked to take. As I said, SFL is not the only solution, but it might offer benefits from a theoretical, methodological and practical point of view. For example, a text analysis based on SFL could help students get away from the surface, from the structure of the English ST and engage with a deeper reflection on wordings and meanings realised.

Theory, hopefully, might even not be perceived as a 'dirty word' if you can offer students some practical usefulness of this meta-linguistic approach, because they usually start a translation course being a bit suspicious of theory, but they can realise that it can help their performance.

Moreover, I think that SFL could even help solve the old dichotomy between culturally-oriented translation studies and linguistically-oriented translation studies, because it is based on a strict link between language and

culture, language and context of culture, and the notion of context of culture in translation is fundamental.

One might argue that this is an elaborated model and it's a problem. A possible solution could be to simplify it according to the kind of audience (or class in the case of teaching) for certain translation purposes. However, even the so-called delicacy of this model, its highly systematic structure, can be useful for a complex process like translation.

**MDB:** *What about time?*

**MM:** Yes, time is another problem. Of course, the ideal situation would be a background, at least a general one, in SFL. If this is not the case, also because I do not employ exclusively this approach in my translation courses, I illustrate how this can be more useful than other ones, but I combine different approaches, so time is actually not so much.

But something can be done, maybe without illustrating the full model in detail like in yesterday's talk, just hints. Still, something can be done, and with interesting results.

**MDB:** *You have also recently explored audiovisual translation. Can you tell us a bit more about your experience?*

**MM:** Yes. My experience, as you say, is a very recent one. After working on audiovisual translation from a didactic point of view, working on the ever-growing theory of audiovisual translation, and also guiding students through exploring audiovisual texts for their final dissertations (they enjoy audiovisual translation), I have recently engaged in a research of mine that actually allowed me to put together some of my research fields.

I decided to focus on multi-ethnic sitcoms addressed to a young audience. For this purpose, I made use of linguistic studies on language variation, theory of translating for children, and postcolonial studies, along with some specific studies focused on dubbing, which in Italy is still the main audiovisual translation form. I've just begun. I still have a lot of work to do, but this seems to be a challenging field of research to explore widely and deeply, not only in terms of translation studies and audiovisual translation studies, but also in terms of analysing cross-cultural diversity in our multi-ethnic society.

**MDB:** *What about the students? You said that they enjoy audiovisual translation, and maybe sitcoms are the best in this sense?*

**MM:** Yes, they enjoy it. As for sitcoms, there are often problems with trans-

lation. Italy has a well-known and valid tradition of dubbing as far as movies are concerned. With sitcoms of different kinds and TV in general, there are sometimes more problems in the TT, because of the lack of time and the sort of inferiority attached to the genre.

And many students, especially in Foreign Languages, are used to watching them in English and they are able, even without a theoretical framework, to make comparisons between different versions, and identify problems in rendering, especially when different cultures are involved. For these reasons, I picked this interesting topic. Yes, we have a lot of research in dubbing of movies, but this particular sub-type, in particular for a young audience, could offer interesting results.

As I learnt recently, when attending the “Media for all” conference on audiovisual translation, many scholars started to become more interested in reception, i.e. how dubbing or subtitling are received by the target audience. So, in this sense, it would be interesting to see how sitcoms (in the one I worked on, cultural references were mostly maintained by the way), are perceived by a young audience of teenagers.

**MDB:** *The emphasis on the use of automatic tools in translation is bigger and bigger, as you know. Do you think there is space in the theoretical teaching of linguistics for this?*

**MM:** Translation and technology nowadays are strictly linked. In the professional world, translators of specialized translation in particular cannot do without the use of CAT tools by now. Let’s think about translation memories that spare a lot of work and time.

From the point of view of teaching, parallel corpora, I think, can be a useful resource for both descriptive research and practical purposes. However, I consider technology to be more helpful when dealing with highly specialised texts where, apart from terminology, certain recurrent conventions are the norm, and words and meanings are sort of predictable in both languages, the ST and the TT.

If we want to focus on other texts, like the ones we have discussed so far, which in functional terms are more open—in the sense that they are not so predictable and offer translators a wide range of choices—I think that other kinds of methods can still be employed, especially for teaching purposes.

# An interview with Dr. Franz Pöchhacker on interpreting research and training

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Interviewer: RAN XU  
*The University of Leeds*

Franz Pöchhacker is Associate Professor of Interpreting Studies in the Centre for Translation Studies at the University of Vienna. He has worked as a conference and media interpreter and published articles and monographs on various domains of interpreting. He has co-edited *The Interpreting Studies Reader* (London/New York: Routledge 2002) and published an introductory textbook entitled *Introducing Interpreting Studies* (London/New York: Routledge 2004). He is also the editor, with Minhua Liu, of *Interpreting: International Journal of Research and Practice in Interpreting* (John Benjamins, Amsterdam) and serves as Associate Editor of the 'Benjamins Translation Library' series (John Benjamins, Amsterdam). Dr. Pöchhacker was invited to give a talk titled "Researching Interpreting: Focus on Methodology" at the Centre for Translation Studies, University of Leeds, where this short interview took place.

**Ran Xu:** *What do you see as the current trends of interpreting research and what determines these trends? In what possible directions do you see the future trends developing?*

**Franz Pöchhacker:** It depends on the time frame that we are looking at. When you say 'current trends', this could also mean to say 'what's hot nowadays in interpreting studies'. But I would like to step back and look at the long-standing trends. The major shift that is extremely noticeable is the move beyond international conference settings as a focus of interest in research on interpreting. It started to happen in the 1990s, looking not only at international conference interpreting and specifically at simultaneous interpreting, but also taking seriously other domains of interpreting, like court interpreting and interpreting in hospital as well as many other settings. I think that is the most fundamental and a recent trend in the field of interpreting studies. It has also been accompanied by several shifts in both theory and methodology. A purely cognitive or cognitive science perspective was ideally suited to an explanation of the cognitive process of simultaneous interpreting, but once

we are looking at conversational interaction, interpreting research based on cognitive psychology does not tell us much about what is going on in these situations. So the shift from the cognitive scientific models and methods towards more sociological methods was associated with this change or this expansion of the field of view. That also meant that the typical methodologies that used to be more quantitative or experimental underwent a shift towards more qualitative analysis, discourse-based analysis.

One separate trend is generated by technological progress. New forms of practising interpreting, especially remote interpreting, have had a major impact. So I see a major research interest in looking at interpreting as practice with new technology. There are other researches that have a regional or geographic or linguistic origin, and that could also be seen as a trend that new language combinations are coming to the fore as an object of study.

The future trends would be almost like developments extending from a very strong nucleus, which I think originally was a very tightly knit set of parameters: specific type of interpreting, specific mode of interpreting, certain language combinations and certain regional centres where interpreting was practised. It was a small core and it is almost as if this core has been expanding in all directions. I could not really say that there is one particular direction for the future researches, but there will be more developments, for instance, towards more sophisticated, cognitive scientific methods. I know that Barbara Moser-Mercer in Geneva is now working together with neuroscientists to study the intricacies of language in the brain in conference interpreting. That trend is continuing. There will also be more discourse analytical studies, more sociological interaction-oriented studies. All these various new developments in new settings will be on-going. It would be hard to see the whole field moving only in one direction.

**RX:** *Generally speaking, the market need for conference interpreters is shrinking against the current financial background. Meanwhile, interpreting research itself has been experiencing a shift towards, for example, community interpreting, an area where professional training is still lacking. What are the implications for interpreting training schools? Does it pose a threat to professional training, in other words a de-professionalization of the trade?*

**FP:** I think the fundamental issue here would be the appreciation for the complexity of interpreting, also in the settings beyond international conferences. If people believe—or are made to believe—that the real challenge of

interpreting is only in simultaneous interpreting and the rest is easy and can be done by any bilingual, as current and everyday practice seems to show, then I think training institutions would be in trouble.

There are enough studies to show that interpreting in dialogic and triadic settings is incredibly complex and challenging. Even people with a conference interpreting background like Margareta Bowen said many years ago that interpreting in a community setting is at least as challenging as sitting in the booth in an international conference. It is just that the type of challenge is a different one.

If the interpreting training community aims for professionalism in that activity, there will even be a growing need for training, but maybe not so much for an expansion of training conference interpreters. Training schools would definitely remain in business—if not grow—if society agrees with them that the kinds of interpreting that happen nowadays in multilingual societies deserve to be practiced at the highest possible professional level. This is ultimately a political decision.

**RX:** *In China, the interpreting market is still growing, and it has given rise to the boom in interpreting training schools and MA programmes for conference interpreters. All of a sudden, interpreting research has become popular as well. Do you see China as taking on the lead in interpreting training and possibly research?*

**FP:** I certainly see tremendous potential in research and training in China, where there are very active and prominent research centres. I would acknowledge though that China is nowadays faced with a great need for not only trainees and graduates, but also qualified trainers of interpreting. There is a real bottleneck. If the country wants to expand the number of available professional interpreters so quickly, it has to draft language teachers without any experience in interpreting into the classroom to teach interpreting to students who very often do not have a very high level of English skills, because everything is happening so fast and so quickly. Then I think there is a risk involved that we create a generation of graduates of interpreting training programmes who are not trained under ideal circumstances for the reasons that I've alluded to.

On the other hand, I don't know any solution to it. If you have a strong need, you have to try to fill this need in whichever way possible. In some other countries, interpreting training also became almost like a fashion. Any university wants to have an interpreting training programme. So that is



where I believe, in free societies, some level of regulation might be useful. A state ministry of education should be more sensible and realistic about the need and expand the interpreting training programmes a bit more slowly, but with more quality. Maybe getting teachers who have experience in interpreting would make sense in the long run. The worst-case scenario would be that we expand the pool of interpreters very quickly and they haven't been trained under ideal circumstances. In ten years' time, when all these people have saturated the market, China might face the situation that certain countries are facing nowadays in Europe where interpreters for English are no longer that necessary.

Will the need for interpreters really continue rising the way it has in the past ten years? I don't know. If we expand quickly and saturate the market, then it may develop in a different direction, or at least stagnate. Then we will not have any chance to make the interpreters even better and more professional, because we have produced too many of them and too quickly.

**RX:** *As an interpreting scholar, you have extensive experience in many disciplines of interpreting research. Do you have any specific suggestions for young interpreting researchers? In the long run, should we be as broad as possible, covering different disciplines, or as narrow and specialised as possible?*

**FP:** On the level of the interpreting studies community, luckily we do not have to make these choices. The community is large enough and develops on its own. It is self-regulating. Maybe within a centre with limited funds, we have to say what we should opt for. But in the community as a whole, there is no need to say 'we' should focus on this or that.

On the individual student level, my advice is usually to capitalize on their strengths. I would suggest that they try to find out what particular interests, capabilities and skills would be available to them.

Finally, in terms of research training, that question does indeed come up: when we give a course on research training, should it be "specialised" or "as broad as possible"? I think we should opt for the latter. At the University of Vienna, we have a research training course that introduces students to survey design, semi-structured interviews and quantitative analysis, etc., giving them an overview of the various methods that they could then adopt for their particular research topic. New publications are also helpful in guiding students if they want to opt for a certain methodology. In terms of methodology, I think it is useful to keep it broad.