

## *Shorter notices*

### *Ossi Ihalainen in memoriam*

Professor Ossi Ihalainen, known to most members of the ICAME group, died on 15 September, 1993, at the age of 51. Though he had been fighting against leukemia for nearly a year and a half, his death took his colleagues and students by surprise, reminding us that uncertainty and tragedy remain an inexorable element of life.

Ossi Ihalainen graduated from the University of Helsinki in 1966, took an MA at the University of Wisconsin in 1968 and presented his PhD thesis at the same university six years later.

He led the Savonlinna Language Institute in Finland in 1968-1969, and was appointed to an assistantship in English Philology at the University of Helsinki in 1970. After a three-year period as associate professor of English Philology at the University of Jyväskylä (1976-1979), he returned to Helsinki in 1979 as associate professor, and was made full professor in 1985. Among his duties outside the university were memberships in the State Committee for the Humanities at the Academy of Finland, the Matriculation Examination Board and the board of the Finland-U.S. Educational Exchange Commission. He was appointed a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1991.

Though Ossi Ihalainen's academic career was remarkably successful, he never withdrew to an ivory tower of scholarship. As early as the 1970s he was a friend to all Finns studying English via TV, known as the editor and the principal actor of the Finnish version of the popular Slim John programme. Throughout his career, he kept in touch with the general public by giving interviews on questions of the English language and its research. Only a few months before his death he participated in discussion on questions of usage printed in the letters-to-the-Editor of the major Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*.

Ossi Ihalainen's research interests were manifold, ranging from theoretical linguistic analysis and questions of TG grammar to more communication-oriented fields of study such as dialectology, contrastive studies and language learning. In his PhD thesis he dealt with genericity and the semantics of the English noun phrase. Later on he worked on issues in contemporary English syntax, particularly raising.

However, it was Ossi Ihalainen's work in dialectology that was to

make him a world-famous scholar in his field. In pursuing the study of present-day British dialects, particularly the dialect spoken in the county of Somerset, he continued the pioneering research in the syntax of dialects launched by his teacher, Professor Tauno F. Mustanoja, in the early 1970s. To collect new material in small country villages, Ossi Ihalainen interviewed old Somerset men and women in their homes. In this work he possessed, as witness his dialect tapes, that very rare and invaluable gift of making one's informants talk in a spontaneous and natural way. After the research trips, it was not infrequently that one stopped at Ossi Ihalainen's door in the department corridor to wonder about the strange noises coming out of the room. What was gibberish to an untrained ear, was clear Somerset speech to Ossi Ihalainen, who sat at his desk transcribing the material.

On the basis of his transcriptions, Ossi Ihalainen studied a variety of central topics, among others, the dialectal occurrence of the auxiliary *do* and the use of the relative links. His expertise was needed for the hundred-page chapter on historical dialectology that he was invited to write for one of the volumes of the *Cambridge History of the English Language*. The chapter was still underway, when he fell seriously ill. It was only through his unfailing will-power and determination that Ossi Ihalainen was able to complete the study; it was left for his students to see the manuscript through the press.

Ossi Ihalainen was also one of the pioneers in realizing the potential of the expanding computer technology for the study of language. In the beginning, it fell to him to explain to the specialists at the computing centre why computers could be used to crunch not only numbers but also words. From early on, Ossi Ihalainen was highly intrigued by software developments for data storage and retrieval and he spent countless hours learning and experimenting with new techniques. He was especially interested in linking the sound of the dialect tapes and the transcriptions by the help of a data retrieval interface. As leader of the dialectal part of the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts project, he was committed to compiling a major archive of computer-readable British English dialect texts, a task which was interrupted by his untimely death. Through the 1980s he followed the activities of the ICAME group members with great interest, and for the last eight years of his life he was a member of the ICAME Advisory board.

Discussing an issue with Ossi Ihalainen meant approaching the problem from different angles, weighing the pros and cons thoroughly and considering the various decisions one could make, for better or worse.

It was his wit and very special sense of humour that made these discussions memorable and rewarding. His linguistico-philological talent and incontestable dedication to the cause made Ossi Ihalainen an exemplary scholar; his intense wish to do good for his fellow people made him an exemplary person. These qualities seldom bloom in one and the same human being; in Ossi Ihalainen they did.

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***Fourteenth ICAME Conference, 19-23 May, 1993,  
Feusisberg (Zürich)***

*Anne Wichmann*  
*Central Lancaster University, Preston*

This was a chocolate box ICAME – the most picturesque I have been to. We drank chilled wine in an alpine meadow, with a lake far below and snowy mountains above. We saw the magnificent Abbey library at Einsiedeln, guided by a scholar monk who knew Mrs Thatcher ('a very clever lady; we never talk about politics'). We were welcomed to Zürich, as we stood beneath palm trees in the central atrium of the University, by the creator of the last manual concordance of the Bible in German. And of course there were the papers...

Many of the papers and posters described work on familiar corpora, and in familiar areas. The large British National Corpus (BNC) and International Corpus of English (ICE) projects were well represented. Liz Eyes and Mike Bryant from Lancaster reported on their work of tagging the BNC, and Dominic Dunlop talked about the attempts to rationalise the TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) headers for maximum

efficiency. Progress in the compilation of ICE was reported by Anne Pakir for Singapore and Philip Bolt for Hong Kong, while Sid Greenbaum examined some of the problems of word-class labelling, and Gerry Nelson and Akiva Quinn described (and demonstrated) their utility programme for searching the corpus.

Among those papers describing aspects of synchronic variation were Hilde Hasselgård (time and space adverbials), Christine Johansson (relative clauses), and Charles Meyer (ellipsis). Göran Kjellmer presented his work on lexical density as a parameter of register variation, and Josef Schmied's poster looked at register variation in East African English. There were also several papers this year reporting on work on collocations, idioms and other fixed expressions. Jean Hudson shared with us the complexity of 'complex adverbs'; Alex Collier and Eleanor Mundy described collocational analysis on a large scale (and said something about throwing the corpus away afterwards – did they mean that?). Bengt Altenberg and Mats Eeg-Olofsson, having apparently exhausted the supply of continuous collocations in the London-Lund Corpus (LLC), are now working on discontinuous word-combinations. Jacques Noël, in what was sadly to be his last ICAME paper, talked of his work on collocations in the Canadian Hansards.

In addition to more familiar themes, there were some which charted new directions within a familiar area. We have known for some time about work on historical corpora, and there were again several papers on diachronic change. This time, however, the time-scales under scrutiny varied from very long-term changes, through more recent change over the last 200 years, to current monitorable change. Among those dealing with language change of the before-our-very-eyes variety was Pam Peters, who presented her work on the Australian Corpus of English, investigating American and British influences on verb morphology. (I think the Americans win.) Willem Meijs had some interesting evidence of productive and less productive affixes, and Antoinette Renouf entertained us again with her monitoring of the progress of words we can argue about, on this occasion *grunge*, *risc* and *nimby*. Of those dealing with a slightly larger time-scale I particularly enjoyed a paper by Doug Biber and Ed Finegan. They reported work on their 'Archer' project, which looks at register change over two centuries. This was a fascinating application of Biber's model to diachronic variation. Using the dimension 'involved' vs 'informational' they analysed the development of register in personal letters over the last 200 years. They were pleased to report that while men were still nowhere near as 'involved' as women letter-writers, they

have become at least slightly less inhibited over that period. (What Doug actually said was that they were basically still jerks!)

Above all this was a conference about new (especially spoken) corpora, and new uses for corpora. Jan Svartvik, Brian Mosey and Olof Ekedahl described an investigation, based on the Lancaster-IBM Spoken English Corpus (SEC), into what constitutes good Public Speaking. As Bengt Altenberg commented, 'there is an infinite number of ways of reading a text; there is not an infinite number of ways of reading a text well'. They have already found interesting patterns of chunking, pausing, and nuclear tone choice.

As Gerry Knowles reported, the SEC now exists in a new incarnation as MARSEC (the Machine Readable Spoken English Corpus), which is now available in digitised form on CD-ROM. Work on transcribing the new Corpus of Spoken American English which, unlike the SEC, consists largely of conversation, was reported by Wallace Chafe and John du Bois. I look forward to the planned CD-ROM which will make it possible to look at the transcription and listen at the same time. I also look forward to a slightly less evasive definition of the 'intonation units', in which the text is being transcribed. Anna-Brita Stenström gave a gripping account of her adventures with Leiv Egil Breivik collecting a corpus of 'youngspeak' (COLT: Corpus of London Teenager language). Having tired of studying the language of 'old educated people' (LLC) they sought out the young and ill-educated. In fact, the subjects were so ill-educated that they were loath to part with the recording equipment afterwards, and the researchers were obliged to take a taxi from house to house rounding it up. Randall Jones reported no such irregularities in the collection of his German corpus. The Brigham Young University Corpus of Spoken German is a mammoth undertaking. It represents 80 hours of speech, elicited in 400 semi-structured interviews, and includes samples from the former GDR, Austria and Switzerland. This is a very welcome research tool since the only existing German speech corpus dates from the 1960s and is only available in transcribed form.

A very new direction for ICAME is the development of multilingual corpora, and there were two excellent papers in this area. Stig Johansson and Knut Hofland reported on the English-Norwegian parallel corpus, a collection of fiction and informative prose. A similar project in Lund, dealing with Swedish-English texts, was reported in a poster by Karin Aijmer. These developments are potentially of great importance to translation theory, which still appears to suffer from a mixture of over-generalisation, anecdotalism, and not a little mystique. However, after

Christian Mair's expressed concern (in his report of the 13th ICAME Conference) about the letter M in ICAME, perhaps we should now consider what to do about the E.

Given the current research climate which emphasises the 'user', I should mention some papers dealing with applications of corpus analysis. Sylviane Granger is testing out commercially available grammar and style checkers on a corpus of learner English. Eleanor Mundy described an approach to automatic topic identification, an important contribution to semantic analysis, and Pieter de Haan took a new and critical look at the issue of authorship detection. It would be nice to think that such rigorous research could contribute to forensic linguistics. Finally, the growing use of corpora in teaching was highlighted in John Kirk's spirited account of his attempts to introduce corpus methods to undergraduates at Queen's in Belfast. (Incidentally, we now have a new idiom, coined I think by Antoinette Renouf, which is 'doing a John Kirk'. This is to whip overhead foils away just as the audience is about to read them. Sometimes this is no great loss, but on the whole not to be emulated.) Interest in the pedagogical applications for corpus linguistics, first raised by Steve Fligelstone in Nijmegen, and inspired by so many ICAME contributions, has now led to the first international conference on Teaching and Language Corpora (TALC94) to be held in April 1994 in Lancaster.

Although neither Gunnel Tottie nor Udo Fries can claim credit for the Swiss scenery, they have every reason to be proud of having organised such a stimulating conference. We look forward the 15th ICAME in Aarhus.