A Historical Linguistics Background for Teachers of English: A Need?

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En este artículo se explora la posibilidad de aplicar unas nociones básicas de Lingüística Diacrónica a la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa en Educación Primaria y Secundaria. El estudio tiene su origen en una serie de preguntas frecuentes que los maestros de Primaria y, en menor medida, también los profesores de Secundaria recibían de sus alumnos, y para las cuales no siempre encontraban una explicación satisfactoria. Creemos que en muchos casos esta justificación es de índole histórica y que su tratamiento en clase, siquiera de modo somero, puede repercutir positivamente en el aprendizaje. Proponemos un acercamiento puntual a distintas facetas —tanto fonomorfológicas como sintácticas o léxicas— del idioma inglés dentro de las asignaturas ya contempladas en los Planes de Estudio de Magisterio actualmente en vigor, más que la inclusión de una asignatura de Historia de la lengua inglesa de pleno derecho. En el apéndice se incluye un ejemplo práctico del acercamiento que proponemos.

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of English Historical Linguistics (EHL) within the Higher Educational framework and curriculum in Europe has been subject to scholarly examination for some time, most noticeably in the workshop *Applying Historical Linguistics* coordinated by Profs. Fischer & Ritt and held in the recent (1997) ESSE/4 Conference in Debrecen (Hungary). It is a matter of concern, yet, that these analyses arose from the ever increasing marginalisation of this particular area in many European departments of English, some of which have abolished its compulsory status within the curricula, reversing thus a time-honoured situation established in the 19th century. Nicholas Ritt (1998: 7) bleakly illustrated the situation in Copenhagen, Amsterdam and his own university, Vienna, stating that "in spite of occasional exceptions [the general trend seems to be clear]:

historical English linguistics is growing out of demand and/or fashion". Nationally as well, the Spanish academe has turned its attention to this matter in a workshop held within the AEDEAN 1999 Conference (Guzmán – Verdaguer 2000: 89-98). The workshop was founded on a questionnaire filled in by some colleague lecturers, who reviewed some of the features of the degree in English Philology as imparted in the several Spanish Universities where this is offered. This questionnaire gave a vivid picture of the state of affairs in our country, ranging from the subjects, methodology or lecturers to the textbooks, evaluation methods, examination papers, etc. currently in application in the sister Faculties. From the arguments and information retrieved from this study, it was generally agreed that the situation has not yet become so dramatic here as at other latitudes, although it would be daring to assume that the hard times endured abroad will not find a sad echo in the Spanish system in the near future, mostly when the causes adduced for the decline of EHL in Europe can be proved to be basically the same.

All at the same time, and quite in the opposite direction, a controversy has sprung lately in certain academic circles concerning the suitability of a background in EHL as a valuable asset for teachers of English in Secondary Education, and perhaps even in Primary. It seems clear that this proposition should be read as a reaction to the decadence of the 19th-century system: Philologists in general, and those specialized in the History of English in particular, are on the prowl looking for innovative applications of their expertises on other growing, if related, fields such as TEFL —hardly a matter of wonder, given the irrational and undeclared sociopolitical siege that the Humanities are suffering these days, notwithstanding the several Governments' public, and very much publicized, claims otherwise. It is fair to say, though, that the degree of adhesion to this proposal is far from universal, spanning from the complete thumbs-ups of Fabiszak (1997) and Trobevsek-Drobnak (1997), the intermediate, if mild, position displayed by Rissanen *et al.* (1997), up to the moderate critique in Tejada Caller (1997) and Hundt (1997) to the more idealistic side of Fabiszak's paper, but who are sympathetic as a whole to the idea of decanting a few drops of old Philological wine into the new TEFL barrels.

The writers of this article also accept, albeit cautiously, the main tenets of this proposal, and offer some methodological guidelines herewith

concerning the practical development of some of the thoughts appearing in those articles. This practical orientation makes our main target twofold, since in our country a 3-year undergraduate studies (Diploma of Teacher of Foreign Languages), or a four/five-year B.A. degree (Bachelor in English Philology) are required to teach in Primary and in Secondary Education, respectively. This disparity means in practice that Bachelors are expected to receive sufficient theoretical and practical instruction in the History of the English Language (HEL) —a nationwide 10-credit core subject—, while the future primary teachers do not enjoy (or suffer, as this is to a great extent a matter of personal taste and inclinations...) any HEL-related subject in their curriculum. This paper tries to cater for both, lying some, indeed very generic, bases on which HEL could be applied to those fields with profit to the student; responses in either sense (for or against this proposal) and feedback from other colleagues is needed before actually decking any Primary Education curriculum with some, if necessarily minimal, notions of HEL.

The article itself is divided into four parts, plus a conclusion section. The first two deal with the suitability and usefulness of some HEL background in the teaching of EFL, while point 3 proposes an approach of HEL within the degree of English Philology that hopefully goes well beyond the grammatical syllabus: we advocate for a more practical approach centered on the idea of the *recurrence* of the same phenomena throughout the linguistic History of English. The last point is a commented list of elements that could be inserted in the syllabuses of the teachers of English in Primary Education, in the belief that a smattering of HEL cannot but be of some help in their understanding of the frequent peculiarities and irregularities in PDE.

2. SUITABILITY OF A HEL BACKGROUND IN THE TEACHING OF EFL

Before dealing with the usefulness of introducing some historical information in the teaching of EFL, we would like to point out the suitability of this approach. For this purpose, we will make some reflections regarding the nature of the learning process and the approach likely to be adopted.

First. Given the distinction between *language learning* (the general case of English within the compulsory education in Spain) and *language acquisition*, taken as *conscious* and *subconscious language developments*

(Dulay, Burnt and Krashen 1982: 11), the latter brings about some obvious advantages that the former cannot offer. Experience proves that success in language acquisition derives from the linguistic immersion of the subjects; it is therefore expected that, under similar learning conditions, the level of success will be determined by the time and the intensity of the learners' exposure to the foreign language. Conversely, low intensity (and low motivation!) can be claimed for learning failure in our country where intensity is far from desired, as English learning is spread through many years.

As a result of the linguistic immersion in acquisition, the subjects are able to generate their own grammar as well as to correct their analogy-based productive errors from the continuous feedback received at all levels: phono-morphemic, morpho-syntactic, semantic or pragmatic. The learners of a foreign language, however, lack the necessary input to build their own rules and, what is worse, they have to overcome the filter-related mistakes caused by the interference of their mother tongue. To cope with this, they have to rely only on the feedback from their teacher and pairs, or from other materials (books, grammars, dictionaries, video/audio recordings, the Internet, etc.). But this can only be done during limited time, and at intervals.

On the other hand, and to balance in a way the preceding shortcomings, language learners reflect on the mechanisms of the foreign language being learned. This reflection may result in the curiosity to know why, in general terms, the foreign language diverges to a certain extent from their mother tongue, or why, particularly, some irregular productions go hand-by-hand with regular ones. Sometimes, this curiosity flows out into the so-called *curiosity questions*. To answer them accurately requires a long teaching experience, or a previous instruction in HEL to avoid the spread of misleading information as in teacher-made rules of thumb like the following: 'the digraph <ea> is always pronounced as /i:/'. This rule holds certainly true in many items (*bead*, *eat*, *feast*, etc.), but it does not in a bundle of counterexamples, such as *break*, *steak*, *great*, etc., all of which are pronounced with /eɪ/; nor does it in *read* (past/past participle), *lead* (mineral, chemical symbol *Pb*), *meadow*, etc., which are rather pronounced with /e/. A smattering of HEL allows the teacher to know that most ME long open e's (/ɛ:/) —written as <ea>— gave rise to alternative pronunciations resulting from raising to /i:/ (via /e:/) during the Great Vowel

Shift (*GVS*) at the end of the ME period. This was the usual trend in English and therefore the origin of the current mental association <ea> = /i:/. But now, some items liable to this same closing process —some of them being very important ones, like those quoted above— chose either to diptht hongize into /eɪ/, or else suffered a shortening process into /e/.

Second. In accordance with the previous assumption and considering the specific circumstances involved (students/teacher ratio, time available, auxiliary means, teachers' non-nativeness, etc.), as well as the general and specific objectives aimed, we understand that only a sort of *eclectic communicative approach* is convenient in our country. By *communicative* approach we mean that method whose main objective is communication and whose syllabus mainly consists of linguistic functions, general and specific notions, linguistic exponents, lexical inventory, topics, roles, situations, activities, tasks, etc. The tag *eclectic* has been added as to allow some contents or activities that cannot be considered communicative, not even pre-communicative.

We are of course well aware that the introduction of historical contents will not compensate for the shortcomings related to language learning in Spain in the preceding paragraphs, but they may, however, prove both useful to motivate the students and helpful as a recalling factor in the case of vocabulary. These contents, which must comply with the requirements of *brevity*, *opportunity*, and *immediate benefit*, can range from the observation of mere linguistic facts (i.e. dynamism and evolution of living languages, linguistic changes, similarities between akin languages, and the like) to the illustrations of sociolinguistic phenomena (i.e. dialectal variations), and can also regard cultural information (i.e. peoples, homologue chronologies, places and place-names, names and onomastics, etc.).

3. USEFULNESS OF HEL GUIDELINES IN THE TEACHING OF EFL

The use of HEL guidelines in the teaching of EFL can be justified for the noticeable effects that they may bring about to the docent of English, as the following:

1. The *parallelism effect* allows the teacher to highlight the systematic correspondence of an element, be it a grapheme or a phoneme, in cognate words –those sharing the same IE origin– such as *war* vs. *guerra*; *guarantee/warranty* vs. *garantía*; *warden* vs. *guardián*; *wardrobe* vs. *guardarropa*; *waste* vs. *gastar*. In this vein, the teacher's information about the outcome of Grimm's law may be extremely helpful so as to relate cognates in both languages. Compare, for instance, such pairs as *fell/pellejo, fish/pez*; *foot/pie, tooth/diente*, etc. where the opposition 'English voiceless fricatives vs Spanish voiceless stops' is responsible for their difference. Analogously, the opposition 'English voiceless stops vs Spanish voiced stops' is found in pairs such as *ten/diez*, *tooth/diente*, *pitcher/búcaro*, etc.

2. The *likeliness effect* allows the teacher to take advantage of the similitudes between the foreign language and the mother tongue to explain some specific features of the former. This likening process should not necessarily be constrained by proper cognates; we can broaden its scope by comparing similar phonomorphological patterns in both languages, notwithstanding the different origins in Spanish and English. A good example is the morphological alternation within paradigms of the type *foot* /fʊt/ ~ *feet* /fi:t/, *tooth* /tu:θ/ ~ *teeth* /ti:θ/, *mouse* /maʊs/ ~ *mice* /maɪs/, etc., whose PDE pronunciation after the raising and diphthongization in the Great Vowel Shift can be explained by recalling Spanish *pedir* → *pido*, *sentir* → *sintió* → *siento* or in *poder* → *pudo* → *puedo* which show similar phenomena.

3. The *regularising effect* allows the teacher to justify those irregularities of PDE as having a regular evolution (the so-called *uniformitarian principle*; Lass 1997: 24-32). English tends to *regularization* which, in the end, means *simplification* and *ease*, but there also exist irregularities that, somewhat paradoxically, can be explained as regular developments. For instance, the shortened/brief preterites (e.g. *led, met, read,* etc.; *hit, let, cut,* etc.) are irregular although they evince a high simplicity (and regularity, if the regular/irregular distinction were made using other classification criteria). To explain the first series, it suffices to recall that in the early stages of English the stem vowel (OE *lǣdan*, *mētan*, *rǣdan*, etc.) was shortened when followed by non-homorganic clusters as in *ledde*, *mette*,

redde, etc., hence the different pronunciations of *lead* /li:d/, *meet* /mi:t/, or *read* /ri:d/, with a long root vowel in the infinitive and a short one in the past and past participle (e.g. *led* /led/, *met* /met/, *read* /red/). As for the second series, the three forms have become homonyms after a process of assimilation, cf. OE *lǣtan* → *lǣtde* → *lǣtte* → *lætte* → *lett(e)* → *let*.

If past developments are closely observed, it would not be daring to forecast future changes. For example, PDE long closed vowels /i:/ and /u:/ are bound to evolve into future diphthongs, so as to follow the same cycle as in the past. In fact, some dialectal medial front vowels are turning into diphthongs and some diphthongs, on their turn, are becoming monophthongs (Samuels 1972: 43). Similarly, it is not risky to state that analytical comparatives and superlatives will be the norm in the future if the same trend is kept. In this same vein we can quote Rissanen *et al.*'s words: "it is possible to understand the variable character of present-day English only if it is viewed as a (more or less) logical outcome of long-term developments" (Rissanen 1997: 10).

4. The *Germanic effect* allows the teacher to rely on Germanic peculiarities so as to help learners grasp the inner mechanisms of the English language. Let us cite the set of irregular verbs in PDE where just the change of a vowel phoneme serves to discern among the present, the past, and the past participle as in *swim/swam/swum; begin/began/begun*; *drink/drank/drunk*; *ring/rang/rung* and so on. A vowel fronting/gradation can be observed in umlauted plurals like *foot/feet, tooth/teeth, mouse/mice, louse/lice, man/men, woman/women,* etc.; a similar phenomenon can be noticed in pairs like *long/length, deep/depth, high/height,* etc. See the likeliness effect above for other implications of this feature.

Although a prompt call to the observation of this *Ablaut* throughout the group of irregular verbs might be of help to advanced learners, it seems unpractical, if not directly counterproductive, to provide the students with the reason for these metaphonic interchanges: the teacher should never forget that he/she is dealing with PDE high-school students, not with future medievalists and philologists. Let us rather rest content if they assume this as a natural linguistic

process that happens in many languages: the interested teacher can turn to Lass (1994: 135, 153-162 for Old English) and Lapesa (1980: §§ 30, 45 regarding Spanish) for details; more generally, R.S.P. Beekes (1995:§§ 11.2 and 12.2) gives an oversimplified introduction to the original IE rules that might be also helpful, while Prokosch (1939: §44 ff.) and Krahe (1942-1967: §50), dated and all, are still of the greatest value for Germanic in number of examples and expositional clearness.

This *Germanic effect* has been offered in the preceding paragraph under a positive light, i.e. so as to show concomitances with Spanish, but this can also be employed negatively, in order to stress radical divergences between both languages. We can, for example, recall another typically Germanic trait, its proneness to synthetic mechanisms in noun-phrase building as in '*an old-fashioned mechanical calibre-measuring instrument*', as opposed to analytic constructions that require prepositions (and/or connectors) as well as the right-to-left hierarchy order as in *the mechanical instrument used to measure the calibre (of tubes) which has become obsolete*. Cf. on the other hand the left-to-right hierarchy in the Spanish counterpart.

5. The *lexico-semantic effect* permits the teacher to use the etymology of words so as to fix the basic meaning and study the semantic changes occurred in accordance with Carter & McCarthy's understanding of word knowledge (1988: 44-45). For this, it would be appropriate to relate the linguistic change with historical events, cultural facts and sociological phenomena produced by the people that spoke such a language. For instance, some etymological background may be helpful to grasp the specific uses of the related words *beaker* and *pitcher* (Sp. *búcaro*). The same happens with *pig iron*, as the etymology of *pig* is crucial to understand that we are referring to an *ingot* (Sp. *lingote*), and avoid thus its association with swine OED: pig *n*[1], 7).

On the other hand, a cultural explanation would be useful to account for the meanings of *log in* and *log out*, because they were originally created taking *wood tallies* as the main referents. Also cultural information can be applied to explain the existence of doublets or

triplets in PDE, having each of them a Germanic and a French origin. To a broad extent, many of them coexist nowadays with the same meaning, excepting those where the contrast between colloquial versus technical usage is produced, as in *spin* vs. *rotate*, *speed* vs. *rate* and *velocity*, etc.

6. The *motivating effect* enables the teacher to motivate the learners by satisfying their curiosity about the target language with the most appropriate explanations. In particular, a brief commentary on the history of a word or about a word-related change has proved to be a reliable motivating technique.

4. PROPOSAL FOR THE SUBJECT OF HEL IN ENGLISH PHILOLOGY

According to the guidelines set forth by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, the subject HEL within the degree in English Philology in Spain consists in a ten-credit subject whose descriptor textually reads 'diachronic study of the English language'.

It goes without saying that lecturers and professors, entitled as they are with the right of freeedom of teaching, can design the programmes/ syllabuses according to their own criteria, though the Department's approval is always required. That is why particular issues may be treated in more detail than others. It is not, however, our intention to get entangled in syllabus design, a task that would require a deeper analysis so as to ascertain the most proper sequence of items/issues and, what is more important, the methodology to be employed. Instead, a set of five guidelines is proposed below that may be used independently of the methodological model adopted. However, some further information can be drawn from our proposal for the studies of Teacher of Foreign Languages.

1. The HEL can cover as many fields as Historical and Comparative Linguistics, Socio- and Psycholinguistics, Phonology and Spelling, Morphosyntax, Lexicology and Lexicography, Dialectology, etc. (see some valuable general remarks in Tejada Caller 2001: 51-57), which can help convert it into a most motivating subject for a future English philologist if theory and practice are properly offered, and historical, geographical, cultural and sociolinguistic contexts are

taken into account. It is interesting to note that *Socio-historical aspects of inter- and intra-linguistic variation* scored higher (13 votes) than the more linguistic-oriented *Language change: what it is and how it can be explained* (11 votes) in the 'spontaneous poll' to the question "What do you think should a European student of English be taught about the history of the language?" set forth in the ESSE/4 *Applying Historical Linguistics Workshop* already mentioned (Fischer & Ritt 1997).

2. The HEL should be viewed as a continuum, and not as a bunch of isolated, independent stages. This means that Middle English cannot be accordingly described without taking into consideration the in-between periods from lOE to eME, on the one hand, and the one ranging from lME to eMnE on the other. In any case, PDE should always constitute the main objective of comparison; no matter the approach used, whether an ascending or descending chronological order is followed, an evolution procedure needs to be traced with regard to PDE, whenever possible. For example, the first time that the OE strong declension for masculine and neuter nouns is treated, attention must be drawn to the fact that Plural Nominative ending *-as* is the origin of the plural morpheme *-(e)s* in PDE nouns.

3. The description of individual phenomena or changes should lead to the formulation of general rules rather than state a norm that will be illustrated with examples complying with it. The observation of the lOE smoothing and the subsequent appearance of new diphthongs in ME may contribute to justify the existence of cyclic phenomena affecting living languages if the same process is observed to have already ocurred (Germanic <ai> into OE <ā>) or to take place later in time (lME /i:/ > PDE /aɪ/).

   Similarly, the OE <ēo> in *fēo* < *feohe*, the latter with <eo>, is an example of compensatory lengthening that results from the loss of <h>. PDE *light, night, knight,* etc. (cf. OE *lēoht, niht, cniht*), are also illustrations of the same phenomenon. It is the observation of these examples that can contribute to provide a definition or an explanation that students will be able to recall or state.

4. HEL should help to bring on the idea that a living language constitutes a system that is bound to change. Notwithstanding the existence of change motivating forces within the system, adjustment forces are responsible to keep the system in equilibrium. The chain of changes decribed in Grimm's Law can be claimed to explain how a series of sounds replaces the gap originated after a change in the contiguous series (i.e. the void left by the series of voiceless stops /p, t, k/ after turning into the series of voiceless fricatives /f, θ, x/ is filled by the series of voiced stops /b, d, g/) which become unvoiced; analogously, the void left by the series of voiced stops /b, d, g/ is filled by the series of aspirated voiced stops /bh, dh, gh/) which lose their aspiration.

   In the same line, the general rising of long vowels in eMnE described in the Great Vowel Shift brings about the readjustment of the different long vowels (i.e. purposedly neglecting the chronological order, the gap left by eMnE /i:/ after its dissimilation in [ɪi] → [əi] → [ʌi] to end in PDE /aɪ/ was occupied by /e:/ rising into /i:/; this space was, in turn, filled by the long 'open e', and so on. The use of trapezes serves to explain these changes more succesfully.

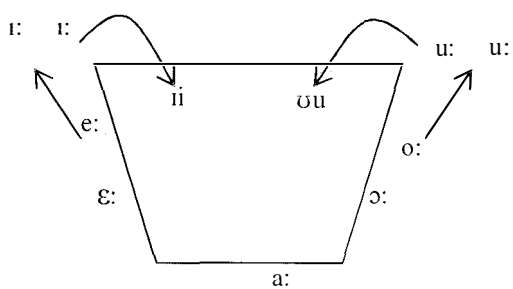

Figure I: *Raising of long closed vowels and diphthongization of* /i:/, /u:/

Similar examples can be easily adduced if lexis is involved. *Hund*, for instance, was the unmarked term in Old English to refer to a 'dog', but in PDE the meaning has specialized to denote 'a dog used for hunting and racing' whereas *dog* (lOE *docga*, the Gmc root from where Sp. *dogo*) has taken over the general unmarked meaning. The same applies to PDE *meat* and *flesh*, as the former

was used in OE to refer to 'any kind of meal' (which was likely to include a dish of venison, pork, boar, rabbit, etc.) whilst the latter was the unmarked term for 'meat'. The difference in PDE lies in [-human] vs [+human], respectively.

5. Generally speaking, all changes throughout the history of English should be related to those in their mother tongue, if that is possible, and attuning the theoretical background to the level of knowledge of the students. Cf. the likeliness effect above.

5. PROPOSAL FOR THE STUDIES FOR TEACHER OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

We take for granted the convenience of a HEL background for Primary Education teachers of EFL, and it is our belief that they would welcome some basic, succinct formation in this field, not only for their personal development as instructors, but also to satisfy their young students' linguistic curiosity. It goes without saying that our proposal is addressed only to the syllabuses of the future teachers of English in Primary Education and, in no way, this linguistic information can be delivered to the students if required. Only then, they must decide the quantity and level of the information in accordance with the age and linguistic level of the students. In any case, their explanation should always be short and clear.

It would have been easy to propose the inclusion of a specific subject within the curriculum; this is far from realistic, yet as legal obstacles make this a desideratum for the time being. Therefore, our proposal is based on the introduction of some correction measures that can be actually implemented without altering the existing educational frame. Therefore, we would favour the transmission of HEL basic contents through curriculum subjects (i.e. Morphosyntax, Phonetics and Phonology, and Semantics). In fact, we suggest the inclusion of brief diachronic notices within those contents of the syllabus that deserve essential attention. Those remarks could be similarly included when introducing a topic, or before passing to a new one, although we favour the last possibility.

Some colleagues, teachers of English in Primary and Secondary Education, have kindly collected the curiosity questions that their students

had repeatedly made. We have classified them into three groups according to their nature (i.e., morphosyntatic, phonetic and lexical) and have sequenced them around a topic. All this information has served to develop our proposal. In the appendix we enclose a model on how to answer these questions, but some remarks are given after the enumeration when deemed appropriate.

5.1. Morpho-syntax

As indicated above, brief historical notices can be provided for the items of English Morphosyntax, especially when a significant divergence is detected. Next, we are going to list the items as well as the questions that can be related to each of them.

1. Nouns.

1.1. Plural formation

Why is the plural of *sheep* the same as the singular?
Why is *teeth* the plural of *tooth*? (i.e. *foot/feet; man/men, etc.)*
Why do some words form their plural with <-s> where others require <-*es*>?
Why does *alms* ends with <-s> being singular?
What changes occur in the plural of words ending in <-y>?
Why is a singular noun placed after a numeral in examples like *a ten-pound note*?

To be able to answer the preceding questions, when dealing with plural formation in PDE nouns, reference is to be made to the OE ending of strong plurals *-as* as the general rule *-(e)s*, and to that of the weak ones *-an* to justify cases like *oxen* or *children*. Equally, reference is needed to morphemic mutation to explain the odd dozen of plurals *foot/feet*, *tooth/ teeth*, etc. as well as those zero plurals such as *deer*, *fish*, *trout*, *salmon*, *sheep*, etc.), whose origin lies in the neuter gender of these terms during OE times, which meant that there was no formal difference between the singular and the plural.

1.2. Genitive case

Under which circumstances is the Saxon genitive preferred to the *of*-periphrasis?
Why do you say 'Anglo-Saxon genitive'?

To be able to answer the preceding questions, when dealing with genitive constructions in PDE, distinction is to be made between synthetic (Saxon genitive) and analytical (with *of*) ones. Reference can be made to the origin of the apostrophe <'> as a sign of something missing.

2. *Adjectives*

Why are adjectives the same in the singular as in the plural?
Which adjectives take *-er*, *-est* instead of *more*, *most*? (reference is to be made as for the synthetic < > analytic distinction)
Why are adjectives put *before* nouns? Can they be located *after* nouns?
What is the difference between *older/elder*?
What is the reason of multi-rooted comparatives and superlatives like *good*, *better*, *best*? (Reference must be made to their Spanish counterparts (*bueno, mejor, óptimo).*
How can we turn an adjective into a noun? Is it the same as in Spanish? (Point out the differences)
How can we translate *The sooner, the better*?

3. *Verbs*

Why are the past and past participle of irregular verbs unpredictable?
Why don't modal verbs end in *-(e)s* in the 3rd person singular?
Which is the full infinitive of modal verbs? And the *–ing* form?
Why do some irregular verbs share the same form in the present, the past and the past participle?
Which is better, *learned* or *learnt*? (the same with *proved/proven, worked/wrought, burned/burnt, dreamed/dreamt, leaned/leant, smelled/smelt, spoiled/spoilt*, etc.?
Is there any difference between *got* and *gotten*?
Why do you say *If I were* ... instead of *If I was* ...?
Why is the *–ing* form used after prepositions?
What is the origin of compound verbs?
Does the subjunctive mood exist in English?
Why does only the 3rd person singular of the Simple Present take an ending?
Why do some irregular verbs have two forms in the past *heave* > *hove/heaved*; *spit* > *spat/spit*; *light* > *lit/lighted*; *shine* > *shone/shined*; *thrive* > *throve/thrived*, etc.

When is the full infinitive preferred to the bare infinitive?
When is the full infinitive compulsory in opposition to an *–ing* form?

4. Adverbs

How do you form adverbs from adjectives in English?
Why don't some adverbs such as *fast*, *soon*, *hard* take *-ly*?
Is the same *hard* as *hardly*?
What is the difference between *too* and *enough*?

5. Pronouns and pronominals

Why can we say *two hundred and three* but *hundreds and hundreds*?
When can *some* be used in questions and *any* in affirmative statements?
Can you express the Spanish contrast '*tú* vs. *usted*' in English?
Why can't we use a preposition in front of relative *that*?

6. Syntax

Can *that* be used in non-restrictive clauses?
Can *who/which* be used in restrictive clauses?
Why are the English constructions *'I like...; I was shown the way'* different from the Spanish *'Me gusta(n) ...; se me indicó el camino ...'*?
Why is the word-order in English stricter than in Spanish?
Why is inversion possible in non-interrogative constructions, for example, in conditionals?
Where must frequency adverbs be placed?
What is the most likely position of place, time and manner adverbs in an English sentence?
How can I choose the right preposition, for example, among *at, in, on* when indicating place or time?
When can I omit the subject in an English sentence?
When can relative pronouns be omitted?

5.2. Phonology and phonetics

In this topic it is harder to organize the questions around a particular item, so the teacher must decide which is the most convenient moment during the class. However, the following guidelines are offered.

1. Phonology/phonetics distinction.
   The most frequent question would be the one around the divergence between pronunciation and writing of words in PDE. To answer this, a sample is developed at the end of this paper. Although no other specific question has been collected, we consider that it would be appropriate to refer to:

   a) Equilibrium of the system which is reached after chain changes: Grimm's law and *GVS*.

   b) Cyclic changes through history: long monophthongs → diphthongs → long monophthongs → ... Cf. Gmc *stain* → OE *stān* → PDE *stone*; voicing → devoicing → voicing → ... Cf. OE → PDE; stops → fricatives → stops → ... Cf. IE *pitár* → OE *fæder* → PDE *father*.

2. Pitch / stress
   Why is *phótograph* differently stressed from *photógrapher*? (Reference is to be made to word primary/secondary pitch in PDE depending on the words' Gmc/Romance origin).

3. Vowels
   Why don't we pronounce *children* as *child*? (the same applies to *wise/wisdom*; *bath/bathe*)
   Why don't we pronounce *four* with /u:/?
   Why do you pronounce the same word differently, for example *read*, *lead*, etc.?
   Why do you pronounce *"he says"* /hi: sez/ but *"to say"* /tu: seɪ/?'.
   Why are some <u's> pronounced as /ʌ/ and some others pronounced as /ʊ/?
   Why is /ə/ so frequent in English?

4. Consonants
   Why do we say *life* in opposition to *live*? (Reference is to be made to voiced/unvoiced pairs like *belief* (n) / *believe* (v), *bath* (n) / *bathe* (v), *cloth* (n) / *clothe* (v), etc. Cf. also the singular/plural constrast in *life/lives, leaf/leaves, wife/wives,* etc. Recall that the ME voicing of OE consonants /f/, /s/, /d/ brought about the introduction of the new phoneme /v/ both medially, as in *lives*, *leaves, wives*, etc. and initially, as in *vixen*).

Why don't you pronounce some consonants? (Reference is to be made to mute consonants: /b/ in *climb*, *comb*, etc.; /l/ in *could*, *would*, *calm, psalm, balm,* etc.; <gh> in *although*, *through*, *night, light, etc, isle, island, etc.; debt, doubt, etc.*).
When must <gh> be pronounced in PDE? (Reference is to be made to the position of the digraph)
How must we pronounce words beginning with <th->?
How must we pronounce the past suffix –ed?

5.3. Lexis/Semantics

What is the origin of surnames in English? (Reference is to be made to onomastics: OE *-ing* in *Browning*, *Whitting*, etc.; Danish *-son* (< *-sen*) in *Richardson*, *Johnson*, *Davison*, etc.; French *Fitzgerald*; Scottish in *MacDonald*, Irish in *O'Sullivan*).
Why do some place names end in a similar way, for example *Manchester, Leicester, Chester?* (Reference is to be made to *Edinburgh, Friburgo, Hamburgo, Burgos, etc;* also to Spanish *burgués, burguesía)*
Why are some suffixes similar in Spanish and in English?
Why can more than a word be used to refer to the same or similar thing, phenomenon, concept, etc., as in *speed, rate, velocity*?
Is there any relationship between *shirt/skirt; gaol/jail*; etc.?
How can we express the opposite of ...? (Reference is to be made to antonym-forming affixes)
Are there any Spanish words in English? And French? And Viking?

In addition to the preceding questions, special attention has to be devoted to explain the existence of hyperonyms/hyponyms as well as to full/partial synonyms and antonyms. There seems convenient to explain the existence of doublets and triplets through homonymy: *brake, break; take, skeak; grate, great, greet; lake, leak, leek; mate, meat, meet; bare, bear, beer*. Lastly but not the least important is the attention that has to be paid to the phenomenon involving change of meaning: OE *mete* (*food*) vs PDE *meat* (animal flesh); OE *flǣsc* vs PDE *meat*; OE *dēor* (wild animal) vs PDE *deer*.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Long-term benefits are expected for would-be teachers inasmuch PDE-related evolutions and changes will constitute the more lasting substratum from the study of HEL. It is just the development from past features into PDE that is bound to survive, once most specific information has been lost/forgotten. If the future teachers become enriched with the study of HEL, their students will also benefit from their teachers' knowledge.

HEL students seem to show their motivation increased when this approach is followed, and EFL learners will also experience these effects from their teachers.

Although specific literature can be available to provide linguistic information regarding morphosyntax, phonology, and semantic, however research on the main features and changes of the most common English words and its subsequent publication will be welcome as a valuable handbook for teachers. It is well known that not all the words are worth commenting, but most of them will illustrate the regularity whereas the rest will stand for the exceptions or irregular evolutions.

APPENDIX

We offer here a practical example about how to present a diachronic topic to the students. The main ideas will be just outlined, without any long commenting on them; we leave to the teacher the task of presenting particulars in the way he/she deems most convenient. We have chosen an example dear to most scholars, '*why is English not pronounced the way it is spelt?*', as it is a question very much familiar to any teacher in Spain or, indeed, elsewhere outside English-speaking countries.

ENGLISH SPELLING PRACTISES

The supposedly 'chaotic' orthography of English may trigger a list of specific questions such as *'Why don't you pronounce the digraph <ou> the same in all the words?*; *how can we pronounce the digraph <ea>?*; *how and why do you pronounce the digraph <gh> differently?*',

etc. which can be summarised in the following general question: '*Why is there not a one-to-one correspondence between pronunciation and writing in English*?'

A graded information can be provided to answer the students in accordance to their age, linguistic level or background knowledge, as follows:

Level 1

Unlike dead languages such as Latin, Gothic, etc, living languages are characterized by their continuous changes affecting the pronunciation, the writing, the meanings, etc. For example, at the beginning of English, its orthography was quite transparent, that is, words were written in such a way as to represent rather unequivocally their pronunciation. Accordingly, the words *nama, hus* were pronounced as /'nama/, /hu:s/. When a sound changed, the conventional spelling was adapted so as to keep being transparent. Finally, there was a moment —difficult to date for each word, but 15th-17th for most items; see Görlach 1991— when the spelling became fixed, whereas the pronunciation continued evolving. In the example above, the spelling has been roughly maintained (i.e. *name, house*) whereas the pronunciation was changing until PDE pronunciation (i.e. /neɪm/, /haʊs/) was reached.

Level 2

English would not have greatly differed without the influence produced by intrepid folks such as the Vikings and the Normans, and it is likely that, if not for them, English would be much more similar to German or Dutch that it actually is. Most students have watched films about the vikings, who wore characteristic horn-ended helmets and who dared to sail across rough seas in frail vessels provided with a huge and scary figurehead. Similarly, they are bound to have watched more than one film about Robin Hood, the outlaw who led a gang of Saxons in the Woods of Sherwood. The Saxons were dominated by the French-speaking Normans, whose stereotype was the Sheriff of Nottingham.

It is almost a cliché to insist on the paramount importance that the flow of French borrowings during the Middle Ages had on the development of PDE lexicon. But, oppositely to the previous Viking invasion and their dialects, which left only some dozens words in English (apart from

placenames; of these they left manyfold), the Normans and their language, Old and Middle French, added literally thousands of words to the English lexicon. Moreover, they also had an extraordinary bearing on the spelling habits adopted after 1066, as we will show in the next paragraphs. To make a long story short, we will only attend to two facets, one dealing with the vowel system, the other with consonants: the use of the digraph <ou> — alternatively, <ow>—, and the apparition of a new phoneme in English, /ʌ.

The most noticeable spelling reform of English vowels brought about by the Normans is surely the use of the digraphs <ou>, <ow>— to represent long /u:/, a device still found in Contemporary French (*vous*, *nous*, etc.) to avoid confusion with short u (which was pronounced /y/ in Old French; Nyrop 1930: §186, Kibler 1984: 29). Those OE words that had a long *u* (*hū*, *hūs*, *lūs*, *cū*, among many others) began to be written according to this new standard as *how(e)*, *hous(e)*, *lous(e)*, *mous(e)*, *cow(e),* etc... but were still pronounced /u:/. This sound later developed into the diphthong /aʊ/, but the old spelling was maintained, which made the contemporary pronunciation opaque. Consonants also benefited from the Norman spelling reforms: the OE graph <f>, used to represent both the original phoneme /f/ and its allophone [v] was used only as a representation of the former, while the latter was substituted by <u>, <v>, which was more logical for OF standards. Since OE [v] only appeared intervocalically, it comes then that all words beginning with <v> are of French stock (and hence, ultimately, from Romance and Latin)[1], cf. *virtue*, *veal, very, vow,* etc. Peculiar spellings where <f> and <v> alternate also denote Romance influence: they can indicate a change in number (singular /f/ ~ pl. /v/), as in *life* vs. *lives*, *wolf* vs. *wolves*, *leaf* vs. *leaves*, or in the grammatical class, as in *belief* vs. *believe*, *life* vs. *live*, etc.

Level 3

In our first explanation we took our stand on the principle of permanent change, common to all living languages, while in the second one we attended to that creolization axiom through which languages in contact —especially when both derive from the same family— tend to lose, gain or simply synthesize words, structures or spelling habits in order to ease communication. Demographic, dialectal or sociological facts, finally, can be associated with the *Great Vowel Shift*. The main objective here is to highlight the dissociation between spelling and pronunciation

in the English language. The teacher should offer a condensed version of the main facts concerning the spelling and phonetics of the original vowels, and their evolution since the 15th century.

The history of English Phonetics is that of a dynamic system striving for simplicity and clear, very discrete sounds. The existence of close and open medial long vowels in IME was very much against this basic rule and triggered, according to the opinion of many (Labov 1994: 145 ff), the *GVS*, an important feature of English that must be blamed for the actual mismatch between the eye and the mouth when reading aloud in this tongue. The full story is too long to rewind in a short appendix such as this, but the following paragraphs cannot possibly escape from the interested teacher if he/she wants to know more about this lack of coordination between organs in PDE.

Close long medial vowels then followed the logical trend of ascending, pushing then /i:/ and /u:/ until they became diphthongs by dissimilation. This push chain is the cause that <ee> and <oo> (the late Mediaeval forms to spell the close medial vowels) sound nowadays like /i:/ and /u:/, respectively. Those newly created diphthongs, again, were altered with each new generation of speakers so as to put their two components as phonologically apart as possible, so that now we have the lowest head sound /a-/, plus the highest codas /-ɪ, -ʊ/... even though the English people has kept that spelling prior to these changes (<i>, <u>), marring thus any immediate connection.

A second, parallel scenario to that of medial vowels was that of /a:/. The lowest vocalic phoneme of the Old English inventory was a back /ɑ:/, which passed on to /ɔ:/ at the end of the period. During Mediaeval times a new /a:/ appeared due to internal processes (basically through lengthening of the short counterpart /æ/, or lexical borrowing from French), but this time it probably had a distinctive palatal or, rather, palatocentral tinge. This trend towards palatalization came to mean a real passage to /æ:/ during the late-15th or early 16th century. This meant also a problem yet: the new phoneme was too similar to the open medial e-sound, i.e. /ɛ:/ for the likes of English speakers. The strategy for solving this near-crash was, again, to raise /ɛ:/ (usually spelt <ea>) to that vacant left by the ascension of /e:/ to /i:/, while /æ:/ filled that new gap.

Everything is pretty straight up to this moment. But in the 16th-17th century this new /ɛ:/ (spelt <a>, as it represented the heir to /æ:/) pushed its way up to /e:/, forcing most words that presented /ɛ:/ originally (remember, those spelt <ea>) and had since passed on to /e:/ to a further ascension to /i:/ in some dialects, coalescing thus with the reflexes of pre-GVS /e:/ that had risen to /i:/ (i.e. those words commonly spelt with <ee>). That is why today many items spelt with <ea> are pronounced /i:/, exactly like those spelt with <ee>: cf. a pair like *heal* and *heel*, now homophones (/hi:l/), but which were pronounced in the 16th century as /he:l/ and /hi:l/, respectively. But some words did not move, but chose to merge phonetically with those words that had had /ɛ:/ (spelt <a>) into /e:/, or else were borrowed from some English dialect where this passage never took place. Those later went on to /eɪ/, and that is why there are some words in English spelt <ea> but which are pronounced as if spelt with <a>: *break*, which is homophone to *brake*, or *steak*, which is homophone to *stake*.

NOTES

[1] *Vixen* is the only exception to this list, as it comes from OE (unrecorded) *fyxen* (< Gmc *fuhs-in, cf. fox < Gmc *fuhs-az). This word is as remnant of a Mediaeval Southern and South-West Midlands pronunciation, where /f/ was voiced also initially (Jordan 1974: §215).

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