REPORT

TOWARDS A HISTORY OF ENGLISH STUDIES IN EUROPE

Report on the International Symposium at Wildsteig (West Germany)

THOMAS HERBST and GERTRUD SCHOLTES

University of Augsburg

At Wildsteig/West Germany an international symposium on the history of English Studies in Europe was held from April 30 to May 3, 1982. The meeting, which was sponsored by the Volkswagen-Foundation, was initiated and organized by Prof. Thomas Finkenstaedt (University of Augsburg). Sixteen participants from ten European countries took part, each presenting a paper.

In his introductory remarks Prof. Finkenstaedt pointed out that little systematic study concerning the history of English Studies in Europe had been done so far and he expressed the hope that the symposium would provide a great amount of factual knowledge, to serve as a basis for new insights and further investigation.

'The Continental contribution to the study of Anglo-Saxon writings up to and including that of the Grimms' was the title of the first paper, which was presented by E. Stanley (Pembroke College, Oxford). Stanley stated that the study of Anglo-Saxon preceded that of later English writings both in England and on the Continent and discussed early Continental printings of Anglo-Saxon texts.

In his survey of Continental Anglo-Saxon scholarship before the Grimms, Stanley attributed great importance to Francis Junius the Younger and stressed his understanding of etymology and his publication of the Caedmon manuscript. Stanley then gave an account of the Grimm brothers' contribution to the study of the Anglo-Saxon language and literature, especially also to the study of Beowulf, which they very often used in order to illustrate Germanic traditions

and customs. Stanley came to the conclusion that it was first and foremost Jacob Grimm who advanced the understanding of Anglo-Saxon writings.

While Stanley was concerned with the beginnings of Anglo-Saxon studies, K. Schröder (University of Augsburg) dealt with the early history of the teaching of English. He gave an overall account of English language teaching in the German-speaking countries up to the 19th century. The earliest instances of English language learning are to be found in the latter part of the 16th century, in Protestant northern Germany and in Hanseatic surroundings. English was not taught, however, in "regular" schools and universities before ca. 1670. In the course of the 18th century, English was mainly studied for scientific and economic reasons. Political considerations (for or against English) did not become manifest before ca. 1780 when the Empress Maria Theresa banned English from the Austrian universities for its "anti-religious and immoral principles". On the eve of the French Revolution English could be learnt at almost all German universities, in many of the *Ritterakademien* (academies for noblemen), and also — as part of private tuition — in some of the Protestant secondary schools. Before 1780 the teaching of English as a foreign language comprised the (communicative) study of the language and civilization rather than the reading of *belles lettres*. The teachers of English were in most cases Germans with an academic background.

A. Zettersten (University of Copenhagen) outlined the development of English Studies at Swedish universities, like Schröder concentrating on the prehistory. He pointed out that teaching materials for English could be found in Sweden as early as the 17th century. A century later English was properly introduced as a university subject and taught by language masters at the universities of Uppsala, Lund, Åbo and Greifswald. At the beginning of the 19th century Lund was the only Swedish university that continued to be active in this field. At Lund a division between language and literature was introduced and an interest in didactics and pedagogy developed. By the mid-nineteenth century English had gained considerable status as a university subject and was no longer seen as the privilege of scholars and the nobility. Later the chairs of modern languages were divided into chairs of English, German, etc. Separate chairs in English were founded at Uppsala (1904, 1948 and, in American literature, in 1962), Göteborg (1904 and 1967), Lund (1907 and 1964), Stockholm (1932 and 1952) and Umea (1971).

G. Storms of Nijmegen University began his short survey of Anglistics in the Netherlands with Francis Junius, to whom he referred as the first Anglo-Saxon scholar in that country. Storms concentrated on the development in two fields in which Dutch Anglistics accomplished outstanding achievements: Old English (the names P. C. Cosijn and R. C. Boer among others can be mentioned here) and grammar writing (represented by scholars of international reputation such as H. Poutsma, E. Kruisinga and R. W. Zandvoort). The

latter tradition stands in close connection with the importance that is attributed in the Netherlands to the practical training of English teachers. The need for such training was first felt in the second half of the 19th century and had its origin in the expansion of trade and industry. In the wake of this development, school education was reformed and the first chair of English created at Groningen in 1886.

R. Derolez (Ghent University) presented a paper entitled 'English Studies in Belgium: What's in a Name?'. After an outline of the political history of Belgium and its effects on the universities, Derolez drew attention to the fact that the teaching of English after 1830 was marked by one basic principle of official thinking, namely that the three Germanic languages (Dutch, English, German) were to be treated as a unit. From 1863 onwards it was made possible for teachers to prove their proficiency in these three languages by passing an *examen de capacité*. Teacher training was taken over by a modern languages section in the *Ecole Normale des Humanités* at Liège in 1874 and parallel 'Sections Normales' (attached to the Arts Faculty) in Ghent in 1883. These were abolished in 1890, when the training of teachers for the *Athénées* was gradually taken over by the universities (Ghent, Liège, Louvain and Brussels). The subject of Germanic Philology comprised the study of English as well as Dutch and German — a system which remained unchanged until 1968, when the principle of a "major" language was introduced.

G. D. Zimmermann of Neuchâtel spoke on 'English studies in French-speaking Switzerland'. He began by explaining some of the differences between the universities in the French- and the German-speaking parts of Switzerland. At Neuchâtel English courses were introduced in 1868 (almost twenty years later than in Zurich) and the first professor of English language and literature was appointed in 1885. At Lausanne English was taught from 1880 by the same professor as German and the same principle was followed when the University of Geneva created a chair for *littérature et langues du Nord* in 1895. These chairs were split up in 1920; at Fribourg, a separate chair of English had already been created in 1903.

Zimmermann pointed out that until recently the academic orientation was essentially literary and that (through the creation of new chairs and the general expansion of the English departments) a considerable diversification of the subjects treated has now been achieved.

F. Marenco of Genova University gave a survey of English Studies in Italy from 1930 to 1980. He started his account by acknowledging the important part played by Mario Praz. The post-Praz period can be seen as beginning in the early fifties, a turning point in the history of English studies. This period was marked by the changing role of the English language in Italian society, the expansion of education and the growing importance of English as a school subject. A change also occurred in literary scholarship, not only with respect

to quantity but also concerning the critical attitudes and methodological allegiances of scholars. In his paper Marenco concentrated on the most important schools of literary criticism and their representatives, giving an account of their manifold publications and activities.

In his paper entitled 'The Rise and Development of English Studies in the country of the Prague School' I. Poldauf (University of Prague) first gave a brief account of the general historical and geographical background. It was only towards the end of the 18th and during the 19th century that English literature was widely translated into Czech and that Czech grammars and textbooks of English were published. This demand for English can be explained through large-scale emigration to America and increasing trade links of Bohemia and Moravia with the west of Europe.

In his outline of the development of English studies in this century Poldauf emphasized the contribution of the Prague circle of linguists (especially Mathesius and Trnka). Despite important work done since — e.g. on 'functional sentence perspective' by the Brno School (Firbaš, Vachek) and on machine translation at the Department of Mathematical Linguistics at Charles University (Sgall) — it seems that the era of the Prague School has more or less come to an end in the country of its origin.

J. Fisiak from the university of Poznań outlined the different periods of the history of English Studies in Poland. After a brief sketch of the pre-history he dealt more extensively with the university of Cracow, where the first chair of English was established in 1908. The first PhD-holder and professor at that university was Roman Dyboski.

After World War I three new chairs of English were created: Poznań in 1921, Lwow and Warsaw both in 1922. World War II caused heavy losses to Polish universities. English scholarship was deprived of such outstanding scholars as Tretiak, Mikułowski and Arend. The period of reconstruction (1945—50) was marked by the growth in the number of students and the creation of four new departments. In 1950 a rigidly disciplined programme of studies was introduced. By government decision all English departments except Warsaw and Lublin had to be closed by 1952.

After 1960, however, all former departments (apart from Toruń) were restored and new centres came into existence. The number of full-time staff members increased considerably, as did the number of students.

Fisiak then gave a detailed account of the work done at the Polish universities. The remarkable expansion of English Studies in Poland has also led to the emergence of new disciplines such as English language didactics, the study of American literature, and the English-Polish Contrastive Project in Poznań under the directorship of Prof. Fisiak.

Whereas most of the papers reported on so far were general surveys of the development of English Studies, the remaining contributions concentrated

on special aspects. Thus, for example, the two French participants dealt with the teaching of *civilisation* (J. Dulck, University of Paris III) and the teaching English to non-specialist students (P. Danchin, University of Nancy).

The increasing importance of *civilisation* in the training of French students of English is, according to J. Dulck, mainly due to two factors: a) a shift of interest from literature to *civilisation* in secondary schools and b) the demands of a new type of student preparing for other than the teaching profession. Within *civilisation* as a university discipline three approaches can be defined: the historical and sociological approaches and a third combining different aspects under the heading of "History of Ideas." The new subject has been introduced into most university curricula (starting with the *agrégation* in 1977). In recent years, quite a number of research studies have been produced in this field — a fact which reflects the development of *civilisation* into a scientific discipline on the same level as linguistics and literature.

To illustrate the problems involved in teaching non-specialist students of English, P. Danchin chose the example of his own university, Nancy. He sketched the development of the *Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues* (CRAPEL), which, from humble beginnings in the early fifties, has grown into a largely independent unit within the university.

The CRAPEL team developed an approach destined to answer the particular needs of non-specialist students. The following six points sum up the characteristics of this approach:

- the skills or types of knowledge aimed at are clearly defined
- modern technological equipment is widely used
- teaching is seen as the *application* of linguistic knowledge
- the contents-centered approach has been replaced by an audience-centered approach
- interest has shifted from linguistic competence to communication experience
- emphasis is put on the learning rather than on the teaching process.

In his paper "Phonetics and 'Anglistik'" D. Götz (Augsburg) gave a survey of the various roles of phonetics in the syllabi of English Studies at German universities.

From about 1880 to 1920 phonetics was considered an indispensable part of the syllabus. The professors of English — the first and second generation of "Anglisten" — felt directly responsible for that subject, many of them doing research work, nearly all of them being involved in the teaching of phonetics.

From about 1920 onwards phonetics appears to be delegated (or relegated) to the non-professorial staff — partly because the "phonetics of the ear" was supposed to have come to a kind of standstill. Moreover, the opinion that phonetics was "only" a natural science and that there was no place for it in the humanities, was widespread. Later developments (the growth of instru-

mental phonetics, the growth of structuralism) did nothing to change the ancillary role of phonetics within *Anglistik*.

Götz' paper places emphasis on yet another reason. The early *Anglisten* seem to have been aware that "English Studies in Germany" involved a variety of problems connected with the fact that English was a foreign language. The hypothesis of Götz' paper is that after 1920 *Anglistik* came to disregard most aspects of English as a foreign language and pursued the study of English in much the same way as German scholars pursued the study of German.

A. V. Walter (Speyer) spoke on the establishment of English as a school subject in German secondary schools in the 19th century. Analysing the development of different types of schools and taking into consideration the crucial issues in contemporary educational policy, the author traced the roots of present day problems in the field of English language teaching, the most important one being the incompatibility of the specific aim of language proficiency and the dominant aim of the schools to provide their pupils with a certain kind of general education ("Bildung").

G. Haenicke (Bonn) investigated the regional and family background of about 200 German-speaking "Anglisten", mainly in the period when German scholarship enjoyed its highest reputation. The typical pre-1914 professor of English came from an educated and/or well-off Protestant middle-class family in an industrial or university town. However, several renowned heads of "schools" or prominent scholars were Catholics and moreover poor or of a working-class or urban background. Due to political and social changes after 1914 German professors of English came from a wider cross-section of the population.

Th. Finkenstaedt tried to find patterns of research in German Anglistics. He pointed out the difficulties of defining research in the Humanities where real, 'scientific' progress is lacking. He discussed several types of research and analyzed German dissertations from 1885—1945 and from 1965—1980, trying to explore the interplay of general developments, particular universities and individual professors. He also presented statistics of the "fields" of dissertations (e.g. Old English, Shakespeare, syntax) and illustrated the difficulties of preparing such statistics. The last decade has brought an extraordinary decline in the percentage of students doing a doctorate in English, and an analysis of the publications of present-day anglicists in the Federal Republic shows that there is less research than would be expected in a university system which places such great emphasis on research.

Finkenstaedt suggested that a combined quantitative and qualitative evalution of research could lead to more general questions about the function of research for teaching, especially teacher training, and for the selection of future staff.

H.-H. Christmann, Professor of Romance Philology at Tübingen University — in a paper entitled 'Romance Philology versus English Studies in

Germany in the nineteenth century' — showed that in the 19th century Romance philology enjoyed a much higher standing than English studies. From the 18th to the mid-19th century, when English, Italian, Spanish and French were taught by so-called *maîtres* or *lectores*, French prevailed. Also, with the importance attributed to the historical-philological method at the time, which comprised a comparative, a historical and a philological component, Romance philology could establish itself as a discipline in its own right, whereas English studies fell under the domain of German philology. When in the second half of the 19th century "double" professorships for Romance and English philology were created (in order to meet the demands for adequate training of foreign language teachers), a separation of these chairs was soon called for, above all by the Romance scholars. By the end of the century, the separation of English studies from Romance philology was completed everywhere.

The presentation of each paper was followed by a discussion which allowed the participants to comment on the various subjects and to look at them from the point of view of their individual countries. Two types of contribution could be distinguished:

— additional information was given concerning persons, facts and developments,
— controversial aspects were taken up and discussed, contributors pointing out similar or different developments in their own countries and relating history to present-day experience.

The history and present situation of English Studies as a university subject formed one of the centres of interest. Contributions were concerned with institutional aspects such as the organisation of departments, the structure of university careers, the status of foreign staff and the role of research. It was stated that recent developments, especially the expansion of student numbers, had led to similar problems in most countries. Special attention was given to the question of teacher training, and, in close connection with this, the role of English as a school subject. Whereas the systems of courses and examinations were shown to vary considerably in the individual countries, there was general agreement as to the aims of teacher training. Great importance was attributed by all participants to proficiency in English, although it had to be admitted that in many countries this aim was not fulfilled in practice. Problems of school curricula and the part played by the administration were discussed as well as political and legal aspects of language teaching in general. A phenomenon to be observed in all countries is the growing importance of English compared with other foreign languages.

A further topic often reverted to was the role of the different disciplines within English Studies, such as literature, linguistics, civilization, or American Studies: contributions dealt with the relationship of these branches to the subject as a whole, their respective importance in teacher training and their

changing roles in the course of the history of English Studies. In recent times the individual disciplines appear to be growing more and more independent. It was, however, generally accepted that the English language and the teaching of that language can be seen as the common basis ensuring the unity of the subject.

At the end of the symposium a number of subjects for further study were suggested. Among these were the institutional relationship between language and literature, the connection between scholarship and the publishing business, and the social impact of English studies in different countries.

The proceedings of the Symposium were published in Spring 1983. (Thomas Finkenstaedt/Gertrud Scholtes, Towards a History of English Studies in Europe, Augsburger I- & I-Schriften Vol. 21. Augsburg 1983).