

THE HISTORICAL IMPOSITION OF ENGLISH:  
PREQUELS AND SEQUELS

*Margarita Mele-Marrero*, guest-editor



## INTRODUCTION

After 12 years RCEI devotes a new volume to the development of English. Strictly speaking, it might not be considered a historical linguistics issue since it is also quite concerned with Present Day English; nonetheless the focus is set in the progressive acceptance and expansion of this language. Vol. 46 reflected on standardization but from the non-standard perspective, how there were non-standard variants that contributed, by addition or opposition, to the conformation of an accepted vernacular and also how modern scholars may have acted on its portrayal.

Volume 71 is in a way a continuation of that past issue, once English was acknowledged as a valid language its “imposition” started. *The Historical Imposition of English: Prequels and Sequels* invited several contributors to present their views on the gradual establishment of the language in the recent past and modern, present times. Acceptance led to standardization and the emergence of methods to teach and frame the language. This aspect is considered in the article of Ortega-Barreda who concentrates on the creation of grammars for the instruction both of native and non-native speakers in the eighteenth century. Dossena opens the pages of glossaries from the Late Modern English period, those which go further than “merely” language acquisition, unveiling their sometimes proscriptive, sometimes vindicatory nature.

From the table of contents it can be seen that one of the main concerns of scholars is how English attained a first position in scientific writing. It is clear that English has gained a status difficult to ignore for anyone who longs to hold an academic rank a fact that has been tackled in volumes 59 (Martín-Martín & León-Pérez) or 69 (Burgess) to mention the most recent. For the current issue, authors have presented the paths followed and the walls English has encountered when trying to reach a global summit.

Alonso-Almeida and Mulligan emphasize the importance *stance* markers had as a means to reinforce the optimality of English in translations and science works. Against the idea of a reduction of interpersonal features in scientific discourse, seventeenth-century writers use large numbers of *epistemic* and *effective* strategies. They show how objective and (inter)subjective devices are advantageously combined in order to reach a wider audience while also conveying meaning and authority. A specific register is devised for specific matters and that is what Crespo remarks in her paper, claiming that the birth of Empiricism was, among others, an important factor for making of English the language of modern science.



*La Coruña Corpus* serves as a complement of these two previous works. Moskowich measures the use of classical terms in eighteenth-century scientific writing in English once Empiricism had settled, contrasting Philosophy and Life Sciences. Differences are evidenced when one branch resorts to the established authorities and their works and the other appears to have moved on to the description of new things.

The displacement of other geographically close vernaculars shows the force English has been provided with. The evolution of this displacement and the attitude of Celtic language communities' representatives is the main issue of MacLeod's article which leads to the question of how to confront language minoritisation.

The confrontation of English and Spanish in Puerto Rico, shows the unbreakable association between politics and languages. Analyzing the inclusion and evolution of language policy proposals from 1989 to 2010 in U. S. congressional bills, Shenk provides good measure of the relationship sustained between the status of the island regarding U.S. and the pressure of English first policies. Even last September the linguistic controversy reappeared when Spanish was declared the first official language of Puerto Rico (EFEUSA).

Our final article reviews several documents issued by the European Commission trying to enhance multilingualism and presenting CLIL as a valuable pedagogic tool in learning languages. It seems, nevertheless, that this European policy has not been successful for its supposedly initial purpose, advocating countries to prioritize the teaching and use of English over other "minor" languages.

The present volume of *RCEI* presents photograms, pieces of a prequel which can only be reconstructed from what English is today. We can only give a draft of the future sequels of a historical and present imposition. More volumes will be necessary for a happy ending.

## WORKS CITED

- EFEUSA San Juan. "Senado de Puerto Rico aprueba relegar el inglés a segundo idioma de la isla" (4 sep 2015) 6 sept 2015. [www.efe.com/efe/usa/puerto-rico/senado-de-puerto-rico-aprueba-relegar-el-ingles-a-segundo-idioma-la-isla/50000110-2703776](http://www.efe.com/efe/usa/puerto-rico/senado-de-puerto-rico-aprueba-relegar-el-ingles-a-segundo-idioma-la-isla/50000110-2703776).
- MARTÍN-MARTÍN, P. AND I. K. LEON-PÉREZ "Communicating Science: ESP Studies at the Outset of the 21st Century" *RCEI* 59, 2009.
- BURGESS, S. "Current Issues in Research Communication in English" *RCEI* 69, 2014.

