

Introduction

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This volume of *Token: A Journal of English Linguistics* originates from the first international conference on historical medical discourse (CHIMED-1) organized by the University of Milan in June 2017. This event brought together more than forty researchers of various fields: social historians and historians of medicine, historical linguists researching on medical discourse in its various manifestations, and literary critics interested in illness and health-related issues as literary topics. The diachronic and cross-disciplinary perspectives of the conference proved so successful and inspiring that continuation was immediately agreed upon. CHIMED-2 was held in Helsinki in June 2019, and CHIMED-3 is currently being planned in London for 2021.

A great number of the contributions to the Milan conference came from scholars working on English language and linguistics. Indeed, ESP (English for Special Purposes) has long been a staple element of English language teaching and learning worldwide, and research on various aspects, including the diachronic dimension, is blooming. Recent decades have shown an increasing interest in historical aspects, including the initial stages and various traits of development of special language varieties, especially that of medicine, but those of other fields as well. The multifarious nature of specialized discourse from academic communication to didactic texts and popularizations showing different levels of adaptation to various audiences has also been fostered among English scholars. This interest has been generated for several different reasons. First of all, an increasing number of historical corpora have been made readily available with new comprehensive data in an accessible form. This state of affairs has promoted corpus linguistic studies on language use in a diachronic perspective. Furthermore, digital databanks like *Early English Books Online*

(EEBO) and *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* (ECCO) have brought big data to individual scholars' desks. These developments have made it possible to study with more precision scientific English in its different uses. Scholars are encouraged to customize their own selections for their own purposes; this recommendation opens up even more new avenues for research. Secondly, current trends in historical linguistics, with an emphasis on sociolinguistics and pragmatics, have called for studies on hitherto neglected areas of written language in publications meant for less educated readerships. A wide variety of data sources with translations, popularized versions of important texts as well as more ephemeral writings, have received attention and initiated the study of language history 'from below'. All this is particularly relevant to medical language and discourse, as medicine has always been considered one of the most important fields of science, covering both technical and practical aspects. Health issues are of concern to all people and pertain to culture in general, providing the varying macro context. These different elements form the background against which research published in this issue of *Token* was conducted and against which the papers should be read.

The articles of the present issue make up a fairly tightly focused and coherent collection. The topics illuminate important aspects of specialized lexis and its development in the language of medicine in the Early and Late Modern English periods. During this time Latin was in the process of losing its monopoly as the language of science and technology in Europe, and the vernacular took over in England as the major language of publications. Reference works, such as dictionaries and encyclopedias, played an important role as agents of popularization of science and dissemination of knowledge.

The first paper, authored by Giovanni Iamartino and Giulia Rovelli, analyses the lexicological and lexicographical characteristics of *A Physical Dictionary*, a 13-page medical glossary appended to the English edition of Lazare Rivière's *Praxis Medica*, translated by Nicholas Culpeper and others, and published by Peter Cole as *The Practice of Physick* in 1655. This glossary was aimed at literate but not highly educated readers of Rivière's book in English. The audience role can be verified by the text, which provides easier language equivalents of the many technical terms that are part and parcel of a medical book of this kind. It is a useful addition to Rivière's treatise in English and further evidence of Nicholas Culpeper's long-lasting activity as a translator and popularizer of medical discourse in seventeenth-century Britain.

The contribution by Lucia Berti deals with more or less the same period, the second half of the seventeenth century and the very beginning of the eighteenth. The medical texts she discusses come from, and are meant

for, more learned people, the Fellows of the Royal Society and foreign gentlemen – more specifically, Italians – interested in the study of medicine. By examining twenty-five selected articles published in the *Philosophical Transactions* as either translations of Italian writings or reports of Italian research, Berti illustrates the main features of the Italian medical contributions to the early *Philosophical Transactions*, casting new light on a largely neglected aspect of the history of Anglo-Italian relations.

The next three papers focus on medicine in eighteenth-century dictionaries and encyclopedias. This century was characterized by extensive efforts to make science accessible to the general public. Various strategies were employed, as the following contributions show.

The paper by Alicia Rodríguez-Álvarez deals with the medical terms included in John Kersey's *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum* (1708), an abridged version of Kersey's revision of Edward Phillips's *The New World of Words* (1706). Her study discusses the lexicographer's methods of abridgement and assesses the importance given to medical terminology in portable volumes of this kind by comparing Kersey's *Dictionarium* with the *Glossographia Anglicana Nova* (1707). These works shared the same target readership, the same purposes, and the same emphasis on scientific terminology.

M. Victoria Domínguez-Rodríguez concentrates on the second important and innovative lexicographer of the eighteenth century, Nathan Bailey. She studies medical terminology in Bailey's *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721) by analysing Bailey's own definition of *medicine* and his strategies to single out and define medical terminology.

Medical terminology is also at centre stage in Elisabetta Lonati's article, but she approaches it from a different angle, through a selection of eighteenth-century British specialised dictionaries and universal dictionaries of arts and sciences. Her aim is to illustrate how scientific terminology was becoming more and more stable in those days. By selecting a number of medical terms related to some relevant areas of interest in eighteenth-century medical research and practice (e.g., inflammatory diseases, anatomical description, and surgical operations), Lonati highlights the underlying mechanisms that define the medical lexicon, and medical writing in general, in specialised language use.

The interest shifts to the nineteenth century with Magdalena Zabielska's and Anna Franca Plastina's papers. This era was important for medicine as it brought forth both novel methods of diagnosis and treatment, and advances in medical reasoning and discourse. Both papers analyze meaningful linguistic and stylistic features of two different kinds in texts for medical professionals, the *British Medical Journal* (*BMJ*) and Medical-Officer-of-Health reports.

Magdalena Zabielska explores the discourse of the late nineteenth-century case reports in *BMJ* in search of the linguistic manifestations of the changes taking place in the medicine of that period. She devotes her attention to the themes marking changes in medical reasoning as well as aspects like patient's presence, authorial persona and referential behaviour.

Anna Franca Plastina deals with an under-researched genre, the Medical-Officer-of-Health report. It emerged from the need to improve poor sanitary conditions in nineteenth-century industrialized Britain. She concentrates on *if*-conditionals and their macro-functions with sociohistorical meanings. Another matter addressed is how participants in MOH discourse are represented through such constructions. Plastina bases her analysis on a diachronic corpus evidencing the spread of smallpox infection in MOH reports from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Her results reveal shifts in the semantic functionality of *if*-conditionals.

Finally, Kim Grego's paper proposes a terminological review of the word *euthanasia* and the concepts related to this practice. Her aim is to discover what changes occurred in the period between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries, and what social and historical events prompted them. The study draws its data from the British newspapers *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* from the years 1864-1949. She offers a critical reflection on the changes that occurred to the term and concept of *euthanasia* in its social, ideological and period contexts, and attention is also paid to the role of the media.

In short, the topics dealt with in this collection of articles in *Token* form a focused and coherent whole, although treated by linguists of different backgrounds, specializations and interests. Historical medical discourse is a versatile field that offers plenty of possibilities for interesting research that can be conducted using fresh materials. This special issue gives evidence of the increasing interest in the large literature of medical writing including both professional texts and more popular adaptations. We are confident that this trend will continue in the future.

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