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## DRACULA AND EARLY PRAGMATIC THEORY

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Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (Stoker 1898) is usually interpreted as a tale of Gothic horror or, by imaginative critics, as a tale of reverse colonialism (East attacks West), racial conflict (Attila the Hun versus Anglo-Saxon Victorians), bureaucratic power (keep your records in order), a recipe for garlic soup, and much more (Hindle 2003). However, previously unknown correspondence by Stoker, which was discovered blocking a mouse-hole in a flat he once inhabited in London, confirms what some have long suspected.

The novel is a collage of two quite separate books. At the same time as he was writing *Dracula*, Stoker was working on the applications of pragmatic theory to language teaching, and two quite separate manuscripts became muddled. His correspondence complains of the incompetence of his cleaning lady, and the most obvious explanation is that she dropped two manuscripts which were on his desk, and the resulting muddle was sent to the printers, leading to the version of the book which we now have. There are two main textual arguments for this interpretation of events.

1. The lengthy quotes from the Dutchman Van Helsing have long been recognized as transcribed spoken data from a project in which Stoker was involved. He was investigating English-Dutch interlanguage, some eighty years before work by Corder (1989). There are many references in the book to new techniques of audio-recording, which could be used for the first time in the late 1800s to make accurate records of spoken language. It is quite implausible that the characters in the book could have remembered Van Helsing's language in such detail. If the book is seen as a novel, this makes no sense. But when it is realised that these passages are from another book entirely, everything falls into place. Part of the research project involved English as a lingua franca in intercultural communication, as we see in this fragment of a conversation between a Scottish ship's captain and Van Helsing (Stoker 1898 / 2003: 370):

Ship's captain: "It's no canny to run frae London to the Black Sea wi' a wind ahint ye, as though the Deil himself were blawin' on yer sail for his ain purpose. An' a' the time we could no speer a thing. "

Van Helsing: "Mine friend, that devil is more clever than he is thought by some; and he know when he meet his match."

2. What has been less widely recognized is the originality of Stoker's ideas on phraseology. Jonathan Harker, a young English solicitor, is visiting Count Dracula in his castle, in order to help him with the purchase of a house in London. Dracula has been planning to move house for some time, and has therefore been learning English, but he realises that his command of the language is inadequate (he reaches level C1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). His knowledge comes from an impressive collection of English literature in his library, but he knows that there are significant differences between written literary English and colloquial spoken English. He has not been able to spend time in an English-speaking country (he has problems crossing rivers), there are few native English speakers in the area (most of those who used to travel through on holiday have fallen ill), and cuts at the University of Transylvania have meant job losses in the English Department. (It transpired that a major transdisciplinary research project on transfiguration entranced the Minister of Education and transformed funding policy. In a move to introduce new blood and to give a more transparent profile to the University, money was transferred to transcultural, translational, transcendental and transylvanian studies.)

In a lecture at a phraseology conference, Sinclair (2005) drew attention to the following crucial exchange between Harker and Dracula (Stoker 1898 / 2003: 27):

"But, Count," I said, "You know and speak English thoroughly!" He bowed gravely.

"I thank you, my friend, for your all too-flattering estimate, but yet I fear that I am but a little way on the road I would travel. True, I know the grammar and the words, but yet I know not how to speak them." [Emphasis added.]

It would be another thirty years before Ludwig Wittgenstein (who lived in a hut in Norway, not in a castle in Transylvania) put forward a similar theory:

"Die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch in der Sprache". (The meaning of a word is its use in the language.) (Wittgenstein 1953: §43.)

Harker is hesitant to correct his host's English and suspicious of Dracula's motives for keeping him locked up in the castle, but the Count merely wants some conversation practice, and after a month Harker is allowed to return safely to England. As the count says:

"You shall, I trust, rest here with me a while, so that by our talking I may learn the English intonation. And I would that you tell me when I make error, even of the smallest, in my speaking."

Dracula implies here that he also wants help with pronunciation. He has particular difficulty with labio-dentals and inter-dental fricatives (which are infrequent in Romanian). His dental problems are due to a lack of dentists in Transylvania. You

can see the problem: "Open wide please, Sir! Ow! You seem to have bitten my finger. Well, not to worry ...". But after all the dentists had turned into vampires, they had little interest in fixing teeth.

In summary: The novel has traditionally been interpreted as a collage of different fragments: letters, telegrams, memoranda, diary extracts and the like, written by different characters. It is indeed a collage, but from different books. Some passages (transcribed conversations, memoranda on using new audio-recording techniques for research on spoken language, and on the problems of representing the International Phonetic Alphabet on standard typewriters) come from the unpublished book on pragmatics and language teaching. The book also reports some cutting edge research on improving language learning by blood transfusions from native speakers, but this proved to be a pedagogical dead-end.

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