

Review

Reviewed Work(s): An Introduction to Linguistics by L. Ben Crane, Edward Yeager and Randal L. Whitman

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BOOK NOTICES

An introduction to linguistics. By L. BEN CRANE, EDWARD YEAGER, and RANDAL L. WHITMAN. Boston: Little Brown, 1981. Pp. xiv, 280.

It is, without a doubt, difficult to prepare an introduction to linguistics that is both understandable to the novice and faithful to the complexity of the subject. Each attempt fails to please at least some of the people some of the time, and this new text will be no exception.

The authors preface the volume by remarking that their goal is to treat syntactic concerns fully (recognizing the importance of transformational-generative theory in the past fifteen years), but also to include discussion of areas like historical linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, semantics, and acoustic phonetics—a goal to be saluted by those of us who have been busily working away at those sub-disciplines. However, it is apparent that, despite these egalitarian intentions, the authors' major emphasis is on TG analysis of grammar, and that the areas subsumed under the heading 'Linguistics: A broader view' are seen as somehow less legitimately part of linguistics proper.

The text, designed for undergraduates and beginning graduate students and dedicated almost completely to discussion of the English language, has three major parts. Each chapter includes summaries, extra reading lists, practice exercises, and discussion questions at the close. The volume ends with the answers to the exercises, a glossary of linguistic terms, a bibliography, and an index.

Part I ('Language and linguistics: An overview') contains four chapters. Chap. 1 deals with the nature of animal communication, its learned and innate characteristics, and its relation to human language. The latter is examined more deeply in Chap. 2 via the three systems of speech, writing, and gesture. Chaps. 3–4 explore first the history of linguistics and then the history of the English language.

Part II ('Linguistics: Grammar') is the core of the volume, and consists of eight chapters. Chap. 5 treats articulatory phonetics; Chaps. 6–7, phonology; Chap. 8, morphology; Chaps. 9–10, syntax; and Chaps. 11–12, semantics. In each case, traditional and structuralist approaches are presented, with comparison to transformationalist-generativist conceptions. A

surprisingly large number of issues are dealt with concisely.

Part III ('Linguistics: A broader view') includes Chaps. 13–18, which cover psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, historical linguistics, neurolinguistics, and acoustic phonetics, respectively. For some reason, there is no discussion of applied, educational, or computational linguistics. The coverage of sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics is slight and outdated, with no discussion of important recent work in the ethnography of speaking, discourse analysis, or language planning. This lack is somewhat, but not totally, remedied by the extra readings given. (Incidentally, teachers should inform their students that Joel Sherzer's co-author is Richard Bauman, not Baumm; pp. 202, 262).

The basic flaw of this text is its failure to present an integrated view of the discipline, with a clear rationale for each sub-area and an explanation of its contribution to the larger endeavor. Nowhere, for example, do the authors indicate the interrelatedness of the sociolinguistic study of variation with the study of acoustic phonetics, or the connection between neurological and psychological investigations of language. The relation between acoustic and articulatory phonetics is referred to briefly, but the two are completely separated in the text. This lack of integration only contributes to the confusion of the beginning student who (if not completely scared off) is directed into one camp or another without fully understanding the role of each specialization.

Another serious flaw (shared by many linguistic texts) is the lack of some indication of the utility and application of the principles and techniques outlined. This, too, is critical for beginning students, who may feel that the only purpose for linguistic training is self-perpetuation through teaching.

Ultimately, this text will be of greatest utility to an introductory course which focuses primarily on grammar—admittedly a cornerstone for further work in linguistics. However, I would recommend that the teacher make careful use of the supplementary readings, in order to present a complete and accurate picture of what we know and sometimes love as linguistics. [ALICIA POUSADA, *Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, CUNY.*]