

REVIEWS

Harder, Peter. 1997. *Functional semantics: a theory of meaning, structure, and tense in English*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, xv + 586 pp. £28.50, ISBN 3 11 015721 7.

Reviewed by William Frawley, University of Delaware

Functional semantics is pretty tough going – a characterization meant *not* to discourage readers, but to alert them to the time-cost of the insights. The book's difficulty stems mostly from Harder's struggle to produce his version of *functionalism* – an account of semantics that neither defers to context as the ultimate determinant of meaning nor endorses traditional conceptual-referentialism. To stake out his territory, Harder is forced to summarize and critique partisans on all sides, which often requires him to rehearse familiar claims, plus give background to, and detail in, analysis where a less metatheoretically driven account might simply acknowledge the facts and alternatives and move on. All this can make for some slow going.

Part I, 'Meaning', surveys the major trends in the analysis of meaning from Plato onward. Harder critiques the denotational and logical traditions and the way referential theories feed and turn into logical semantics, ultimately flipping from language reflecting the world to logical form making the world up. There is especially good discussion of the tradeoffs between formal precision and ontological plausibility (see his discussion of Frege, p. 21; cf. Marconi, 1997 for related arguments). Harder's sympathies for Putnam (pp. 27–9) are important to recognize since Putnam's reliance on language use as an arbiter in language–logic–world relations motivates much of Harder's functionalism.

Harder then turns to the cognitive tradition in semantics, which he casts in two strains: the computational-information-theoretic approach and the cognitive-semantic approach. His critique of the former is essentially that of Searle (thoughts have to mean something to the thinker, and hence pure intentionality falls short), but his doubts about cognitive semantics are new and refreshing. Cognitive semantics leads too easily into pan-cognitivism and internal reductionism. Harder makes the case for the relevance to linguistic meaning of what Searle (1995) calls the Background – the nonrepresentational backdrop of speech and thought that provides the conditions for intelligibility: 'not all meanings are obviously conceptual' (p. 77); some rely on facts of the background, not explicitly (mentally) represented categories.

The promises and failures of both referentialism and cognitivism lead to Harder's functionalism, which he advances in the remainder of part I. Meaning is an ecology; expressions mean not what they point to but what they do. Meanings are instructions for how to match expressions and situations, and representing is but one of these functional relations. Conceptual representations thus *follow* meaning,

not precede it. Representations are made by meanings. Interestingly, Bowerman (1996: 424–5) makes a similar point in arguing that semantic universals may be the outcomes of development, not prerequisites.

Two features of Harder's kind of functionalism come to the fore here. The first is that semantics is *procedural*, i.e. functional via mappings between expressions and situations. In this sense his functionalism is somewhat like that of received functional linguistics, although the tendency in the latter to accede to pragmatic and semantic reduction is not what Harder has in mind. But it is also functional in an evolutionary sense. For Harder, a linguistic function is what causes language to live beyond individual speakers. Functional semantics is part of the cause-to-persist loop of language as an ecosystem.

These views bring me both satisfaction and worry. As for the former, it is good to see a strong case made for a descriptive procedural semantics, one in the 'functional' tradition of Winograd & Flores (1986), Blakemore (1987), and Fauconnier (1997), although readers have to wait about 300 pages to see exactly what a semantic instruction looks like. Such a procedural semantics has the advantage of both neurocognitive and computational plausibility since implemented rules of interpretation look to be pointers rather than declared categories.

As for the worries, I have two. The first is that Harder uses his functionalism to argue (basically against Searle) that linguistic meaning does not exist prior to communication, only mental content does. Linguistic meaning happens in the deployment of procedures – in the functional act. But surely the procedures so deployed exist as mental representations prior to their deployment, and to call them *mental content*, but not meaning, seems to me to be splitting hairs. Aren't the procedures intentional, 'about something', and so meaningful? Are they, perhaps, *virtual* linguistic meaning?

Second, he links two different kinds of functionalism under the same rubric, and as far as I can determine, they are only nominally alike. Semantic functionalism is normative. Semantic procedures are what they are because they are judged against a backdrop of what they are supposed to be and do: they are intrinsically veridical and effective (this is also why Harder's functionalism is compatible with a 'use theory', where the norms of standards for use lurk in the background: Dretske, 1998). But evolutionary functionalism does not strike me as necessarily normative. That is, semantic procedures are supposed to be veridical and effective, but evolution does not have to be anything, as the views of the anti-adaptationists (e.g. Gould) appear to indicate. If evolution were normative – i.e. if it were the case that what evolves does so against the backdrop of what it is supposed to evolve into, say, an adaptation – then one would be increasingly forced to argue that the functional structure of language is the optimal historical solution, that it somehow had to come out like this, when in fact it just happened to come out like this.

I raise this normativity distinction between semantics and evolution because I fear that it is too easy to scale the functional system of language (where everything seems to work as it is supposed to) up into some natural functionalism. There may be

functions all the way up and down the explanatory picture only if you are willing to mix functions of different kinds.

In part II, 'Structure', Harder appears to have two goals: (1) to review the history of modern approaches to linguistic structure so as to show that the major figures either were or should have been functionalists; (2) to carve out his version of functionalism in contrast to competitors. He does these things basically through a sustained attack on grammatical and conceptual autonomy.

Just about everybody takes a drubbing: Saussure, Hjelmslev, Bloomfield, Chomsky are all (lethally) inclined to pure structure, except where they are closet functionalists. In some cases, I think Harder is right. For instance, distributional structuralism is a kind of functionalism since it presupposes content and often explains forms via their structural jobs. But in other cases, it seems to me that, for the sake of promoting functionalism, Harder runs quickly over more subtle points. For example, the frontal assault on generative grammar because autonomous syntax 'ignor[es] meanings' (p. 179) and 'is the central component' (p. 179) misses a crucial fact about modular architecture: generative theory has interface rules that work very much like functional instructions to link domains. So meaning is not ignored, and syntax is not central. There is nothing intrinsically anti-functional in generative grammar, when you look at the architecture in detail.

Perhaps the best way to characterize Harder's functional semantics is in terms of what it is not. It is neither cognitive grammar (Langacker, 1987, 1991), on the one hand, nor grammaticalization (Heine, Claudi, & Hünemeyer, 1991) or emergent grammar (Hopper, 1987) on the other. For Harder, cognitive grammar is too abstract, list-like, and bottom up; structure is too autonomous and hard coded, underestimating the functional role of meaning. In grammaticalization and emergent grammar, however, structure is epiphenomenal. Harder's functional linguistics involves 'conceptualization embedded in interaction' (p. 269) linked to syntactic recipes. Linguistic structure is made out of meaning-driven constructions where some of the structure is routinized into stored patterns.

Part III, 'Tense', applies this functional theory in detail to one linguistic phenomenon. From a long critique of representational theories of tense, Harder argues for the elimination of notions like *event time* and *reference time*. The meanings of past and present are best explained not as temporal denotations, but as instructions to an interpreter to identify a point of application of a state of affairs. A significant part of his case is carried by the analysis of tenses whose denotational content does not match the time of application: pasts without past reference (*I wish I knew*), presents without present reference (*Dinosaurs are big*), tenses with no time (*Two times two make four*).

The future instructs the interpreter to look ahead to a point of application of a state of affairs. Futures and modals are often conflated in language because they share the conveyance of unrealized states. But the future, Harder argues, signals only pure look ahead, unlike modals, which give instructions to interpreters on how to find ways to truth or alternatives.

Tenses are procedures, not coded temporal types. Moreover, even though there is no hard-coded denotation, tense cannot be situationally reduced to some general cognitive focus of attention at the moment of speech. Tense is, well . . . , something between cognitive grammar and emergent grammar.

The fact that tenses are directions, not types, returns Harder to a larger theoretical point. Procedural meaning makes truth; truth follows interaction. Note how a tenseless expression, *The cat eat food*, has no truth value and signals, if anything, just a state of affairs. For truth to be assessed, expressions have to be tensed. That is, they have to signal to interlocutors how to locate the point of application of a state of affairs. Thus tense not only illustrates functional semantics, but embodies its theoretical claim of meaning as a construction and procedure, not a representation.

My account vastly simplifies Harder's, which also ranges over complex tenses, typological facts, discourse time, and adverbial co-occurrence. The lesson, in the end, is that the procedural construal of tense simplifies tense enormously and yields a number of possible uses. For example, it would be good to see if, in acquisition, the aspect < tense sequence is somehow simplified by a procedural account. It might also be good to look at children's tense 'errors' to see if, when they are using the present for a past event, they still understand the past as an instruction even though they miscode it.

In many ways, *Functional semantics* is two books: parts I and II (about 300 pages) constitute a meta-book arguing in-principle claims, and part III (about 200 pages) is a new and sweeping study of tense. As I worked through the details and finer points, I often thought Harder should have published the two separately, one as a brief for 'Harder-functionalism' and the other as a procedural semantics of tense. He could have then added to the tense study to broaden its implications and perhaps cut the detail in the metatheory to a tighter and more pointed argument. Still, writing a book of this scope and length is a very daunting task (the Preface tells a bit of the struggle), and criticisms of execution are admittedly easier than the execution itself. This book has a lot of uses and should be studied closely.

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Johan Elsness, *The perfect and the preterite in contemporary and earlier English* (Topics in English Linguistics, 21). Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997. Pp. xvii + 432. Hardback DM248, ISBN 3 11 014686 X.

Reviewed by Laurel J. Brinton, University of British Columbia

By means of a careful, corpus-based study, this book sets out to answer three main questions: (i) what is the distribution of the preterite and the (present) perfect in Modern English; (ii) is the frequency of the perfect increasing or decreasing in the history of English; and (iii) are there discernible differences between British and American English in the use of the perfect and preterite?

Following a brief introductory chapter, chapter 2 reviews some previous theories concerning the use of the perfect and preterite and provides a theoretical grounding for the remainder of the study. Elsness comes to the conclusion that the preterite expresses ‘weak’ deixis (much like a personal pronoun or definite nominal); it denotes a time wholly distinct from the present; and it requires a contextual past-time anchor with which the situation that it denotes is linked. The present perfect¹ expresses ‘strong’ deixis (much like a personal pronoun such as *someone* or indefinite nominal); it denotes a time which is not clearly separate from the deictic zero-point or which extends up until the zero-point; and it permits no contextual past-time anchor. The preterite is associated with given information and the narrative foreground, while the perfect is associated with new information and the narrative background. Elsness argues that even when there is no overt anchor, the preterite may occur in cases of ‘unique past-time’ reference. Also, he relates the concept of ‘being located at any time up to the deictic zero-point’ not to the situation *per se* but

¹ In this study, Elsness is concerned almost exclusively with the present perfect, not with other forms of the perfect.

to the discourse topic (i.e. that about which the speaker is either providing or requesting new information).

While such views concerning the perfect and the preterite are generally uncontroversial, Elsness goes on to question a number of widely held ideas. One is the categorial status of the perfect. Although it has been suggested that the perfect is an aspect, a relative tense, or another category altogether, e.g. status, Elsness views the present perfect as a tense since it expresses anteriority and is deictic. A second notion that he questions is the potential for the perfect to express a situation that extends *beyond* the present, as in *David has lived in Vancouver for ten years*. For Elsness, this is a pragmatic inference of the perfect but not part of its conventional meaning. Most importantly, he queries the concept of 'current relevance' – or resultativeness – traditionally invoked for the perfect. Giving examples of perfects *without* current relevance and of preterites *with* current relevance, he admits that the perfect may have the connotation of current relevance and that in contexts of vague past-time reference where both the perfect and the preterite would be appropriate, current relevance will often dictate the use of the perfect. This chapter also includes short discussions of the adverbial specifiers found with both forms, of the importance of aspectual character (i.e. Aktionsart) in the use of the perfect and preterite (though to my mind, more could have been said on this topic), and of the four recognized 'types' of the perfect, which Elsness rightly sees as reducible to two types (see Brinton, 1988: 10–12). Finally, he discusses the inadequacies of formal tense logic in distinguishing between the preterite and the perfect.

The remainder of the book consists of corpora studies. For Modern English, Elsness uses the Brown University (BUC) and London–Oslo/Bergen (LOB) corpora and his own, specially collected, corpus which he terms CONTCORP. There are limitations of BUC and LOB which Elsness acknowledges. For example, both consist only of written English. Because the grammatical tagging of the corpora is not useful for separating the perfects from other forms with auxiliary *have*, he can give only approximate numbers for the perfect forms using indirect evidence. He supplements these rough counts with an exact count of the eight most common verbs, but here the number of perfects is too low to be reliable. Some of the problems are addressed in his own corpus, which consists of British written and oral texts, though only written texts for American English. One might question some of the selections for his modern corpus. For example, the British 'science' category consists only of linguistic texts, and the American 'novel' category consists only of *Catcher in the Rye*, a first-person novel imitating an adolescent's style of discourse; both of these choices cause problems for his results (see pp. 130–1, 154, 267, 341). Moreover; the development of CONTCORP might have provided Elsness an opportunity to update the BUC and LOB, which are now becoming somewhat dated, but the fictional and dramatic texts he chooses are roughly twenty-five to thirty years old and the informational texts nearly twenty years old. For earlier English, Elsness has assembled his own corpus, termed HISTCORP. Here, the selection of texts seems quite wide-ranging and representative.

Chapter 3 is a lengthy examination of the distribution of perfects and preterites in Modern English, first in the BUC and LOB corpora and then in CONTCORP. Elsness considers a number of factors influencing the distribution of the two forms: the specification of past time by adverbials or other elements in the same clause or by elements outside the clause, the lack of temporal specification, the givenness or newness of the situation (i.e. whether it occurs at the same time as the preceding clause or not); the temporal location of the situation, the type of clause, the aspectual character of the situation, the type of subject, negation, interrogation, voice, and text type. Because the preterite is several times more frequent than the perfect, Elsness uses the ratio of perfects to preterites as a comparative measure. He finds the ratio to be considerably higher in British as opposed to American texts and in informational as opposed to fictional texts in both corpora. The latter finding he attributes to the orientation of informational-type texts to present time and of fictional texts to past time. Elsness's findings generally bear out the claims of the previous chapter:

If the reference is determined as being to a point or period of time located *wholly in the past*, either through a temporal specifier in the same clause or because it is *given* in the preceding context, the preterite is the standard verb form in both varieties. If, on the other hand, the reference is to time which extends from the past *up until the deictic zero-point*, the present perfect is usually preferred in both varieties. (p. 230)

One apparently surprising finding is that the preterite occurs more often than the perfect in cases where the time is *not* specified; this would appear to contradict his claim that the preterite requires a contextual anchor. However, Elsness presents convincing evidence that in many cases, the temporal specification occurs in or is implied by the preceding or larger context. In other cases, the past time is 'unique', which Elsness defines as 'a single, bounded past situation which can be seen as a necessary prelude to a subsequent situation whose past or present occurrence is taken to be a fact' (p. 146). As one can see, the concept of unique past is a powerful one, and hence somewhat suspect. In respect to situation type, Elsness finds that the perfect is most common with achievements and least common with states. While the association of the perfect with boundedness is usually attributed to current relevance, Elsness is careful to point out that his findings should not 'be taken as support for the claim of resultativeness'. Finally, it is not always clear how the numerous factors that Elsness identifies relate to one another. For example, he finds that the perfect is more common with first- and second- person subjects, with bound situations, and in negative and interrogative sentences. He notes that all of these elements are characteristic of 'situational integration', or the interactive use of language. Is the presence of the perfect determined, then, by the use of language, by the formal elements, by the aspectual character, or by the temporal reference? Which factor is the primary determining one or are they all mutually reinforcing factors? In this context, some of Elsness's claims, for example that 'clauses whose subjects have personal reference are more apt than others to refer to situations classified as

bounded, generally more dynamic than unbounded situations' (p. 199, also p. 331), seem rather sweeping.

Chapter 3 ends with a very interesting discussion of an experiment in which Elsness asked American and British university students to rate the acceptability of preterite and perfect forms in identical syntactic contexts. The results of this experiment generally support his corpus findings, though there are a few contradictions between the two sets of data. For example, while the American students in the study prefer the preterite with *already* and the British students strongly disprefer it, the only co-occurrence of these forms in CONTCORP is in spoken British. Nor does CONTCORP suggest the preferred collocation of *always/never/ever* with the perfect in British English found in the elicitation experiment. Elsness could have explored the implications of such discrepancies (either in respect to his experiment or his corpus or both) more fully. Elsness notes in passing that the elicitation experiment suggests that when the past participle and the simple past are formally identical and the auxiliary contracted, the present perfect and the preterite are not always clearly separated (as in *I('ve) finished my paper*). A similar conflation might underlie constructions of the sort *You should have saw that movie* found currently in a number of English varieties.

Chapter 4 presents a somewhat briefer examination of the history of the perfect construction in English. Elsness begins with the erroneous observation that what has been written about the development of the perfect and the preterite 'consists of scattered references in more general treatments' (p. 237), but later shows himself to be quite well versed in the fairly extensive literature on these verb forms. He seems to accept the standard account of the origin of the perfect (pp. 239–40), e.g. when he attributes the frequency of bounded situations in the perfect to the fact that 'present possession (in a wide sense) resulting from a past situation can most easily be associated with cases where the past situation is bounded' (p. 319). However, he correctly takes a liberal view of what constitutes a 'perfect' in older stages of the language, limiting himself neither by the inflectional status of the participle nor by the word order of the construction. Noting that the usage of the preterite and perfect in earlier English is conventionally understood as 'less settled' than in Modern English, Elsness sets out to determine when the modern norm was established and whether the decline in the frequency of the perfect, which seems most marked in American English, is real or apparent. The ensuing analysis of HISTCORP follows the pattern established in the previous chapter (see above), and for comparison Elsness repeats the major findings from that chapter. This leads to a fair amount of repetition which might have been avoided had a different organizational strategy been adopted. In respect to frequency, Elsness finds that the perfect expands in use from the Old English period until the period 1750–1800, when usage reaches its peak in both British and American English; if individual text types are considered, perfect usage declines in both varieties thereafter (modern British news texts being the one exception). The specific conditioning factors seem to operate in the earlier periods much as they do in the modern period, apart from negative and passive

sentences, where the perfect is slow to develop. Elsness hypothesizes that this exception is related to the question of syntactic complexity, which is obviated when the auxiliary becomes mandatory. He sees the factor of temporal location as becoming more important over time. A number of additional factors are also relevant in the earlier period: the relation of auxiliary HAVE to auxiliary BE, the possibility of external (Latin) influence, and the loss of 'perfectivizing *ge-*'.² While this chapter presents worthwhile data concerning the increasing frequency and gradual regulation of the perfect, it does not provide any new insights into the semantic and syntactic grammaticalization of the form.

The book ends with a chapter summarizing the results of the study, notes, references, and appendices containing detailed accounts of the composition of CONTCORP and HISTCORP. Elsness speculates only quite briefly on the larger consequences of his findings (pp. 346–8, 358–62). The course of the perfect in English differs markedly from that in other European languages, viz., French and German, where the perfect is supplanting the preterite. Elsness suggests that the decline of the English perfect may be the result of the language-specific conditioning factors: the conflation of the preterite and perfect (with loss of reduced forms of HAVE and formal identity of past tense and past participle forms) and an increase in the use of the preterite in cases where there is no obvious temporal anchor. It would appear that the only restriction on the use of the preterite now is that the situation be wholly in the past, not that it have a past-time anchor.

The book is clearly written and carefully proofread. I found only a few typographical errors or nonidiomatic examples (e.g. 2:16). The presentation of quantitative data by means of tables and bar graphs is easy to decipher for the most part, though the wealth of data makes the book rather heavy going at times; the cyclic nature of the discussions in chapters 3 and 4 also leads to considerable repetition. Nonetheless, this is an important book that fills a gap in our synchronic and diachronic knowledge of the English perfect and preterite by providing quantitative evidence for the distribution of these forms. Elsness supplies few details about how the two special corpora used in the study were compiled or how the exact counts of forms were made, but the work involved in this study was obviously substantial; Elsness is to be congratulated for his meticulousness and dedication.

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² Elsness claims that the preponderance of the perfect with bounded situations is 'consistent with the assumption that the growth in the frequency of the present perfect was connected with the general loss in Middle English of the prefix *ge-*' (pp. 320–1). However, the perfective meaning of *ge-* is still far from incontrovertible (see Brinton, 1988: 199–201).

Reference

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Katie Wales, *Personal pronouns in present-day English*. Studies in English Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. xvii + 234. Hardback £35, US\$54.95, ISBN 0 521 47102 8.

Reviewed by Catherine Emmott, University of Glasgow

This work is advertised, on the cover, as ‘the first comprehensive book-length analysis of personal pronouns in present-day English’¹ and it also covers reflexive and possessive pronouns.² A key characteristic of Wales’s study is her detailed and scholarly examination of authentic data. The book has its roots very firmly in the descriptive tradition of Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985) and will serve as a useful supplement to *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. Wales manages to fill in many gaps in Quirk et al.’s account of pronouns, frequently subjecting their generalizations to a questioning analysis and looking carefully at areas that they ignore or footnote. She also enriches her grammatical analysis by drawing knowledgeably on an extremely broad spectrum of linguistic fields of study, including historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, stylistics, discourse analysis, and sociopolitical analysis. Wales’s book is written in an accessible style and provides a general survey of pronouns that will be useful for students. In addition, it offers plenty of fresh insights for researchers and illustrates corpus-based grammatical analysis at its best.

Chapter 1 provides a useful introduction to the book. In defining pronouns, Wales argues against the notion that a pronoun is a substitute for a noun or noun phrase. She questions whether pronouns are ever semantically empty (on the basis of their meaning in context, sociopolitical connotations, etc.) and discusses lexical senses of pronouns and their place in dictionaries (e.g. ‘How was *it* for you?’, ‘She thinks she’s *it*’ (p. 9)). Her inclusion of paradigm tables for spoken and regional forms precludes the book’s emphasis on a broad range of data. She also questions whether pronouns are really a closed class, offering her observations of the generic

¹ Wales is a little more circumspect in her preface, describing the book as ‘the first full-length analysis ... that I know of’ (p. xi). Although it is arguable whether any book on pronouns can be truly ‘comprehensive’, given the current gaps in our knowledge, this is undoubtedly a wide-ranging study.

² Personal, reflexive, and possessive pronouns are grouped together as ‘central pronouns’ by Quirk et al. (1985: 345) although, as Wales points out (p. 169), there is some inconsistency in their usage with possessive forms on occasion being included in the personal category.

reflexive *themselves*, a recent neologism, as counter-evidence along with historical linguistic material.

Chapter 2 provides a succinct and readable survey of a number of topical issues in discourse-orientated theories of reference. Among other points, Wales: (i) questions the idea of referent identity in anaphoric relations, arguing for a model that involves coreference to a (potentially changing) mental representation (in line with Brown & Yule, 1983); (ii) explores the distribution of lexical noun phrases and pronouns in coreferential cohesive chains, looking particularly at rhetorical factors and genre differences; (iii) provides a useful introduction to sentential and inter-sentential cataphora and suggests discourse reasons for the use of cataphoric structures; (iv) suggests that pronouns without recent antecedents are interpreted by a reader or listener's knowledge of the 'universe of discourse' (Lyons, 1977) and thereby challenges the distinction between endophora and exophora.

Chapter 3 examines person distinctions. Wales focuses on what may appear to be unusual choices of pronouns, but are in fact quite common in everyday discourse due to their special interpersonal connotations. Examples are third-person forms for direct address, such as 'Diddums! Did *he* hurt himself?' (p. 56) and second-person forms that do not include the speaker, except as an empathizer, such as the medical 'How are *we* today?' (p. 67). This chapter also explores the sociopolitical connotations of forms such as *one*, *them* and *us*, and *you* and *I*, and points out that *thou* is not quite as archaic as is usually thought. Many of the points that are made in this chapter are familiar from studies such as Mühlhäusler & Harré (1990), but Wales provides an analysis that focuses specifically on English and is supported by a rich body of corpus data (and many of Mühlhäusler & Harré's observations about English draw on Wales's earlier work anyway).

Chapter 4 is about case and argues for a levelling of subjective and objective distinctions in informal spoken and written English. Wales bases her analysis on an extremely thorough corpus exploration of a wide range of grammatical structures in a variety of discourse contexts. She also draws heavily on sociolinguistic observations of pronoun systems in regional British varieties, non-native 'Englishes', pidgins, and creoles to provide a broader than usual picture of case distinctions in English. Chapter 5 continues the sociopolitical theme of chapter 3, drawing on feminist linguistic research to provide a useful summary of the problem of generic *he*. Wales discusses the various alternatives and argues strongly for the use of 'singular' generic *they*. Chapter 6 is a probing exploration of personification and has implications for our understanding of the animateness hierarchy. Wales argues that personification is a more common, complex, and important phenomenon in everyday English than is usually recognized. Chapter 7 examines possessive and reflexive pronouns. This includes an original and interesting discussion of the '*your*+generic' structure (often '*your*+*average/usual*+generic') that is common in informal spoken English and particularly in written genres such as advertising and newspapers (e.g. 'Helen Mirren is not *your* usual TV star' (p. 181)).

The main feature of this book is its analysis of real rather than invented data.

Wales draws heavily on the Survey of English Usage (SEU) and the British section of the International Corpus of English (ICE-GB), subjecting these corpora to a systematic study. In addition, she supplements this corpus material with her own extensive collection of examples from the 1980s and early 1990s, examining a considerable amount of material from informal spoken and written texts. This material takes her beyond the usual territory of data used in grammatical analysis and enables her to challenge the traditional 'canon' of topics handled in grammar textbooks. The range of data is important in pronoun studies because informal spoken and written material provides a large quantity of data that does not conform to grammarians' prescriptions or to descriptive generalizations based primarily on formal written English. In addition, face-to-face dialogue needs to be examined to appreciate fully the interpersonal and sociopolitical aspects of pronoun use. Furthermore, informal speech and supposedly peripheral texts such as public signs provide examples which rely heavily on contextual and other types of shared knowledge for their interpretation, so have important implications for cognitive models of pronoun use and comprehension. Wales's examples will entertain and instruct the reader of the book, but they also serve an important purpose in terms of presenting a broad-based description of pronouns in English.

Wales's combination of detailed corpus analysis and native-speaker observation means that she is at her best when taking to pieces her own language variety, Standard British (English) English. She also considers other types of Standard English, such as American English, and her approach provides a method for others to analyse these varieties in more detail. In addition, she puts forward strong arguments for the grammatical study of nonstandard dialects. These are usually discussed in sociolinguistic studies, but Wales suggests that grammarians should also give these varieties due attention. This is a fair point since works such as Quirk et al.'s 'comprehensive' grammar are generally studies of Standard English rather than the language as a whole. In looking at regional dialects, Wales argues that their pronoun paradigms are of as much grammatical interest as those of other languages that are studied in great detail by language typologists. She also questions the dividing line between informal standard usage and nonstandard usage (designations used in many of Quirk et al.'s footnotes), arguing that this is a fuzzy area when actual data are examined carefully.

In addition to being of interest to researchers in the field, the book is usable in a wide range of teaching situations. Apart from its obvious use in grammar classes on pronouns, the book provides some interesting and detailed case studies of descriptive versus prescriptive grammar and the lucid summary of current discourse-oriented theories will provide a good introduction to this area. The chapters on sociopolitical aspects of pronoun use and on the generic pronoun issue are useful in critical linguistics classes. There is also material that is of interest to students of sociolinguistics, stylistics, and semantics. Much of the book addresses issues that are of relevance within Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Moreover, the overall approach provides a good illustration of corpus study in action. In view of the wide

applicability and the deliberately accessible presentation style, it is surprising that Cambridge University Press have published this book only as an expensive hardback monograph, rather than targeting the student market.

My overall assessment of this book is very positive. I have very few disagreements with the theoretical discussion or with Wales's analysis of her data. My only minor criticisms are in relation to presentation. In particular, I felt that the brief conclusion did not do justice to the rest of the book. This could have been used for a more substantial summary of the outcomes of her study and future possibilities of corpus study. It would also be useful to have a final evaluation of the implications of the current project for the writing of grammar books and dictionaries. In addition, the conclusion and chapter 2 could have given greater explicit indication of the fact that pronouns are a very active area of research and that Wales's approach reflects a general trend in grammatical analysis.³ I also felt that there was some tension between the book's data-based descriptive approach and its occasional attempts to function as a usage guide. In her preface (p. xiii), Wales expresses a wish that the book might be 'of use to those teachers who seek to instruct their pupils on this far from simple, yet fascinating, subject' and mentions the National Curriculum's statement that school-age children in England and Wales should be taught 'how pronouns ... should be used'. Later chapters of the book also repeatedly emphasize the point that the complexity of the language needs to be drawn to the attention of non-native students. Although Wales is undoubtedly right about the educational relevance of her work, these frequent assertions sometimes detract from the broad range of other potential applications. Moreover, although criticizing prescriptivism, Wales becomes somewhat prescriptive herself in advocating 'singular' generic *they* ('One variant I am personally very keen to promote in written (academic) discourse' (p. 125)). The problem here is that although corpus evidence can show that this form is increasingly being used, this gives little indication of the extreme reactions that it can trigger, particularly as its acceptability may vary from country to country.⁴ Overall, I felt that it would have been better to have kept this book as a descriptive study that gives the reader an indication of the potential applications but leaves application itself to other works. This study could then serve as a standard reference work and any usage guidance could be included in a book or books targeted specifically at the educational market.

In addition to these presentation points, I sometimes felt that the way that Wales was labelling research topics and researchers was unfortunate. I thought that she could have distinguished more clearly between different types of grammarians, rather than grouping them all together under a single heading. Her criticisms of

³ Wales's study reflects the growing interest in discourse anaphora and, more generally, the grammatical analysis of data collected from a wide range of discourse types.

⁴ Quirk et al. (1985: 770) suggest that this 'singular' generic *they* is 'increasingly accepted even in formal usage, especially in AmE'. From my own experience of using this form in Britain and America, I am not sure that this is the case. Clearly, there needs to be empirical as well as corpus examination of any national differences that exist.

grammarians are levelled specifically at textbook writers and formal linguists, but there are also many researchers who are currently developing models of grammar along the lines she advocates. The label 'grammarian' often seems to have negative connotations in the book and this does not help those who are seeking to redefine traditional notions of grammar. Moreover, in her discussion of anaphora, it seemed to me that she gave undue weight to the suggestion (by linguists such as Jones (1994)) that the term might be dispensed with: 'In some approaches to discourse processing, in fact, it is possible to dispense with the notion of anaphora virtually altogether; it is certainly now considerably demoted in significance' (p. 27). Few discourse analysts would disagree that traditional notions of anaphora need reworking, but an alternative (as Wales mentions in footnote 2.8) is to broaden the use of the term 'anaphora' to take account of new findings. Wales cites a fair amount of research which adopts this approach (e.g. Cornish, 1986, and Fox, 1987),⁵ so her comment about anaphora being 'now considerably demoted in significance' is somewhat surprising.⁶ This point may seem minor in relation to the book as a whole, but it is important for specialists in the field as the effect of abandoning the term would be to separate researchers from a large body of useful material that goes under this heading.

My overall assessment of this book is that it is a stimulating and scholarly publication. It is a broad-ranging and readable study that will be extremely useful to students and will also provide specialists with a rigorous corpus-based survey that contains many pointers to new research avenues.

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⁵ Jones's (1994) work seems to me to be very much in line with this work on discourse anaphora. His 'radical critique' is a re-evaluation of notions of formal anaphora (from a 'communication studies' perspective).

⁶ Also, in the period since Wales's book was published, there does not seem to have been any diminution in the work that uses a discourse-based approach but still adopts the term 'anaphora' (see, for example, Cornish, 1999, for a recent survey).

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Laura Michaelis, *Aspectual grammar and past-time reference* (Routledge Studies in Germanic Linguistics 4.) London: Routledge, 1998. Pp. xix + 296. £55, ISBN 0 415 15678 5.

Reviewed by Ilse Depraetere, University of Brussels

This is an intriguing book. Michaelis's aim is to determine 'the precise nature of aspectual meaning', to go into the 'grammatical embodiment of aspectual meaning' and to show how tense and aspect interact (p. 3). The perfect serves as test case.

One of the benefits of the book is that the author is not afraid to tilt at traditional strongholds, but takes a fresh approach and in doing so carefully builds up a well-explained framework which enables her to shed new light on (certain aspects of) the perfect. She does not try to squeeze sentences into neat categories (e.g. event or state), but rather shows how they can change categories depending on how they are used by the speaker. Although she is definitely not the first to point this out, she appears to be doing groundbreaking work when it comes to drawing the consequences of that observation. The result is a rather intricate but rich network of interrelated categories, and the skill and flexibility with which she handles them does credit to the author. Throughout the book, Michaelis devotes ample attention to existing analyses. She is familiar with a wide range of linguistic theories and approaches to tense and aspect, which are carefully assessed. Some of her observations are illustrated with French, Latin, and Spanish examples. As Michaelis covers wide ground, the limited scope of this review will not allow me to contribute much to the discussion; this is sad, for somehow this book really invites one to join in and opens up pathways to fruitful discussion. But rarely have I been so impatient to read on in a book of this type, which was rather like a detective story: I was eager to find out more about the author's views and to see how she applies the selected framework to the perfect.

In the first and the second chapters, Michaelis (re)defines aspectual meaning. In her opinion, three types are to be distinguished: viewpoint aspect (i.e. the event/state distinction, expression of attention to endpoints (p. 58)), situation aspect (*Aktions-art*, ontology of idealized situations (p. 58)) and phasal aspect (conversion

operations involving event and state classes/expression of speaker perspective (p. 58); such operators have the effect of mapping state predications into event predications (e.g. inceptive and terminative aspects) or vice versa (e.g. the progressive and the perfect)). At first sight, these labels, i.e. the apparently infelicitous equation of 'situation *aspect*' with 'Aktionsart' and the seemingly overlapping categories of viewpoint aspect and situation aspect, appear to be confusing. However, the author takes great pains to show why the three types are needed and how they are mutually dependent but conceptually different. Viewpoint aspect encompasses the perfective/imperfective distinction and is not directly encoded morphologically in English. Unlike many others, Michaelis refuses to apply the terms 'imperfectivity/perfectivity' straightforwardly to a language like English (e.g. by equating it with the progressive/nonprogressive). The state–event distinction is also the basic conceptual distinction associated with Aktionsart. However, the author argues that when used in connection with Aktionsart, the event–state distinction covers a different semantic load: it should be regarded as the 'default aspectual categorization' (p. 63), whereas viewpoint aspect relates to how the speaker represents a particular situation in a sentence (i.e. the operative definition accorded that situation in the context of a narrative (p. 63)). It is interesting to note the strong similarities between Michaelis's viewpoint aspect and Declerck's (1991) and Depraetere's (1995) category of (un)boundedness, although the latter authors refrain from using the terms 'event' and 'state' because the type of endpoint involved in the 'viewpoint aspect event' (e.g. *John was in the basement for 10 minutes*) appears to be of a different nature than the inherent endpoint present in the 'situation aspect event' (e.g. *I drew a picture of a cat*).

In chapter 3, Michaelis carefully reviews existing analyses of the semantics of the perfect and in particular Klein's compositional approach to the perfect system, according to which the meaning of the perfect forms is the sum of the contributions by the tense auxiliary in question and the anteriority relation expressed by the participle. She demonstrates its shortcomings (pp. 107, 115–19) and chooses to analyse the perfect within the framework of Construction Grammar (Fillmore et al., 1988; Fillmore & Kay, 1991; Goldberg, 1995; Lambrecht, 1994; Michaelis & Lambrecht, 1996). On this approach, the English perfect system is a network of interconnected information structures, i.e. pairings of meaning and form. There is an abstract perfect construction that is connected with three temporally inflected perfect constructions through so-called inheritance links. Some inherited specifications may be canceled or augmented by construction-specific constraints, i.e. constraints associated with the dominated construction. The semantic value of the 'general perfect' is that it consists of an anteriority relation whose reference point is temporally underspecified. Another common element of meaning is that all perfect types refer to a state of aftermath following the occurrence of some event. According to Michaelis, one characteristic of the general construction is that it does not allow event time to be expressed by means of a deictic time adverbial (**Harry has left the country yesterday*, [*I heard that *(Harry had left the country) two years ago*], p. 135).

However, it is only the present perfect and the past perfect and not the future perfect that are subject to this constraint. In other words, the inherited specification is canceled as the future perfect combines with a deictic time adverbial (*Harry will have bought some flowers yesterday* (p. 136)). Michaelis argues this is because the ‘anteriority relation which the future perfect denotes does not entail pastness with respect to speech time’ (p. 136). However, in examples like *The police will believe he killed her when he had returned from the meeting* (when planning a murder, for instance), the past perfect does not refer to a situation that is anterior to speech time and still it does not allow the use of deictic time adverbials (**The police will believe he killed her when he had returned from the meeting tomorrow*). A similar observation also applies to the use of the present perfect (possible future time reference of the situation in the *that*-clause in *She will lie to him and tell him she has burnt the letter (*tomorrow)*).

In chapter 4, Michaelis discusses the properties of three types of perfect (the past perfect (4.1), the present perfect (4.2) and the nonfinite perfect (4.3)), while chapter 4 is focused on the three meanings of the perfect resultative (*The police have arrested the men responsible*, p. 115), existential (*Harry has visited twice this week*, p. 115), and continuative (*The store’s been there for years*, p. 115). The distinct readings associated with the present perfect are distinct grammatical constructions, i.e. different conventionalized pairings of meaning and form, and are subject to a number of grammatical and semantic constraints. The same can be said about the future perfect and the past perfect, but there are fewer constraints that apply to these constructions.

The discussion of the past perfect includes a section dealing with its use in counterfactual conditionals and after *wish*. The author argues that this form always has past-time reference, which appears to be contradicted by examples of the type *If you had known logic, you would be able to solve this problem*. In a footnote she mentions similar examples given in Declerck (1991), but all the same maintains that the time reference of the past perfect is past.

The author argues convincingly (pp. 160–3 and in chapter 5) that the present perfect is an ambiguous aspectual form, i.e. the resultative perfect, the existential perfect, and the continuative perfect ‘have distinct grammatical, semantic and discourse-pragmatic properties’ (p. 153) and are not pragmatic variables over uses. The evidence advanced is that the resultative present perfect cannot be used to ‘(a) provide further information about a pragmatically presupposed event, (b) anchor the event in time by means of a temporal adverb, (c) assert the occurrence of an event complex or “plural event” (Bach, 1986), and (d) specify the manner in which the action was performed’ (pp. 215–16). The fact that the resultative present perfect has distinct grammatical features proves that it constitutes conventional meaning rather than a contextually derived meaning. The section dealing with the present perfect also includes an interesting discussion of the restrictions on the combination of different types of time adverbial with this form. They partly result from constraints imposed by the general perfect and partly arise from interpretive

constraints imposed by the different present perfect constructions themselves. In section 4.2.3 Michaelis goes into usages of the present perfect that do not have the moment of speaking as reference time (e.g. *Whenever I call Dayna, she has gone to some exotic locale; Eastwood plays a retired gunslinger, still fighting the demons of his past even after he has become a family man; If you find on Monday that you haven't improved, you can call a doctor* (p. 189)).

A point of criticism that might be raised is that, when discussing certain aspects of meaning of the present perfect, Michaelis does not pay sufficient attention to similar and related remarks that have been made in e.g. Fenn (1987), Declerck (1991), Inoue (1975), Matthews (1987), Meyer (1992), Guenther (1977).

This is a wonderful book. It is dense, well-augmented and thought-provocative. Other publications by L. A. Michaelis are eagerly awaited.

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