Book reviews

Terry Crowley: *Serial Verbs in Oceanic: A Descriptive Typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. xvii + 281 pp. Hardback ISBN 0198241356 £. 55.00.

The phenomenon of so-called serial verbs was first described for African languages. In his grammar of Ewe (published in German in 1907), for example, Westermann (1930) pointed out:

> (...) a peculiarity of Ewe is that we often find a row of verbs one after the other. The chief features of this are that all the verbs stand next to each other without being connected ... In English these consecutive verbs are partly rendered by composite sentences. But very often several Ewe verbs may be expressed by a single verb in English. The explanation for this is that the Ewe people describe every detail of action or happening from beginning to end, and each detail has to be expressed by a special verb: they dissect every happening and present it in its several parts, whereas in English we seize on the leading event and express it by a verb, while subordinate events are either not considered or are rendered by means of a preposition, adverb, conjunction, or a prefix on the verb (Westermann 1930: 126).

In 1914, Hugo Schuchardt noted similarities with respect to these verb constructions between Ewe on the one hand, and Suriname Creole on the other. So far, most research on serial verbs and serial verb constructions (henceforth abbreviated as SVC) has been done on African languages and on pidgins and creoles; however, SVCs are also to be found in Hmong-Mien, Mon-Khmer, Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, Papuan, Austronesian, Semitic, and Central-American languages as well as in Japanese. The honor of being the first to describe the presence of more than one verb within a sentence for an Austronesian language — namely Jabêm — is due to Otto Dempwolff (1939). However, so far there are only a few studies on SVCs in Austronesian languages, although the information available on this phenomenon is slowly but gradually growing. Thus, all the grammar

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sketches presented in the volume *The Oceanic Languages* (Lynch et al. 2002) have a section on verb serialization. And Terry Crowley's long awaited monograph on serial verbs in Oceanic now constitutes an important landmark for all future research on this topic not only within Oceanic, but also within Austronesian languages in general. In his book, Crowley documents the range of SVCs in Oceanic languages and examines the structural feature of serial verbs not only from a synchronic perspective, but also diachronically.

After the table of contents, a list of tables, the preface, a list of abbreviations, and the conventions in citing vernacular forms, the first chapter of the book deals with "Linguistic Typology and Serial Verbs" (pp. 1–23). This chapter presents a brief but critical discussion of typology as a linguistic subdiscipline and then introduces the topic of the book: serial verbs. Crowley emphasizes that "it may in fact be wishful thinking to assume that we can come up with a universally applicable definition of verb serialization" (p. 18). Nevertheless, he follows Bradshaw (1982: 28) in explixcitly recognizing as serial verbs, in Oceanic languages, those constructions involving two (or more) verbs which share the following basic features:

- there are tight restrictions on the nominal arguments associated with each verb;
- there is no contrast in the basic inflectional categories of serialized verbs;
- there is no grammatical or intonational marking of clause boundaries between the verbs (p. 19).

After this definition, the author shows how difficult it is to quantify serialization in various languages. Compared to Papuan (i.e. non-Austronesian) languages of Papua New Guinea with pervasive serialization and Australian Aboriginal languages with no or minimal serialization, Oceanic languages "seem to fall somewhere between these extremes" (p. 21). This introductory chapter ends with a brief overview of observations that have been made about the grammaticalization of serial verbs in various languages.

Chapter 2 deals with "Oceanic Languages, Serial Verbs, and Linguistic Descriptions" (pp. 24–53). After pointing out the immense geographcial spread of Oceanic languages and the huge amount of typological diversity within this subgroup of the Austronesian language family, the chapter presents a typological overview of Oceanic languages and an excellent typology of serial verbs in these languages. However, so far we lack adequate descriptions of many languages that belong to this subgroup. Therefore, Crowley emphasizes that "much of what is said in this volume

should be regarded as tentative" (p. 47). Nevertheless, he also points out that the "primary purpose ... of my contribution in this volume is ... to offer data which can be chewed over by different people from a variety of theoretical perspectives" (p. 48). The chapter ends with a brief history of research on SVCs in Oceanic languages and a concise summary of some of the problems encountered in recognizing and adequately describing serial verbs in these languages.

The third chapter provides a detailed discussion of "Paamese Serial Verbs" (pp. 54–124). After differentiating serialization from both coordination and subordination, Crowley first presents the various patterns of core-layer serialization to be found in this language spoken on the island of Paama in the Republic of Vanuatu. He then differentiates not only core-layer serialization from nuclear-layer serialization, but also serialization from compounding and describes the patterns of nuclear serialization in Paamese and their productivity. The chapter ends with a description of multiple serialization and a highly interesting and stimulating discussion of the fuzzy edges of serial verbs in Paamese. Crowley emphasizes that the chapter "should be taken as a basis for comparison with synchronic patterns described for other Oceanic languages" (p. 54) — this is done in Chapter 4. Moreover, he states that Chapter 3 "can also be taken as a basis for an examination of the diachronic aspects of the phenomenon in the Oceanic subgroup in general" (p. 54) — this is done in Chapter 5 — "as well as in the development of serial verb constructions in Melanesian Pidgin" (p. 54) — this is done in Chapter 6.

Chapter 4 deals with "The Distribution and Evolution of Oceanic Serial Verbs" (pp. 125–168). The chapter provides "additional data from a number of languages belonging to the major higher-level subgroups within Oceanic with a view to providing the kind of data that are needed for syntactic comparison and any resulting grammatical reconstruction to be made in the area of verb serialization" (p. 125). The following subgroups and languages are represented:

- Loniu as a representative of the Admiralities languages;
- Nalik, Tigak, Nakanai, Saliba, Tawala, Mangap-Mbula, Manam, and Numbami as representatives of Western Oceanic languages;
- Kwaio and Lewo as representatives of Central and Eastern Oceanic languages; and
- Mussau as a representative of the St. Mathias languages.

The chapter ends with discussing the question of how the constructions presented in Chapters 3 and 4 "may have acquired their current distribution and what sorts of patterns may have been present in Proto Oceanic" (p. 169).

The fifth chapter deals with "The Dissolution of Oceanic Serial Verbs" (pp. 169–214). Terry Crowley examines in detail

> the range of structural outcomes that we find for particular kinds of serial verb constructions in Oceanic languages, describing the various structural homologues of serial verb constructions which appear to represent the results of various kinds of structural reanalysis of earlier serial verbs (p. 169).

After presenting evidence for typological dissonance in Oceanic languages with respect to serial verbs, the chapter discusses grammaticalization processes of serial verbs and echo verb constructions (i.e. a kind of "anti-switch reference" system). This chapter convincingly demonstrates that serial verbs have been open to all kinds of reanalysis in Oceanic languages.

Chapter 6, "Oceanic Serial Verbs and Melanesian Pidgin" (pp. 215–254), examines "the possible influence of substrate patterns in the development of serial verb constructions in Melanesian Pidgin" (p. 218). This examination is based on an excellent description of the various structural patterns to be found in the three national varieties of Melanesian Pidgin, namely Bislama (spoken in Vanuatu), Solomons Pijin (spoken on the Solomon Islands), and Tok Pisin (spoken in Papua New Guinea). This interesting chapter ends with a description of grammaticalization processes involving serial verbs in Melanesian Pidgin and with a brief discussion of the question whether we can observe universal factors in the formation of patterns of serialization in pidgins and creoles.

The seventh and last chapter of this monograph, "Oceanic Serial Verbs and the Broader Context" (pp. 255–267), raises a number of more general issues with respect to serial verbs and linguistic typology, especially whether SVCs represent some kind of substantive linguistic universal and whether there is a correlation between adpositional poverty and serial verb richness, between inflectional morphology and serialization, and between complex sentence constructions and serialization. Moreover, it also discusses cognitive implications of SVCs and the relevance of serial verbs for linguistic theory in general.

The monograph ends with the list of references (pp. 268–275) and a very helpful index (although one wonders why the author did not include an entry for the "head-tail linkage" pattern (cf. p. 69) here).

The book is clearly structured and relatively easy to read. The linguistic phenomena presented are extremely well illustrated with excellent examples — indeed, Terry Crowley provides the reader with a bonanza of interesting data. There are only a few typos (e.g. p. 65, second line, read: "heilela keke houm" for "he-ilela keke ho-um;" p. 138, gloss of first example, read: "We stayed until the afternoon" for "I stayed until the af-

ternoon;" p. 193, Table 5.9, read: "habitual" for "abitual;" p. 194, read: "5" for "(5)"); not all the sources quoted are in the list of references (e.g. Crowley [1998] referred to on p. 179), and the author does not explain that the sign "*" is not only used to mark a sentence as ungrammatical, but also to indicate that a certain form marked in such a way — like, for example, "*pulu" (p. 102) — has to be understood as a reconstructed Proto language form. However, all this criticism is carping. What is somewhat annoying, however, is the fact that words, expressions and sentences that are quoted from Oceanic languages are not differentiated by font type. It would have been more reader-friendly to print a clause like, for example, "when faced with forms such as ras 'unable'" (p. 49) as "when faced with forms such as *ras* 'unable.'"

In general, this excellent book is a must for every Oceanist, for every Austronesianist, and for every typologist and comparativist interested in SVCs. Terry Crowley has written a monograph that will be central and basic for all future research on SVCs especially in Oceanic but also in other languages in which this phenomenon can be observed. It certainly will "encourage descriptive linguists, as far as possible, to provide detailed accounts of the surface facts of serial verb constructions" (p. 267).

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Elisabeth Leiss: *Artikel und Aspekt. Die grammatischen Muster von Definitheit*. Studia Linguistica Germanica 55. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000. 309 pp. ISBN 3110167182.

In her study on the development of the definite article in Germanic, Elisabeth Leiss argues that definiteness and aspect are two instantiations

of one and the same linguistic category. While many other investigations of definiteness intend to describe all instances of the definite article (cf. Lyons 1999), Leiss takes the viewpoint of a language without an article, like Russian, which on the other side has an elaborated system of aspect. From this observation, she formulates her main hypothesis:

> Aspekt und Artikel sind Realisierungen ein und derselben grammatischen Funktion. . . . Man könnte diese Funktion wortartenneutral als die grammatische Kategorie Totalität/Nichttotalität bezeichnen [aspect and article are realizations of one and the same grammatical function. . . . This function might be word class neutrally called the grammatical category of totality/nontotality] (p. 14).

Leiss argues from the detailed analysis of Old Norse, Gothic and Old High German. She describes stages of these languages where the aspect system was dissolving and, at the same time, first occurrences of the definite article can be accounted for. After the detailed studies of these languages, Leiss makes some more general points about typology and the acquisition of the definite article, and finally suggests a uniform semantics of the definite article and aspect. The book is divided into eight chapters.

Chapter 1, "Die verborgenen 'Gewänder' einer Kategorie" [The hidden guises of a category] (pp. 1–32), presents her basic assumption about grammar and linguistic theory. Leiss works in a functional framework and assumes three main strategies of marking linguistic categories: (i) an invisible, (ii) a visible, and (iii) a badly visible (or complex) grammar ("unsichtbare, sichtbare und schwer sichtbare Grammatik" [p. 4]). Invisible grammar or marking is characterized by the absence of morphosyntactic means, but follows rather more general principles of information structure or thematic structure. According to the general thematic structure of a sentence, the theme creates an environment typically for definite expressions, while the rheme creates a domain of indefiniteness. Visible marking is characterized by functional morphemes, while complex marking means that certain grammatical functions are expressed by a combination of the invisible and the visible strategy. Definiteness is such a case, since it was expressed in Germanic by two categories: case and verbal aspect. Only the deterioration of these categories gave way for developing the definite article. Leiss ends the first chapter giving a list of research questions and a summary of the following chapters.

Chapter 2, "Die Entstehung des bestimmten Artikels im Altisländischen" [The development of the definite article in Old Icelandic] (pp. 33–72), demonstrates from the detailed analysis of some Old Icelandic texts the interaction between aspect and the definite article which developed from a possessive form. This form is first found in the rhematic part of the sen-

tence in order to mark definite expressions in an assumed "indefinite" domain. Contrary to the view that the occurrence of the article in Old Icelandic or Old Norse is arbitrary, Leiss shows some regularities of the article and compares the situation with that in Modern Norwegian, where we find articles all over the place (like in English and German). Thus, she distinguishes between underdetermination and overdetermination of definiteness ("Hypodetermination vs. Hyperdetermination" [p. 69]). Underdetermination only marks definite expressions by an article if there are no other means available — this leads to a sparse use of the article. Overdetermination marks definite expressions even if their definiteness is already given (by information structure, case, or by their semantic nature). Leiss argues that in languages with overdetermination, the function of the definite article is not clear since it is often "vacuous." It is underdetermination which expresses the real function of definiteness. Chapter 3, "Artikel und Aspekt im Altisländischen" [Article and aspect in Old Icelandic] (pp. 73–113), investigates the correlation between the "historic present tense" in Old Icelandic and the definite article. The historic present tense is analyzed as a perfective aspect form for foregrounding. Leiss then postulates a three step development: first, the historic present tense functions as foregrounding information, while no definite article is used. Second, both historic present tense and definite article co-occur and both have the same function of foregrounding, and third, only the article is used, while the historic present tense disappears. Thus, she concludes that "der Artikel ersetzt Aspekt" [the article substitutes aspect] (p. 81). In the remainder of the chapter, Leiss discusses the verb first position of the verb as an "invisible" marking of the aspect. She summarizes the development in Old Norse: in the first stage, the verb expresses aspect by prefixes as aspectual markers — no definite article is available. In the second stage, the prefixes are lost and different strategies to express aspect are applied, including verb first, historic present tense, and the use of the definite article. In the third stage, the use of the definite article is the main means to express the underlying semantic contrast on the noun — thus the marking of aspect becomes invisible.

Chapter 4, "Artikel und Aspekt im Gotischen" [Article and aspect in Gothic] (pp. 114–155), and Chapter 5, "Artikel and Aspekt im Althochdeutschen" [Article and aspect in Old High German] (pp. 156–197), are devoted to the development of the definite article in these two Old Germanic languages. Gothic is like Old Norse in using the definite article only for definite expressions in the rhematic part of the sentence. Old High German, however, primarily uses the definite article for definite expressions in the thematic part indicating their anaphoric potential. This led, according to Leiss, to the overdetermination of Modern German,

where the definite article is used all over the place. All three languages show a close interrelation between the loss of aspect and the rise of the definite article. For Old High German, Leiss describes three independent systems to express definiteness: (i) the anaphoric article system, (ii) the individualizing article, and (iii) the verbal definiteness system which correlates a perfective verb with a definite object and an imperfective verb with an indefinite object. This raises the question of what the definition of definiteness looks like. Before she discusses a feasible definition of definiteness, she first presents some typological observations in Chapter 6 "Artikel and Aspekt aus sprachtypologischer Perspektive" [Article and aspect from a typological perspective] (pp. 198–238). Unfortunately, it is not possible to give a comprehensive picture of the discussion of definiteness in only one chapter (cf. Lyons 1999). In one subsection, Leiss makes an interesting hypothesis: once the semantic content of the definite article in overdetermining languages is bleached, aspectual markers come back. She illustrates this prediction with some observations from the use of articles in light verb construction in German (Funktionsverbgefüge). Finally, she describes two language types with respect to their encoding of the general category of definiteness: type A(spect), where nominal determination is less marked than verbal determination, and type B(estimmtheit) [definiteness], where the opposite holds.

Chapter 7, "Unifikation von Artikel and Aspekt" [Unification of article and aspect] (pp. 239–274), presents the long awaited theory of the general category of definiteness in the nominal as well as in the verbal domain. Throughout the book, several hints and suggestion had already appeared, but without a clear definition of what definiteness is like. Obviously, Leiss rejects the familiarity theory of discourse semantics as well as Hawkins' inclusiveness theory, the favorite theory of functionalists. She refers to Verkuyl and others, who attempt to unify a semantics of aspect and mass noun vs. count nouns, and extends this to definiteness. However, Leiss is not very explicit about an operationable definition, but gives a rather general characterization: "definiter Artikel und perfektiver Aspekt haben die Funktion zu signalisieren, daß ein Klassenbegriff zu einem Eigennamen aufgebaut werden soll" [the definite article and perfective aspect signal that a class term should be constructed as proper name] (p. 253), and "prototypischer Artikel: Signalisierung, daß ein TYPE in ein TOKEN transformiert wird" [prototypical article: marks that a type is transformed into a token] (p. 258). This seems to be a very traditional concept of definiteness, which for example can be found in the traditional Duden (Grebe 1966). It is correct that expressions with the article are individualized and referring to particular items. However, this referentiality is not only a property of the definite article but also of the indefinite arti-

cle. Thus, the definition fails to explain the difference between the definite and indefinite article.

Chapter 8, "Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse und Ausblick" [Summary of the results and prospects] (pp. 275–283), gives a short summary of the volume and presents open research questions. The books ends with references, a person index, and an extensive subject and language index. The great value of the book is its detailed discussion and analyses of selected linguistic material. Leiss extensively comments on the examples and succeeds in giving us some "feeling" about the grammatical structure of such examples. Unfortunately, she is not always very exact in her terminology and often tries to fit too much material into her main thesis. In spite of these shortcomings, the book is a very original contribution to the discussion of the nature of definiteness and will certainly initiate more discussion on these issues.

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Siobhan Chapman: *Philosophy for Linguists: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 192 pp. Hardback ISBN 0415206588, Paperback ISBN 0415206596.

Chapman has written a book for linguistics students to provide them with the necessary philosophical background for many aspects of linguistic theory and methodology. The book follows a rather traditional and widely accepted canon and is organized with a short introduction and five chapters. All chapters are organized in the same way: after a short and intuitive introduction into the problems, different philosophers or philosophical schools are presented and related to linguistic ideas or concepts. A short description of the life and the main works of a philosopher is often provided. Each chapter ends with an evaluation of those ideas in linguistics and with suggestions for further readings.

The introduction (pp. 1–7) describes the relation between philosophy and linguistics as follows:

> It's not surprising that there is so much philosophy in linguistics. Linguistics itself is a fairly recent academic discipline, but much of our current thinking about language has developed from ideas which date from the decades and centuries before it came into being (p. 1).

This is, of course, somewhat generalized. While it correctly describes the situation in compositional semantics and pragmatics, it misses that linguistics itself has a very long tradition (reaching back to classical times in Europe and India). Furthermore, linguistics has developed its own paradigms such as structuralism, which then has influenced other disciplines including philosophy (see Peregrin 2001 for a comprehensive discussion of the role of linguistic structuralism in analytic philosophy). The book concentrates on the philosophical background of semantic and pragmatic theories and models.

Chapter 1, "Words and things" (pp. 8–40), discusses different theories about the nature of "meaning" and presents the two opposing views of a "direct reference account" vs. the "ideational account." In many cases, the two aspects are involved when we use words to refer to things. While the direct reference theory accounts for the way simple names and terms refer, the ideational view covers cases in which the descriptive content of complex expressions delimits the domain of potential referents. Chapman presents a brief and informative summary of philosophers that discussed theories of meaning. Starting with Plato and Aristotle, both in favor of an ideational account, she then summarizes some ideas of the British Empiricists — still in the ideational account. Only Leibniz argued against Locke, and developed a direct reference account, which then was further elaborated by Mill. Frege approached some problems of the direct reference approach by introducing two aspects of meaning: *sense* and *reference* — a distinction which Carnap dubbed *intension* vs. *extension* (Carnap is only mentioned in Chapter 2 for the first time). The contrast between these two aspects is discussed with reference to opaque contexts ("Pip believes ...") and then embedded into a discussion of definite description by Russell. Finally, Kripke and the concept of "rigid designation" is presented. The chapter ends with some open questions on "words and things in linguistics." While the chapter provides much information and gives an informative survey on basic concepts, the really intriguing question of the nature of reference is left open.

Chapter 2, "Propositions and logic" (pp. 42–71), focuses on the meaning of sentences (or utterances), that is, on propositions. Like words or phrases, sentences have different kinds of meaning: an extensional meaning, which is a truth value, and an intensional meaning, which is much more complex (Frege called it *Gedanke* "thought"). The reminder

of the chapter discusses relations between propositions in the former aspect, which can be formally described by propositional logic. Propositional logic basically defines the syntactic and semantic rules of combining propositions to more complex propositions by negation, conjunction, disjunction, and condition. Chapman manages to motivate the truth functional definition of the conditional, and she also mentions the difference of the linguistic expression "if" which generally assumes relations between the content of the connected sentences. She then gives a very brief overview of predicate logic and the use of quantifiers, without discussing any more general implication of such a logic. Chapman rather concentrates on "entailment and presupposition," two very important issues in logic and linguistics. She comes back to the discussion of Russell's theory of descriptions in terms of the contrast between a uniqueness entailment (Russell) and a uniqueness presupposition (Strawson). She elaborates on Strawson's view of presupposition and embeds Grice's idea in the same tradition. The final section, "Logic and Linguistics," and the suggested readings intend to give some recent developments. Unfortunately, there are only two bibliographical references after 1983.

Chapter 3, "Truth and reality" (pp. 72–105), discusses different theories of truth and the relation between the concept of truth and reality. While Aristotle's definition of truth in his *Categoriae* is basically a correspondence theory of truth (a sentence is true if its content can be matched to the facts of the world), it was only Wittgenstein, who formulated this in the well-known sentence 4.024: "to understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true" (p. 72). Chapman first lays the ground for discussing different theories of truth by introducing us to Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic sentences on the one hand, and between *a priori* and *a posteriori* judgements on the other. Leaving out Neo-Kantianism, she continues with the problem of verification discussed by the Vienna Circle and other associated logical positivists, in particular Carnap, who wrote his *Logical Syntax of Language* in 1937 in order to eliminate metaphysical questions by showing that those questions are linguistically (and therefore logically) not well-formed. Chapman discusses Tarski's schema T for defining truth and Davidson's reformulation in terms of *satisfaction*. Then, Kripke's concepts of possible worlds and contrafactual worlds are introduced and discussed. Finally, the motivation for Montague Grammar is presented and one long quotation from Montague is given concluding with a very short discussion on the differences between philosophical and linguistics semantics. These two final subsections do not seem to fit in this chapter — they would have been better suited into the discussion of logical vs. grammatical form in the preceding Chapter 2.

Chapter 4, "Speakers and hearers" (pp. 106–143), gives the basic philosophical assumptions for a theory of pragmatics. Linguistic expressions are not understood as referring by themselves, but they are used by speakers in order to refer to objects. Starting with the work of Wittgenstein and the Ordinary Language School at Oxford, Chapman sketches the basic philosophical insights that lead to the linguistic work of Austin and Searle on speech acts. Before she continues with the expected theory of implicature of Grice, Chapman inserts a short subsection on "meaning and intention," where she presents Saussure's ideas on arbitrary signs. While this is one of the central ideas of linguistics in the 20th century and of Structuralims in general, I found it not well motivated to introduce it in the context of speech acts and conversational maxims, which are discussed in the next subsection. The final section of this chapter is devoted to the delimitation of pragmatics from semantics. Chapman concludes that pragmatics is developing into a proper linguistic discipline: "perhaps the most significant new work in this area since 'Logic and Conversation' has been the development of 'Relevance Theory' by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, and others" (p. 139). Again, Chapman fails to discuss more recent literature on pragmatics, in particular more formal approaches to it.

Chapter 5, "Language and mind" (pp. 144–172), discusses a more general issue in linguistics, namely whether linguistic competence is innate or acquired. This is a discussion that goes back to Plato's dialog Kratylos. Chapman discusses Saussure's theory of signs and concludes: "language for Saussure, then, is a mental structure. That is only part of his definition. No account of language is complete, he argues, without reference to the social function in a society" (p. 147). I would agree with Chapman if *mental structure* means *linguistic structure*. She continues to discuss the question of linguistic determinism (or rather relativism); and then the empiricism of Bloomfield and Quine, which are closely connected with behaviorism. It is this philosophical environment in which Chomsky reintroduces the innateness theory of language, which opposes both empirism and behaviorism. Based on this criticism, Chomsky formulates the hypothesis of the *language faculty*, which leads to one of the most productive research projects in the recent history of linguistics (a point which is not valued by Chapman). Chapman concludes that linguistics has gained from other disciplines as well: "as we have seen, work which proved important in the development of linguistics came not just from philosophy, but also from psychology, anthropology and other disciplines" (p. 169). The book ends with a very helpful glossary, notes, references, and an index.

Despite minor shortcomings, Chapman succeeds in writing an accessible introduction to the philosophical foundations of linguistics. One can

only hope that more linguists will read this book and understand more complex linguistic theories by embedding them into the general philosophical or epistemological discussion.

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Reference

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William Croft: *Explaining Language Change. An Evolutionary Approach*. London: Longman, 2000. 304 pp. Hardback ISBN 0582356784.

The back cover of this book claims it to be "the first thoroughly worked out framework for language evolution" and to advance "new ideas about grammatical reanalysis, conventional and non-conventional use of language, the structure of speech communities, language mixing, and the notion of 'progress in language change.'" This review will try to see how it measures up to these claims.

In the book, Croft adopts a general theory of selection drawing on work by Dawkins (1976) and Hull (1988) in biology and philosophy of science. The basics of his utterance-based theory of language change are as follows:

(1) utterances are the only observable entities in linguistics; altered replication of utterances may lead to language change;
(2) language change consists of two distinct processes — *innovation* and *propagation*. Innovation is the creation of novel forms in the language, propagation is a selection mechanism of novel forms; propagation is generally overlooked by current approaches to language change, whereas sociohistorical linguistics often lacks mechanisms for innovation;
(3) the mechanism for innovation is *functional*, whereas the mechanism for propagation is *social*;
(4) the traditional distinction between internal and external sources of language change is to be blurred: "all speakers command multiple varieties or codes, and thus some of the mechanisms for internal sources of change are the same as those for external sources of change" (p. 8).

Statements (1), (2), and (4) are rather uncontroversial, and each historical linguist would subscribe to them without reservation. Statement (3) distinguishes Croft's approach from fans of the invisible-hand principle (cf. Keller 1994), according to whom the action of individual speakers is the cause of language change, and from advocates of functional explanations of language change (e.g. Haspelmath 1999a). According to the latter approaches, in language change

> variants are created from which speakers may choose. Being subject to various constraints on language use, speakers tend to choose those variants *that suit them best*. These variants then become increasingly frequent and entrenched in speakers' minds, and at some point they may become obligatory parts of grammar. In this way grammars come to be adapted to speakers' needs, *although speakers cannot shape language actively and voluntarily* ... Diachronic adaptation in language is in many ways analogous to adaptation in biological change (Haspelmath 1999a: 203–204, my emphasis).

These approaches are rooted in the functional-typological tradition (although Haspelmath 1999a successfully shows that a fruitful synthesis of functionalist theories and optimality theory is possible). The main contribution of this functional-typological tradition to language change is that (i) "the positive 'adaptive' value of more optimal outputs leads to them being selected (i.e. produced) by speakers at a greater frequency over less optimal outputs" (Croft 1999: 206–207) and that (ii) there are constraints on the directionality of change. These constraints mainly have to do with functional motivations: some changes are phonetically more likely than others; morphosyntactic change is from concrete to abstract domains (from space to time [Haspelmath 1997]), and mostly unidirectional (Haspelmath 1999b); when a grammatical construction grammaticalizes, the behavioral properties change before the coding properties of the construction (Haspelmath 1999c).

Croft partly disagrees with this evolutionary model for language change. He admits that functional principles are indeed mechanisms for *altered replication*, that is, for *innovation*, but they *do not play a role in selection*. This is so because "not all language changes are in the 'adaptive' direction," and adaptive language changes are not universally natural, but rather "natural for only certain types of societies, for social reasons" (Croft 1999: 208).

Of course, cases of changes running counter to expectations — and, interestingly, cases in which an isolated speech community is relatively resistant to change — are well-attested in sociolinguistics and dialectology (e.g. Trudgill 1989, 1992; cf. also Tuttle 1997), and a social explanation is to be invoked in these cases. But if, as it seems plausible, "adap-

tive" changes outnumber nonadaptive changes, there is something to explain. According to Croft, "if functional constraints operate to determine the frequency of innovations, and the novel variants undergo social selection, then *the end result is going to be a preponderance of optimal variants in the long run*" (Croft 1999: 207, my emphasis). Thus, a speaker does not produce "one linguistic variant in preference to another because of its linguistic properties;" rather, she "identifies herself with a community or a subset of a community and that causes her to produce one linguistic variant in preference to another" (p. 178).

In the light of the statements above, the elaboration of this theory, presented in Chapters 2 to 8, is somewhat disappointing. Not only is there no far-reaching account of propagation as a social phenomenon, but the discussion throughout the book is conducted at a rather general level and the case studies are analyzed too sketchily. Nor can it be said that Croft presents a complete, sociohistorically well-rooted account of what social motivations boil down to: the model presented in Chapter 7 looks more like a synthesis of proposals advanced by sociolinguists than an original, overarching framework able to account for the propagation of linguistic changes. Social explanation, as Croft puts it, is a fuzzy notion invoking processes such as entrenchment, the creation of a new norm, the shift in prestige (p. 181), the desire of a speaker to identify with one social group over another (act of identity; p. 181), but there is little exemplification of how these processes work in actual instances of change. The result is that, in many cases, the reader is left wondering where the relevant social aspects of language change are to be looked for. Thus, one will not gain from reading this book any new arguments in favor of a social theory of propagation.

A minor frustration I occasionally felt was compounded by the fact that Croft's argumentation lacks any serious discussion of the limits of historical sociolinguistics. Any theory of language change should not ignore the debate in this field (e.g. Jahr 1999). In traditional Indo-European linguistics, for instance, we can rarely (if ever) capture the social values connected with linguistic variables and responsible for the final outcome of a process of change. Thus, social explanation in this area is rather difficult, if possible at all. In many cases, little is known about the social forces operating to produce language change in the past. The proper assignment of linguistic variants may be relatively simple in some cases (e.g. it is possible to identify a regional variant if the provenience of the textual material is beyond doubt, cf. Winter [1999: 72]), but what remains to be determined are the conditions under which a speaker resorts to one variety, and the material is often scanty to permit generalizations, so that it becomes very difficult to correlate variation with social diversity:

> For times past we have to note that an identification of a linguistic variety as a sociolect as a rule will be possible only if sufficient extralinguistic evidence is available about groups within an overall speech community so that a mapping of a linguistically defined variety onto an extralinguistically determined group becomes feasible. The moment extralinguistic data become marginal or fade out altogether, at best an appeal to common-sense reasoning remains, and the odds that this will lead to convincing results seem very poor indeed ... It is typical for periods of the more remote past that a continuum of extralinguistic information is replaced by mere patchwork, and that the amount and diversity of textual data decreases. Hence a more than anecdotal sociolinguistic interpretation of linguistic data of a remote past is beset with near-insurmountable difficulties (Winter 1999: 78–79).

Even if we are unwilling to adhere to such a pessimistic conclusion, what is surprising in Croft's argumentation is the lack of a serious discussion of these issues. This is more so if we consider that, in certain cases, we are able to identify clearly the functional motivation which led to the reorganization of linguistic categories, both in the history of a language (see, for instance, Andersen 1990 on the reorganization of Polish verbal categories; Lazzeroni 1997 on the reorganization of nominal endings in Vedic; cf. also Andersen 2001) and in the passage from Indo-European to ancient Indo-European languages. In the aforementioned studies, the notion of drift is consistently invoked as involving many "long-term developments, often comprising numerous distinct changes which share a common direction and apparently have the same degree of mutual coherence and the same unity of rationale as individual changes, but are played out over considerable spans of time" (Andersen 1990: 1). In Chapter 1, Croft dismisses the notion of "drift" (Sapir 1921) as a typical case of reification/hypostatisation of a language, "as if language change is an inherent change applying to an abstract system" (p. 4). This claim lines up with the claim that propagation is essentially (if not exclusively) a social process. Croft seems somewhat unfair when he ignores that Sapir's concept of drift has been refined by modern linguistic thought and applied successfully to language change, and that the modern concept of *drift* is nothing more than an entrenched metaphor which does not suffer from reification "taken to excess." Instead, "drift" phenomena show that also propagation (i.e., the eventual perpetuation of an innovation) may have a strong functional (or, better, "systemic") motivation.

To conclude, the book contains many awareness-raising insights and certainly explores a range of important questions. And while one might not be satisfied with the evolutionary approach to language change proposed, the interaction between functional and social explanations remains an important problem for any theory of language change. All in all, the

book is to be recommended to historical linguists, who will find much to agree with. However, since it lacks first-hand examples offered in support of the theoretical and methodological claims advanced, it does not contribute significantly to the research agenda of historical linguistics, and its insights are still to be supported by new data from both "classical" fields of enquiry such as Indo-European linguistics and (historical) sociolinguistic studies. I hope this is a challenge that future researchers will take up.

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