

REVIEWS

ROY HARRIS. *The Language Makers*. London: Duckworth, 1980. 194 pp. Boards. R32.00

K.M. PETYT. *The Study of Dialect. An Introduction to Dialectology*. London: André Deutsch, 1980. 236 pp. Boards. £8,95.

P.H. MATTHEWS. *Syntax*. (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. xix + 306 pp. Paperback. n.p.

In his Inaugural Lecture as first Professor of General Linguistics in the University of Oxford, Roy Harris detected signs that,

in linguistic theorizing, changes of a quite radical nature are under way What is at issue is, precisely, the role of linguistics in a nascent science of human communication.¹

Such changes, he observed, will lead to 'an inevitable reevaluation of the aims and context of linguistic theorizing' in an age which 'can hardly be expected to believe in the autonomy of linguistic systems' (*op. cit.*, p. 19 and p. 18).

Taking these ideas a stage further, Harris noted that:

Linguistics ... is only just beginning to come to terms with a quite fundamental notion: that, through communication, we create language as we go, both as individuals and as communities, just as we create our social structures, our forms of artistic

¹ Roy Harris. *Communication and Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 19.

expression, our moral values, and everything else in the great complex we call civilization.

(*ibid.*, p. 20)

It is questions such as these that Harris explores more fully in *The Language Makers*. The concept of a language is examined at various periods in the intellectual history of man, from the Classical era to the present time.

... a concept of a language cannot stand isolated in an intellectual no-man's-land. It is inevitably part of some more intricate complex of views about how certain verbal activities stand in relation to other human activities, and hence, ultimately, about man's place in society and in nature. The moment we try to ask ourselves what a language is without situating the question in such a perspective, we ask a question which may sound as if it leaves open a whole range of possible answers, but to which it turns out to be impossible to give any answer at all.

(*The Language Makers*, pp. 54-55)

In K.M. Petyt's *The Study of Dialect* we have moved from the concept of a language to specific realizations of that language. As the author observes and as his ample bibliography testifies, there are numerous studies of dialects. G.L. Brook's *English Dialects* is an example from the same series ('The Language Library'). What Petyt aims to do, however, is to present 'an outline of *dialectology*, the systematic study of dialect, and its history, methods and concepts -- as opposed to its findings about a particular dialect or the dialects of a particular language' (*op. cit.*, p. 7).

Petyt begins by drawing distinctions between 'language', 'dialect' and 'accent' and by evaluating various criteria for differentiating them. Chapter Two offers a useful survey of the development of dialectology between 1800 and 1950, while Chapter Three examines the study of regional differences in Britain. These chapters establish the traditional approaches, which are then scrutinized. While early chapters tend to concentrate on rural speech, the later ones direct themselves to structural and social-urban dialectology, as well as recent approaches to dialectal differences. This is a valuable work, especially for someone looking for an introduction to the field.

P.H. Matthews's study of *Syntax* is the most recent contribution to the series 'Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics'. As a textbook, it is to be highly commended for the serious student, as it presents a lucid and comprehensive introduction to the subject, without adhering to any one syntactic theory, such as transformational

grammar or systemic grammar. The basis for this sensible decision is to be found in Matthews's own comment:

... I have learned most from the transformational grammarians ... But there are many topics that they have covered poorly or not at all, and some that cannot be dealt with properly, or cannot be dealt with in a way that I find illuminating, unless their basic assumptions are rejected. A further problem concerns the sort of transformational grammar that one might expound. Five years ago it was possible to see the latest work of Chomsky and his associates as no more than a series of extensions, in different directions, of a basic method that had been firmly established in the 60s. But this is no longer so. On issues central to grammatical theory, such as the distinction between syntax and semantics or transformations and the lexicon, the views reflected in leading generativist work are now much closer to those urged by their critics ten or fifteen years ago than to the practices those critics objected to. Nor is it clear exactly what their present principles are.

(*op. cit.*, p. xvi)

After initial chapters on 'Constructions', 'Sentences' and 'Words', Matthews's approach is thematic, covering 'Constituency and Dependency', 'Predication', 'Objects and Adverbs', 'Phrases', 'Clauses', 'Coordination' and 'Juxtaposition'. The last two chapters deal with the means by which syntactic relations are realized and 'syntactic paradigms', the forms of statement in which syntactic relations can be described.

The supplementary material is impressive: each chapter is followed by a section headed 'Notes and References', which gives detailed bibliographical material and additional comments. The summary at the beginning of each chapter gives the reader a helpful idea of where he is going. The layout is pleasing and the author's use of bold print to emphasize new syntactic terminology is praiseworthy.

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BERNARD KRETZMANN. *Communicating in English*. Maskew Miller, 1980, 127 pp. Boards. R6,50.

Vast numbers of books on the subject of 'Communication' have been published in recent decades. However, this book is different in