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REWRITING A STANDARD DICTIONARY ENTRY IN VALENCY DICTIONARY FORMAT

Paper delivered at the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the
British Association for Applied Linguistics, Leeds, 1980

FOREWORD

Lack of time has forced me to leave this somewhat hastily-written conference-paper-script more or less in its original form. I would still wish to present the same arguments as I present here, but I might be more circumspect about certain generalisations and about the selection of data if I were to repeat the exercise. I hope, however, that the basic arguments will come across despite the now obvious faults. I have added some notes at the end on various points which I explained orally at the conference.

JTR
March 1981

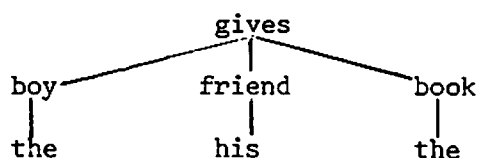
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When I gave a paper on valency theory at the BAAL annual meeting in 1978, my concern at that time was simply to 'communicate' the theory in a general way, since I was aware that little seemed to be known about it in this country, perhaps not least because little has been written about it in English. I suggested then, and I repeat the same claim now, that it is a pity that the theory is not more widely known, not because I see it as a theory which can greatly interest the theoretical linguist striving for explanatory adequacy, but because I see it as one which can potentially help the applied linguist with the task of describing certain aspects of language in a manner which is pedagogically digestible, but at the same time accurate and concise. In sum, it is an 'applicable' theory which has something to offer those interested either directly or vicariously in the practical mastery of languages. Last time I tried to demonstrate this claim by showing how valency theory might lead to the identification of the basic sentence patterns of a language and, moreover, how the descriptive framework deriving from valency theory allowed the basic sentence patterns to be narrowed down to a list considerably shorter than those usually found in the pedagogical literature. Assuming the essential facts of the language we are trying to describe are not distorted, this sort of thing is good news for the pedagogical grammarian, the course-designer, the teacher and the learner. This time what I want to do is argue that valency theory has further good news for us where it comes to the presentation of information about verbs either in specialised dictionaries of verbs or indeed by the classroom teacher, since it not only facilitates very concise description but also, at least in principle, exhaustive description, and can directly or indirectly supply the learner with much of the information necessary to generate not all, but at least only the sentences of a language. This same information can assist the teacher, and perhaps particularly the non-native teacher, in locating the source of certain types of error, and, as I shall also suggest, may be very helpful in determining what is and what is not metaphorical usage in a particular language.

Since, as I have already remarked, valency theory is not well known in this country, I will just spend a little time sketching in some of the essential background before going on to the specifics of my argument. The theory derives ultimately from the work of the French scholar and applied linguist Lucien Tesnière, who spent many years of his life working on a system of syntactic description which he intended to be a useful

tool for the practical student of language, especially through its capacity to demonstrate syntactic mechanisms rather than just supplying morphological inventories. Unfortunately, Tesnière died before his work was finished, in 1954, but friends of his used his notes and drafts to complete his major text, Eléments de syntaxe structurale, which appeared in 1959. At first, Tesnière's work seemed to evoke no major response, but in recent years it has been taken up both in East and West Germany as the basis for new, practically applicable descriptions of the German language. It is true, and I may as well say this now, that Tesnière's system does have a special appeal for those interested in the description of case-languages like German, but we can discuss later whether or not it is more marginal as a descriptive device for languages like English, with little or no surface case.

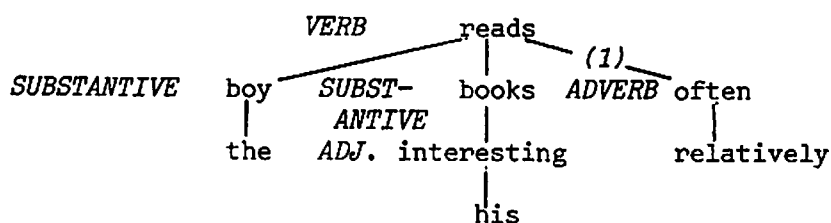
Now Tesnière's syntactic system as a whole is dependency grammar, that is to say, a grammar in which syntagmatic relationships exist between classes of elements such that the occurrence of an element of a certain class is a pre-condition for the occurrence of an element of another class. To put this in simpler, traditional terms, the occurrence of, say, a definite article is dependent upon the occurrence of a noun, or the occurrence of an adverb is dependent upon the occurrence of a verb. The element which conditions the occurrence of another is a governing element, and the element whose occurrence is thus conditioned, and which is therefore dependent upon the governing element, is a subordinate or dependent element. Governing elements can have more than one dependent, and dependents can in turn govern other elements lower than themselves in the dependency hierarchy. At this point it must be stressed that when we say that the occurrence of one element is a pre-condition for the occurrence of another, we are not talking in terms of word order, but in terms of structural relationships. It is evident that in English, for example, definite articles occur in surface structure before the nouns to which they refer, so the whole basis of dependency grammar would be nullified if it were the case that surface structure and syntactic structure were synonymous. To make this point clear, Tesnière distinguishes between what he calls linear order, the order in which sentences are actually spoken, and structural order, which encapsulates the dependencies obtaining between elements. Let us take as an example the sentence: 'The boy gives his friend a book'. I have just articulated this sentence in linear order. Its structural order, according to Tesnière's system, would be as follows:



In Tesnière's grammar, then, sentences have both a structural order and a linear order. However, though Tesnière talks of the translation of structural order into linear order, and though there is some similarity between the structural and linear order of his grammar and the deep and surface structure of another better-known grammatical system, we must not search for too much similarity. For one thing, the elements occurring in Tesnière's structural order are virtually all fully specified and are exactly those elements occurring in linear order. At the same time, though, Tesnière sees structural order in universal terms, that is, the structural order of equivalent sentences from different languages should to all intents and purposes be the same, the differences in linear order being explained by the fact that different languages operate translation from structural order into linear order according to different word-order

conventions. In essence, some languages pick up dependents before picking up governing elements, and others do the opposite, with all sorts of variations between the extremes.

The question must now arise of course as to which elements in a dependency grammar do the governing, and which elements are dependents. Tesnière's answer to this problem emerges from the way in which he divides words up into classes. He rejects the traditional parts of speech which are part of our classical heritage on the grounds that they represent a mixed bag of items thrown together on the basis of three differing criteria - inherent nature, position and function. In their place, he proposes two major categories of words. The one category is made up of words which in his view both possess a syntactically constitutive function in sentences and carry the semantic charge of the sentence. This category contains VERBS, ADVERBS, SUBSTANTIVES and ADJECTIVES, and in principle it is these four classes of elements which can govern others. Example: 'The boy reads his interesting books relatively often'



In brief, all other words apart from verbs, adverbs, substantives and adjectives fall basically in to the classes called junctives, indices and translatives. We may summarise them by saying that they are regarded as grammatical tools or operators.

It is important to note that I said that in principle it is verbs, adverbs, substantives and adjectives which can govern others. It is important because in fact there are two ways of gaining membership of these classes. One is to be born into them, and the other is to do the work associated with them. That is the way of the world in general. So in other words, if something looks like a substantive, it is one, at least in static terms. But if another element does the work of a substantive, then so long as it is doing that work it earns membership of the class of substantives. In Tesnière's grammar, then, there is no problem with a sentence like: 'Interesting is a polysyllabic word', because what one says about it is that though 'interesting' belongs, statically speaking, to the word-class adjective, it is here assuming the function of the word-class substantive and therefore in structural terms is a substantive. There is a formalism for dealing with this phenomenon, which Tesnière calls translation (he proposes 'transference' as the English term) and of course it will be seen that it is basically a rank-shifting process. The formalism is actually somewhat complex, and we do not need to go into it here.

There is perhaps just one other piece of background information we need and this is that Tesnière rejects the traditional concept of subject and predicate. Among his arguments are the following: First, in the traditional view, the subject is an entity in the world about which something is being said through the predicate. On the other hand, the subject has the power to prescribe for the predicate important features such as person and number. With definitions of this sort, says Tesnière, difficulties immediately crop up with sentences like:

It's raining

Es spukt

What entity in the world is this 'it' about which it is being said that it is raining? What entity in the world is this 'es' about which it is being said that it 'spukt' ('is ghosting')? Second, says Tesnière, there is no reason to attach special significance to the subject of a sentence when omitting an obligatory object would make a sentence just as deviant:

She stuck a stamp on the letter

* stuck a stamp on the letter

* She stuck on the letter

In addition, though it is not the case, or no longer the case, in English, except with the imperative, which one might not like to accept as an example, we can find in other languages examples of perfectly grammatical sentences which, though they may arguably have a logical subject, certainly have no syntactic subject:

Mich friert

Mir graut vor dieser Entscheidung

We can now move in to the theory of valency itself, but I should like to make it clear that while in principle and in practice members of all the classes verb, adverb, substantive and adjective can have valency, we shall confine ourselves here to verb valency as it is in this area that the theory is richest and most productive. We need to note at this point that while dependency relationships can be shown to hold between elements in fragments of sentences and in phrases where no verb is present, whenever a verb is present, in a full sentence, it always occupies the uppermost position in the dependency hierarchy because it can govern more elements than can the members of other classes, or, more precisely, there are members of the class verb which can govern more elements than the members of any other class. We also need to note Tesnière's observation that the verbal element which we can find at the centre of sentences in at least the majority of European languages expresses a sort of little drama, and like a drama, it entails a process and usually also actors and circumstances surrounding the process. Translating this into structural terms, the process, the actors and the circumstances become the verb, the 'actants' and 'les circonstants' respectively. I shall translate 'actants' as actants, as indeed the term is usually translated, and I shall refer to the 'circonstants' as the adverbial complements. In the original Tesnière theory, the actants are always substantives or substantive equivalents, and they are the persons or things which participate to one degree or another in the process expressed by the verb. Furthermore, they are the elements which in the dependency hierarchy are immediately dominated by the verb.

To arrive at the theory of verb valency from this point is straightforward. If we examine the actants which go along with various verbs, we find that they can differ from each other both in their number and in their nature.

We find, for example, that in some cases, we seem only ever to have one type of actant, which would be the case with many intransitive verbs, whereas with other verbs, the transitive verbs, we seem to have two types of actant, which stand in a different relationship to the process expressed by the verb. Now to arrive at the theory of valency itself all we have to do is to say that the number of actants we find in a sentence is a direct function of the verb. If we imagine the verb as a sort of atom with hooks on it, each hook capable of hooking on to an actant and maintaining it within the dependency of the verb, then the number of hooks on the verb, and resultingly, the number of actants which can be governed by the verb, defines the valency of the verb.

Tesnière himself describes four categories of valency - nil valency, monovalency, bivalency and trivalency. We will look at these categories briefly:

Avalent, or 'unipersonal', verbs (nil valency) - basically the weather verbs

It's raining (2)

Monovalency (one actant) (intransitives)

The cow died

Mich friert

Bivalency (transitive verbs)

Brian hit Paul

Trivalency (synonyms of giving, saying)

Paul had said rude things to Brian

(which is why) Brian gave him a punch

Now it should be noted immediately, before confusion arises, that with sentences like:

Sam reprimanded Paul and Brian

there is a temptation to say that here there are three actants, whereas in fact there are only two. The reason for this is that elements like 'Paul and Brian' occupy the same structural slot - in traditional terms they are both direct objects, and are therefore simply a case of pluralisation of an actant (dédoublement).

Unfortunately the situation is not as simple as outlined, and for two reasons. First, within the four categories identified by Tesnière - and actually he seems to be one short, as I shall mention directly - we have to distinguish between obligatory and optional valency. If we go back to one of our previous sentences,

Paul had said rude things to Brian

we must count 'to Brian' as an actant, but at the same time, we do not wish to assert that it is ungrammatical to say:

Paul had said rude things

Neither, for reasons of descriptive generality, do we want to argue that there are two different verbs 'to say', one of which is bivalent and the other trivalent. The best solution, then, seems to be to describe 'to say' as a trivalent verb with two obligatory and one optional actant. The second reason for which things are not as simple as outlined is the following: Tesnière himself was fairly insistent that although it was sometimes difficult to distinguish actants from 'circonstants', they had to be kept apart, since in his view only genuine actants could form part of the valency configuration of verbs and the only way of getting an adverbial element to function as an actant was through invoking the process of translation or transference. Now it turns out in further work on valency theory that to make the system work satisfactorily, this position has to be modified or generalities of a significant nature have to be lost. Consider, for example, the following sentences:

(Live = He lives at his friend's house
dwell) He lives at the school
 He lives in London
 He lives next to the Post Office

In Tesnière's original system, in which he insists on the actants being substantive equivalents and defines them as 'actors' 'participating in the process expressed by the verb', there is little scope for analysing the elements 'at his friend's house', 'at the school', 'in London' and 'next to the Post Office' as anything but circonstants or adverbials. It would seem, then, that we might lose the opportunity to include in the specification of the verb 'live' (= dwell) the fact that if this verb is to function in grammatical sentences, it must be used together with a locative phrase such as those used in the examples. What such locative phrases do in effect is to complete or complement the verb. The emphasis has therefore changed somewhat from talking about the actants of verbs to talking about complements, a more general category of an element for which the verb creates, as it were, a syntactic slot. If we look at verbs in terms of the number of complements they specify rather than in terms of the number of actants, then we can deal with verbs like 'translate' at a high level of generality. One might be tempted at first sight, if one is blinded by the notion of actants, to classify the verb 'translate' as a bivalent verb, as in such sentences as:

He translated the book

However, one here misses the generality that people usually translate from one language into another, so that on reconsideration, it seems better to classify the verb 'translate' as tetravalent, with one obligatory and three optional complements:

He translated (the book) (from Greek) (into Potawatomi)

We do, however, run into a problem once we begin to allow adverbial elements and other elements which cannot qualify as actants in the full sense into the valency configurations for verbs. This problem is that we now have to try to distinguish between adverbial complements and free adverbial complements, and in general between non-actant complements specified by the verb and non-actant complements outside the dependency of the verb. We will confine ourselves here to the problem of adverbial

complements and free adverbial complements. Where adverbial complements are obligatory is actually fairly easy to work out on the basis of the so-called 'omission-test'. Thus if we start with the sentence :

He lives in London (live = dwell)

and then omit 'in London', we get :

* He lives (live = dwell)

from which we can conclude that 'live' is a bivalent verb with two obligatory complements, one of which must be a locative. The problem is greater when it comes to deciding whether an element is a free adverbial complement lying outside the dependency of the verb, or an optional adverbial complement. Consider the sentences :

He climbed into bed

He climbed in quickly

He climbed in

I myself would wish to maintain, as of this moment, that all three of these sentences derive from the verb 'climb in', though I might succumb to an argument, if it could be put, that greater generality could be achieved by deriving them all from the verb 'climb'. Actually, that argument does not really matter for the moment. Bear with my 'climb in'. The important point is that, on the assumption that there is a verb 'climb in', we cannot maintain that it has more than one obligatory complement, since 'he climbed in' is perfectly grammatical. The question is, though, whether it has a further optional complement, and I would argue that it does, as exemplified in 'He climbed into bed'. Why? Because climbing in is a directional activity, aimed at a certain location, and an adverbial indicating a 'locative goal' is therefore totally predictable from the verb itself, even if it does not always occur. On the other hand, 'quickly', while in some sense predictable is of a lower order of probability, and there seems no principled reason for maintaining that is within the dependency of the verb any more than 'tiredly', 'unhappily' or 'rapaciously'. I admit, however, that this is a tricky area, and one in which the issues are not totally worked out. On the other hand, it seems justifiable to go for the generality which creates this problem.

You may have noticed that while speaking I have in fact somewhat shifted my ground. I started off talking about syntax, but I have come round to talking about semantics. That, however, is quite appropriate, because for me to support the claims I made for valency theory at the beginning, I have to show that valency theory does not only allow the specification of numbers of complements; it also allows the specification of types of complements. Let me get round to this point by way of some examples :

The headmaster wrote a strong letter to the distributor cap

The filing cabinet philosophised at great length

The man cut himself in to the hand

The teacher told to the boy to hurry

He could not come up for a hundred pounds

He remembered of his youth

She thanked her education to the school

The first two are presumably more or less universally unacceptable because of their very obvious infringement of semantic principles, except in circumstances which plainly reject the norms of everyday life, e.g. humorous contexts and far-fetched tales. The rest are all possible interference errors on the part of German learners of English. But the point about them is that they could well all be eminently avoidable in the light of the sort of information which can be given through the descriptive framework of valency theory. I will not try to deal with all of them, but let us take one example for further work. If we take 'He remembered of his youth', we may be able to locate the error in terms of the valency specification of the corresponding verb in German, which is 'sich erinnern'. (3)

Let us look at and analyse some sentences in which the verb 'sich erinnern' is used, noting as we go along the salient syntactic and semantic features : (4)

Der Lehrer erinnert sich.

(+ human) = grammatical, therefore 'sich erinnern' has only one obligatory complement which can be + human

Die Lokomotive erinnert sich.

(- animate) = deviant, therefore oblig. comp. cannot be - anim.

Der Hund erinnert sich.

(+ anim) = marginal? Try a full context: Der Hund erinnerte sich noch immer an die Grausamkeit seines früheren Besitzers. Seems OK, as long as we're willing to accept that animals behave like humans with regard to memory. Maybe investigate further, but for present accept that oblig.comp. can be defined as + anim (which includes + human). Note also that oblig. comp. appears in nominative case, and is therefore a substantive in the nominative = Sn. (5)

Der Lehrer erinnert sich an sein Buch

(prep.) (acc.) (-anim) = all OK, therefore second, optional complement can be prepositional complement, and can be - anim. Note acc. case after an.

Der Lehrer erinnert sich an seine Tochter

(+ human) = OK, therefore second, optional complement can be + human

Der Lehrer erinnert sich an seinen Hund

(+ anim) = OK, therefore second, optional comp. can be + human, + anim or - anim = +/- anim.

Der Lehrer erinnert sich an	die Valenzgrammatik	
	(+ abstr.)	= OK, therefore comp.2 can be + abstr.
Der Lehrer erinnert sich an	das Singen	
	(+ act.)	- OK, therefore comp. 2 can be + act.
Der Lehrer erinnert sich	seiner	Arbeit
Der Lehrer erinnert sich	seiner	Tochter
Der Lehrer erinnert sich	seines	Hunds
Der Lehrer erinnert sich	der	Valenzgrammatik
Der Lehrer erinnert sich	des	Singens
	(genitive case)	= all OK, therefore comp. 2 can not only be prepositional comp., but can be in genitive case instead. Second comp. is a substantive = S, and can either be a prep. comp. = pS, or a comp. in gen = Sg.

Can the second comp. be anything other than a substantive? To cut a long story short, yes :

Der Lehrer erinnert sich, dass seine Frau heute Geburtstag hat.

= subordinate clause (NS) introduced by dass = NS dass
(act.)

Der Lehrer erinnert sich jetzt, wer das Gerücht in Umlauf gesetzt hat.

= subordinate clause (NS) introduced by wer = NS w (...act.)

Der Lehrer erinnert sich, vom Direktor eingeladen worden zu sein.

= expanded infinitive clause with zu = Inf (...act.)

We seem now to have exhausted the possibilities, both syntactic and semantic. But the information as presented is hardly digestible. Can we collapse it? Yes :

1. 'sich erinnern' is a bivalent reflexive verb (we ignore the reflexive element sich for specification purposes, because it is specifically mentioned in the lexical form of the verb, and can be handled adequately by general grammatical rules).
2. one complement, Sn, is obligatory.
3. one complement, pSa, Sg, NS dass/w, Inf, is optional.
4. Sn is + anim
5. pSa, Sg can be +/- anim/ + abstr / + act

Can we collapse this further? Yes :

sich erinnern 1 + (1) = 2

sich erinnern ---- Sn, (pS/Sg/NS dass/w/Inf)

Sn ---- + anim

p ---- an

pSa ---- 1. +/- anim

2. abstr

3. act

Sg ---- 1. +/- anim

2. abstr.

3. act.

NS ---- act. (dass)

---- act. (wer)

Inf ---- act.

Can we collapse this further? Yes :

sich erinnern 1 + (1) = 2

Sn (+ anim)

p (an) Sa }
Sg

+/- anim / abstr / act

NS dass/w }
Inf

act

Let us now recap on what we have done. We started on this exercise because I claimed that valency theory allows for the specification of types of complements as well as numbers of complements. This point has, I think, been demonstrated. I then claimed in connection with this point that valency theory might help us to locate sources of error, and I took as a putative error by a German learner of English "He remembered of his youth". Assuming, and I admit it is as assumption, though, I think, a reasonable one, that our learner took as his point of departure the verb 'sich erinnern', then we can see that what confounded him was the Sg in the valency configuration of the German 'equivalent' verb. One may say, of course, that anyone who knows German well could have spotted this immediately and without going through all the rigmarole we have gone through. This is not really the point, though. For one thing, not all teachers and applied linguists know German well enough to carry the valency of German verbs in their heads, yet they may be interested in attempting the analysis of German learners' errors, and need explicit information to help them. I would claim that the sort of information we drew up about 'sich erinnern' was as explicit as you can get in these matters. For

another thing, though, even those who know German fairly well are going to come across cases more difficult and subtle than this, where they do need help. Another objection to my argument here might be: well, looking at the error in question, couldn't it just be that the learner slipped in the wrong verb? If he'd used 'thought' instead of, but in the sense of 'remember', there would have been no error. Well, of course, it could be the case that somehow he just slipped between 'remember' and 'think', because of course there is a strong semantic affinity between these verbs; but this in itself then opens up the interesting possibility that the valency of a verb other than 'remember' assigned the structural order to the sentence before translation into linear order and it might be that scanning the valencies of semantically linked verbs would reveal some interesting insights on this basis. However, I do not want to get too much bogged down in the error analysis issue because I would like to make the possibly more important claim that if our learner had had in front of him in the first place a valency dictionary of English, written up in the same explicit detail as we wrote up our entry of 'sich erinnern', the error would have had much less chance of occurring in the first place. The point about our entry for 'sich erinnern' is that it is not only explicit; it is also exhaustive. That is a strong claim, but I believe it to be the case that, discounting errors of word order and the influence of free elements, it is in theory possible to generate all the sentences of German containing the verb 'sich erinnern' which are semantically and syntactically acceptable, and impossible to generate any syntactically or semantically deviant sentence. I will climb down, of course, if you can prove me wrong, but if you can do this, then the formula I have given is wrong and must be amended. As a matter of fact, most of it is Helbig and Schenkel's, with some emendations. There are two further points I must make. The first is that one must be careful not to be led astray by ellipsis, which depends upon shared knowledge of the world or alleged or putative shared knowledge of the world, so these even obligatory complements can be omitted. Utterances like "He said." "They knew" and "She claimed" can all, no doubt be found acceptable in some context. The second point is that valency grammar cannot handle idiom, and presumably idiom cannot be covered by rules. For that reason alone the dictionary in more conventional form cannot be replaced by valency dictionaries, though it can be tightened up and supplemented by the descriptive framework of valency grammar.

I also said at the beginning that valency theory might be useful in determining what is and what is not metaphor. What I meant by this is that in essence, I surmise that a metaphorical usage is a usage specifically excluded by the valency specification of a verb. (6) I will give just one bilingual example. Helbig and Buscha in their specification of valencies in Deutsche Grammatik give 'regnen', 'rain', as an avalent verb. This seems reasonable - the subject is not substitutable. But they also give 'regnen' as a bivalent verb, quoting the example 'Es regnet Blüten' - 'It's raining blossom'. This seems to me very peculiar indeed. What more poetic example of metaphor could we want than 'It's raining blossom'? Since, according to my intuitions, there could hardly be a clearer case of metaphor, I would have no compunction in relegating 'regnen' to the category of avalent verbs for perpetuity. That in itself would, assuming my finding accorded with the feelings of others in general, thereby define 'It's raining blossom' as metaphor. I will make one final remark on semantics. Until you try working out the valency of verbs, you have no idea how many verbs there can be of the same name. Someone wrote a famous paper on the two verbs 'to be'. I wish I could think of his name, but it

escapes me. Only two verbs 'to be'? Semantic considerations have to come in right at the beginning to sort out just how many verbs there are of the same name, otherwise we can get this sort of thing: At first sight, the valency of the verb 'lay' might look like:

lay 3

Comp 1 (+ anim), Comp 2 (+/- anim), Comp 3 p (locational/directional)⁽⁷⁾

This looks like a nice general formula, giving us sentences like:

The postman laid the parcel on the doorstep

The dog laid the ball at his master's feet

But it also gives us:

The plumber lays eggs in the floor

The hen lays pipes in the nest

Somehow, these two latter sequences seem semantically inappropriate! If we really want to say things like this, either we are striving for metaphor, or the day has at last come when pigs can fly, and we can abolish all semantic restrictions.

NOTES

1. The relationship represented by :

reads

often

is in fact not a governing relationship. 'Often' would be classified in this case as a free adverbial complement. What this is should become clear further on in the paper.

2. By convention in dependency grammar, 'impersonal' subjects such as 'it', 'es' or 'il' are discounted as part of the valency configuration. It is assumed that on translation from structural into linear order their insertion will, where appropriate, be demanded by general syntactic rules.

3. I am no longer very happy with the data I give here. 'He remembered of his youth' may certainly be a possible interference-error, but probably rather unlikely. However, what is important is the general principle in the ensuing discussion - that the pinpointing of interference-errors may be facilitated by the information that valency grammar encapsulates. A clear example; and one which I have actually come across several times, would be 'Die Notiz sagte, dass.....' on the part of an English learner of German. It seems that the subject-complement of sagen in German is restricted to being +human and +abstract as human, whereas the verb say in English imposes fewer restrictions on the subject-complement. 'The notice said that.....' is, then, grammatical in English and the learner, having made a semantic association between say and sagen assumes that the subject-complement shares the same features in both languages.

4. For the most part I use Helbig and Schenkel's system of notation in the following analysis.

+act derives from their Act = Action = action

NS = Nebensatz = subordinate clause

NS dass = subordinate clause introduced by dass

NS w = subordinate clause introduced by wer

Sn = Substantiv im Nominativ = substantive in nominative

Sg = " im Genitiv = " " genitive

pSa = präpositionales substantiv im Genitiv = prepositional
substantive in genitive

Inf = erweiterter Infinitiv mit 'zu' = expanded infinitive clause
with zu

5. Oh dear! This has turned out to be a thorny issue, not least for animal lovers. Helbig and Schenkel's position on 'sich erinnern' is quite clear. They restrict the subject-complement to + human and + abstract as human, so that, according to them, "Der Hund erinnert sich..." breaks the restrictions on the subject-complement. Other native speakers seem somewhat divided on the matter. My own inclination was evidently not to agree with Helbig and Schenkel, presumably on pragmatic grounds. Is

this a marginal case which depends on the individual speaker's view of the cognitive capacities of animals? The trouble is that if one is to claim that valency grammar can be perfectly explicit, the problem must on the face of it be solved, even if it means sub-dividing the category + anim as between higher and lower orders of animals. However, I have no immediate solution to offer.

6. This claim of course means that in terms of valency theory metaphorical = ungrammatical. This seems to be an essentially correct claim, though it needs spelling out further as : metaphorical = ungrammatical but acceptable within a given context. The term 'ungrammatical' is then not sufficient on its down to designate any sort of deviation from linguistic norms. Plainly there will be some types of ungrammaticality which are not acceptable in any context - e.g. 'Boy cinema went film the to in night last see the the! Of course, it is always possible to argue that once one begins specifying the semantic features of complements one is no longer in the realm of linguistics but dealing with pragmatics. But does that change anything? At least, if one wishes to save learners from being 'unpragmatic' in a given culture.

7. The 'Comp 1', 'Comp 2', 'Comp 3', (Comp = Complement) notation is my own invention. It seems more suitable for English, which is not marked for case, though there could be arguments for other notations.

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PROJECT REPORT

Department of Behavioural and Communication Studies, Polytechnic of Wales:

Language Development in 6 to 12 year old children

The project is directed by Dr. Robin P. Fawcett with the assistance of Dr. Michael R. Perkins. It has been entirely funded during phase 1 (1978-80) by the Polytechnic of Wales, but additional outside support will be needed for Phase 2 (1981-83) and is currently being sought. Phase 1 has been primarily concerned with the recording, transcription and publication of a large body of data (see below), while Phase 2 will be concerned with its analysis.

We take it as axiomatic that language continues to develop in important ways after the age of five, and that the development of, for example, the ability to do increasingly complex things with the primary syntactico-semantic categories is not the trivial achievement that it has often been taken to be in the past, but a phenomenon of considerable intrinsic interest with important implications for education, both normal and remedial. The project has thus been set up with the following objectives in mind:

Objectives

- a) to describe the general pattern of syntax and the corresponding areas of semantics of a representative sample of children between the ages of 6 and 12 in two types of situation, and within this overall framework to examine the correlations between (i) social and individual variables and (ii) syntactico-semantic variables, and to consider explanations for the observed differences;
- b) to refine, by differentiating and relating the component concepts, the notion of syntactico-semantic complexity, and to develop metrics for these variables;
- c) to establish an archive that will be of value to others investigating language development in this age range, whether or not such work is specifically associated with the present project, and so to facilitate linguistic studies of this age range;
- d) to provide findings that will be of value in establishing norms for linguistic development relevant to (i) educational linguistics and (ii) language pathology.

Population Sample

The subjects consist of 112 children divided into four groups according to age, each child being within 3 months of 6, 8, 10, and 12 when studied, thus giving in very broad terms the effect of a longitudinal study of a single group. The methods used for deciding on the composition of the sample and for trying to ensure a broad parity between the groups are based closely on those of the Bristol University study of children aged $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $5\frac{1}{4}$ directed by Gordon Wells (see Wells (1974)). Following their criteria, which give equal weighting to (i) the occupation and (ii) the level of education of both father and mother, we use four classes of

socioeconomic background, labelled A, B, C and D (with two groups of C class children to provide a double check on our findings, since these represent nearly half the population). The children are further differentiated according to sex, thus yielding, in theory, 40 distinct cells of 3 children, each cell being homogenous in terms of age, socioeconomic background and sex. In practice, all but 2 of the C cells were filled and in four cases a child with a different socioeconomic background was included to complete the cell.

Questionnaires, preceded by letter seeking co-operation, were used to obtain the information relevant to constructing the sample, together with other information that might cause us to exclude a child, e.g. bilingual background, or that might be of interest at a later stage. These were distributed through, and corroborated by, head teachers and class teachers of the Mid Glamorgan Education Authority, whose helpfulness at every stage is a pleasure to acknowledge. The schools involved are in and around Pontypridd, a small industrial town just outside Cardiff, with a population of a little over 35,000 such that the parents of some of the children commute to Cardiff.

Further constraints on the composition of the sample were that children should not have any physical or mental abnormality, and that the members of each cell should, in the opinion of the class teacher, be reasonably compatible in a play situation - i.e. they should be on friendly terms.

Situational Variables

a) Peer group play

The 3 children in each cell were given a large set of Lego bricks and asked to build a house - a task which proved equally acceptable to boys and girls and to 6 and 12 year olds. Each play session lasted about 20 minutes, and was tape recorded in stereo with no adult or other children present. The purpose of recording in stereo was to enable the transcriber to differentiate the voices of the three children on directional criteria. This proved a successful technique, and brought the bonus of additionally differentiating the voices from the noise made by the Lego.

b) Conversation with an adult

Immediately after the play session, each child was interviewed by a friendly but unknown adult (who was the same person for all the children) about (i) the building task, (ii) a game they liked to play, (iii) a recent film or TV programme, and (iv) something they would like to do in the future. Each interview lasted between 6 and 10 minutes and these texts too were recorded in stereo.

c) Written texts

Written descriptions of the building task were also obtained from those children who could write, but Phase 2 of the project is limited to the spoken texts, so that we have no plans at present for the study of these texts.

Transcription

Approximately 10 minutes of each play session and 6 minutes of each interview were transcribed by trained transcribers, using conventions adapted from the

Bristol project, the Survey of Modern English Usage at University College London, directed by Professor Pandolf Quirk, and Crystal, Fletcher and Garman (1976). After thorough checking, these were typed, and the main pitch movements inserted by a trained linguist.

These transcripts have been published in 4 volumes. (For details of how to obtain them, together with copies of the original tapes, see the end of this report).

Syntactico-semantic analysis

The transcribed texts have been analysed by ten specially trained analysts, using a tree-diagram notation for syntax with superscripts to indicate many further semantic features. The model used is an updated version of the systemic grammars used in several similar projects and is also fairly close to that outlined in Crystal, Fletcher and Garman (1976), though it is considerably more detailed. It handles systematically such phenomena as 'raising', dummy subject clauses, ellipsis, etc., and recognises many different types of adjuncts, serving different semantic functions. The semantic analysis reflects Halliday's proposal for recognising various types of meaning or 'functional components', so that here too there are similarities with the Bristol project.

Current state of the project and future plans

The transcribed texts, together with their labelled tree-diagram analyses, are currently being coded and stored, using the Polytechnic of Wales' DEC system - 20/50 computer. A storage system and information retrieval programs are being devised by Dr. Brian Rosser of the Polytechnic of Wales Computer Centre, to enable a description of the data in terms of various parameters of syntactico-semantic complexity. Theoretical considerations, together with data from similar small-scale projects, suggest the value of recognising the following types of syntactico-semantic complexity:

- a) Unit-structure complexity; the number and type of sister elements of structure in a unit such as a clause or nominal group, including structures with a marked sequence of elements, structures with it or there as subject, 'raising', etc.
- b) Co-ordination complexity: the number of co-ordinated units in each complex unit, and the type of co-ordination.
- c) Embedded complexity; the occurrence of units at a 'depth' (see Yngve, 1960, 1961/72, and Huddleston, 1965) of 1, 2, 3, etc. nodes below their unmarked depth, and the type of such embedding.
- d) Complexity of overt functional plurality: the number of functional components of the semantics (in the sense of Halliday, 1970 and Fawcett, 1980) realised overtly in any given clause/nominal group.
- e) Elliptical complexity: a type of 'non-realisation' complexity distinguished from other types of non-realisation by the clear recoverability of optionally omitted formal items (i.e. not, in Ike wants to act, the omitted 'agent' in the embedded clause to act, the omission of which we assume here not to be a type of complexity).

Projected timing of Phase 2 of the project

On the assumption that the support currently being sought is obtained, it is expected that the coding of the data on syntactico-semantic complexity, together with several pilot studies to establish the effectiveness of the programs of data storage, will be completed by the Summer of 1981; that the programs will have been run and the findings considered and written up by the Spring of 1982; and that new lines of enquiry will have been investigated by September 1983.

Dissemination of findings

In addition to the four published volumes of transcripts referred to above, papers on the project's methodology and the concept of complexity have been given at the Cardiff Linguistics Centre; a paper on methodological problems overcome (Fawcett 1979) was presented at the 1979 Child Language Seminar at Reading University, and a paper outlining the five types of syntactico-semantic complexity recognised in the project (Fawcett 1980) was read at the 1980 Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics. A study of the development of modal expressions in the 6-12 age range has been carried out (see Perkins (1980) and in preparation) and further studies are envisaged.

An invitation

However, in view of the quantity and richness of the data we would also like to issue an explicit invitation to any scholar who is interested in the possibility of making a study and/or supervising a postgraduate engaged on such a study, whether on a large or small scale, to write to us at the Polytechnic of Wales. It seems likely, for example, that there is scope here for a number of valuable M.Phil/Ph.D. studies. There are facilities at the Polytechnic of Wales for such studies, but we would be equally happy to co-operate, with whatever degree of integration seemed most appropriate, with scholars based in other institutions.

Copies of the four volumes of transcripts, entitled Child Language Transcripts 6-12, together with copies of the accompanying tapes, may be obtained at the following (1981) prices:

Volume 1 Six year olds (xiv + 254 pp)----- £ 4.00

Volume 2 Eight year olds (xiv + 264 pp)----- £ 4.00

Volume 3 Ten year olds (xiv + 308 pp)----- £ 4.00

Volume 4 Twelve year olds (xiv + 298 pp) ----- £ 4.00

All four volumes ----- £15.00

9 tapes for Volume 1 ----- £16.20

9 tapes for Volume 2 ----- £16.20

10 tapes for Volume 3 ----- £18.00

10 tapes for Volume 4 ----- £18.00

Single tapes (e.g. 'Class C girls aged 8') ----- £ 1.90

Send orders to: Dr. Robin P. Fawcett, Dept of Behavioural and Communication Studies, Polytechnic of Wales, Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan CF37 1DL. Cheques should be made payable to 'Polytechnic of Wales'.

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Robin P Fawcett
Michael R Perkins

REPORT ON EXETER SUMMER SCHOOL IN LEXICOGRAPHY

Lexicography is rethinking itself. That was the clear message to emerge from the International Summer School in Applied Linguistics and Dictionary-Making held at the University of Exeter in August 1980. Anyone who arrived under the impression that lexicographers are content to replough the same furrows that they have worked over for the last hundred years can have left with no doubt that a reappraisal is under way. The lessons of linguistics that have been applied over the last twenty years, and continue to be applied, by the compilers of L2 dictionaries, are making themselves felt more and more in L1 lexicography, and if this trend continues and bears fruit there is every hope that the buyers of general dictionaries will shortly be benefiting by it; for it is a trend that is certainly leading, as Reinhard Hartmann (the Exeter host) pointed out in his opening lecture, away from the compiler's dictionary and towards the dictionary specifically designed to meet the needs of the user.

The context of the week's discussions was well set by Prof. Osselton of Leiden, who traced the historical development of dictionaries from their earliest beginnings. Reference books for words have evolved over the centuries to meet the particular needs of particular ages, but always, by the nature of things, the new model for the new age bears many of the marks of its predecessors, and so it is that, as Paul Procter of Longman re-emphasized in his discussion of the L1 dictionary, present-day general dictionaries are still to a great extent scions of the late nineteenth-century dictionary of record, as represented by the OED. A central theme of the summer school was the need for lexicography to shake off those aspects of this tradition that stand in the way of the dictionary's relevance to its users.

The week was organized to ensure the maximum cross-fertilization between theory and practice. In the mornings, the first round of lectures explored various aspects of theoretical linguistics' input into lexicography, from semantics through syntax, pragmatics and text linguistics to contrastive lexicology, and these were followed up in the second sessions by lectures concentrating on the practical applications of this theory in various sorts of dictionaries: L1 and L2 monolingual dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries, including those for LSP, and field dictionaries. In the afternoons, participants split up into various workshops, to explore actively many of the questions raised in the morning sessions. Topics covered in the workshops included learners' dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries, technical dictionaries and the impact of computer on lexicography.

The crucial importance to dictionary-makers of a sociology of dictionary-users was at the heart of many of the contributions. What do lexicographers know about the way in which their customers use their product? What words do people look up in dictionaries? What sorts of information do they want to be given about the words they look up? How far do present-day dictionaries meet their users' needs? The message was clear: in answer to these questions lexicographers, especially L1 lexicographers, must plead a fair measure of ignorance. Even in the area of learners' dictionaries, whose compilers have made huge strides since the war in techniques of relevant and useful lexicography (such as the codification of grammatical information and the use of simplified defining vocabularies), much remains to be done. The need to identify with still greater delicacy the

demands by EFL and ESL learners and by the users of ESP dictionaries was stressed by, respectively, Tony Cowie of Leeds and André Moulin of Liège in their lectures, and was reinforced in the workshop discussions on learners' dictionaries led by Tony Cowie and Della Summers of Longman.

If L2 monolingual dictionaries still need to look to their laurels in this respect, how much more is this the case for bilingual and L1 monolingual dictionaries. In their lecture-demonstration on defining in technical areas, Faye Carney and Roger Cohen of Longman laid bare some of the desperate shortcomings of current L1 dictionaries in communicating information meaningfully to their users, and implicitly called in question the whole concept of a general dictionary that attempts to encompass all areas of technical language, regardless of a given word's susceptibility to adequate explanation using traditional defining techniques. In bilingual lexicography, too, reappraisals are under way: in their lectures, Jerzy Tomaszczyk of Gdansk and Ali Al-Kasimi of Rabat reviewed the new thinking that is going into making bilingual dictionaries more serviceable tools for translators and other users. Mr. Tomaszczak for example, highlighted the deficiencies of currently available bilingual dictionaries as encoding devices, and suggested that more attention should be paid to the inclusion of lexical items in the target language that do not have lexicalized L1 equivalents. He also discussed the notion of a package of four dictionaries for bilingual interaction, with a productive and receptive component in each of the languages concerned. In the bilingual workshop, led by Tamas Magay of Budapest, these and other questions were pursued further.

New ideas continue to feed into lexicography from both theoreticians and practitioners: from pragmatics, for example, come opportunities for a greater understanding of, and hence a more accurate and useful description of, usage levels, as Reinhard Hartmann pointed out, while Henri Bejoint of Lyon stressed the vital role that could and should be played by field research in gathering truly accurate and realistic raw data for the lexicographer to work on. Computer technology, of course, has opened up unimagined new vistas for the dictionary maker, from sophisticated information-retrieval techniques in the service of greater consistency of presentation, through the computational analysis of texts to yield semasiological, onomasiological, paradigmatic and syntagmatic information, as discussed by Willy Martin of Leuven, to perhaps, in due course, the replacement of the dictionary as we know it, in book form, by a lexical reference system accessible by way of a visual-display unit. In the lexicology and computing workshop, led by Frank Knowles of Aston, attention was focussed particularly on the problems of compiling dictionaries, or lexical data-bases, for use in conjunction with machine translation systems.

A rich vein, then, of innovation was uncovered at Exeter. If only it can be successfully exploited by working lexicographers and commercial dictionary publishers, there is every chance that within the next decade dictionary users will have available to them a range of products that respond as never before to their real needs.

John Ayto

BOOK REVIEWS

RESEARCH IN LANGUAGE TESTING. Olliver, J.W. and K. Perkins, £6.50. Newbury House, 1980

This book is the sequel to the same editors' Language in Education: Testing the Tests (1978) Newbury House and, like its predecessor, needs a gloss on its title just in case potential readers might be misled with regard to its scope or status. Research in Language Testing is not a 'state of the art' work or a manual for those involved in language testing research. In fact, it is a collection of research report papers, nearly all of them emanating from a particular university, the University of Southern Illinois, where Perkins is Assistant Professor of Linguistics. And although the contents pages ('How many factors are there in second language skill?'; 'investigations of listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks'; 'native versus nonnative performance'; 'Measuring factors supposed to contribute to success in second or foreign language learning') suggest broad coverage of test types and issues, the scope of the book is narrower than might be expected.

For one thing, a particular hypothetical thread runs throughout, namely that a single unitary factor underlies all (or nearly all) language proficiency. All the reported studies have something to say on this question; many of them make it the focus of their investigation. Somewhat unsurprisingly, almost all the evidence is found to be in support of the unitary competence hypothesis, a point strongly underlined by the editors in their 'overview'. The second fact that makes the book rather less broad in its scope than the title might suggest is the methodological uniformity of the studies. The guiding paradigm is unabashedly psychometric, even when the point at issue might seem to call for the added insights that more qualitative data might provide. Describing the method employed to investigate inter-rater differences in the evaluation of free writing, for example, Mullen (p.161) begins:

"To test hypothesis 1, a single-factor experimental design having repeated measures was chosen. The F-statistic based upon the mean sum of square between judges divided by the mean sum of squares of the residual variance was computed to test the hypothesis of no significant difference between judges".

And this is fairly typical of the approach and tone of the book as a whole. Thus although we are promised insights into 'the nature of human discourse processing skills' (p.1) the restriction of the argument in the studies to that of the almost exclusively quantitative kind seems to preclude much in the way of illuminating discussion of how people communicate or how we may elicit and evaluate their actual communication. The focus is definitely on the statistical analysis of data rather than on how we may most validly get our data in the first place. And, as is almost inevitable with such a focus, the key question of the relationship between teaching, learning and testing is hardly brought up at all.

Still, the researcher using this book will learn from the format, logic and psychometric efficiency of many of the studies. Both researchers and teachers will be grateful that, unusually, many of the language tests and assessment criteria used are actually reprinted in it. Any anyone engaged in a literature survey of recent testing experiments is bound to find some of the studies worth discussing, whether or not the firm psychometric/indivisibility stance taken by the book is felt to be acceptable.

Roger Hawkey

CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH LEXICON, Roland Hindmarsh, £5.95. Cambridge University Press, 1980. PB 210 + xiv pp.

The 1970s have been the years of discourse and interlanguage, of ESP, functions and notions, so when a two hundred page wordlist arrives in the post, the result of more than ten years' work, initial reaction may well be surprise - even shock. Surely the time for pedagogical wordlists is past, if we still need to consult them why cannot we simply use a modified Michael West, are we not concerned with texts rather than words, with authentic reading rather than isolated items, with the needs of individual students rather than linguistic generalisations, however precise? Anyway, is not the whole notion of simplification under fire? Two years ago an acute reviewer in ARELS Journal remarked of simplified readers:

People who write foreign language readers are a strange, almost unique, species of writer: they set out to write something (but it doesn't really matter what) for a totally unknown sector of the public (age, nationality, background, mentality, interests, all unknown) in a painfully emasculated form of their language.. There is a vast market for their work and yet there are not many that can withstand the close scrutiny of the native speaker. (H. Lesley Gore, ARELS Journal) Vol.2, No.10, 1978 : 255)

It has been argued that graded readers establish an allegedly scientific series of steps which then have to be correlated with the quite unmeasurable levels of students - unmeasurable because of the difficulty of trading off against each other such disparate factors as personal interest, linguistic level, intellectual and cultural sophistication, imaginative capacity and simple time available. A correlation of the precise with the imprecise is not worth attempting. And, of course, most of us have our favourite horror stories of publishers' editors rejecting anything interesting in favour of anything dull ('she was coming to the evening of her life' becomes 'she was very ill') on the assumption that learners of English come to reading as blank and unliterary and inhuman as the computers on which the prevalent information transfer metaphor is based.

All in all, many of us will be predisposed to react negatively to even the idea let alone the solid fact of another pedagogic lexicon, however up to date and rigorous its basis. But perhaps one indication of its relevance can be tested by seeing the extent to which the compiler is himself aware of the doubts his work may engender and the misuses to which it may be put. Roland Hindmarsh's introduction discusses his own personal interest in grading and wordlists, and outlines the genesis of this one. He rightly comments that in the 1960s vocabulary grading, and later syntactic grading were enormously influential in ESL publishing, but then goes on to refer briefly to the implications of a sociolinguistic approach to language. 'Purpose, context, tone, mode and medium can be orchestrated to produce a language specification: but that specification can - and I maintain must - be graded in some measure to make it right for where the learner is now'. (p.vi). This sounds a strong statement, but it is modified almost immediately: instruments of language selection 'cannot be allowed to dominate syllabus ever again; they are however needed to ensure good husbandry in learning to use language in specific situations'. And again, instruments for the grading of vocabulary, syntax and discourse (the last 'as yet unwritten') 'must be used flexibly in the generation of language learning programmes; but that they are an essential part of this process there can be no doubt'. Flexible use is illustrated also: 'for some users

this may mean no more than an occasional check on vocabulary items; for others a filter at a particular stage in the production of language learning materials; for yet others, a careful scrutiny to establish that a reading comprehension passage for an examination does not contain vocabulary items that exceed a given learning level by more than the agreed degree of variation'.

So the author is aware of the problems. How useful is the list, as presented, in helping us to solve them? There seem to be three important issues here: first, how reliable is the list as a representative and principled selection? second, how accessible is the material if we do want to consult it? and third, what advice is given us about the significance of the information we can obtain from it?

On the issue of reliability, it is difficult to give a satisfactory answer without extensive experience of using it. The principles of selection, as outlined, are unhelpful here. Michael West's 'General Service List' (Longman, 1953) has been extended and modified by comparison with a number of other lists, including Thorndike and Lorge, Kucera and Francis, Wright and a variety of others (conveniently summarised on pp.x-xi). But the account of the process of selection refers to a number of unspecified selection procedures. Some items 'did not meet certain criteria of statistical constancy', others were 'slightly archaic', 'academic' or 'specialised' in spite of being of high frequency in other word counts. Other criteria used include 'intuitions of teachers of EFL' and 'lexical items reflecting the world today ... drawn together from a number of sources'. Consequently we cannot claim that this list represents more than one person's (though with considerable consultation) subjective opinion of the most useful selection; though we must concede that the subjective opinion has been cross-referenced with the standard sources, and based on an extensive and varied experience in teaching English overseas. Yet none of this need detract from the merit of the book. If Hindmarsh has good intuitions, this half-scientific, half-intuitive procedure may take us closer to what actually works than something more objective. The material has already been used as a basis for the Cambridge English Language Learning readers, one of the more successful reading schemes, and it has been related to the comprehension range necessary for passing Cambridge First Certificate. But in the last resort, we must depend on experience. The question of reliability, if the compiler defends intuitive procedures, can only be answered in terms of eventual usefulness, and we should ask the question again in five years' time. At this stage, we can only report that the manner of compilation makes sense, given the premises on which it is based, and a superficial survey of the contents does not reveal any striking anomalies.

On accessibility, this lexicon can be recommended. About 4500 lexical items are included in the main list, and each is graded on a five-point scale, five being approximately Cambridge First Certificate level. It is claimed, but only experience will enable us to tell, that the five levels can be linked neatly with the five levels in Longman's 'English Grammatical Structure' (Alexander et al, 1975). The number of words in each level, going upwards, are: 598, 617, 992, 1034, and 1229. The 4500 words are accompanied by a breakdown of semantic values, each value being graded on the same scale, except that these values extend up to levels six and seven, the last being provisionally the level required for the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency. The inclusion of semantic values takes the number of distinguishable meanings up to about 8000, and in addition a large number

of appendices give proper names, phrasal verbs and a range of semantic and morphological problem areas specific treatment within the same scale of grading. By and large the information is more easily retrievable than in other comparable reference works.

As was suggested in the discussion of reliability, it is difficult to evaluate the compilation procedures. Consequently, it is difficult to establish the significance of the information gained from the lexicon, except for taking on trust that it has worked for materials writers in the past. For this reason, it would have been helpful to have been given some information about how it has been used, and, particularly, how flexible writers found themselves being, what criteria for exceptions were established in the process of making simplifications of texts, and what other difficulties they encountered. It might have been particularly helpful if the following rules of thumb had been suggested:

1. Clarify in your own mind the type of learner you are writing for, as precisely as possible;
2. Write your text as clearly and appropriately as you can, without any reference to the lexicon;
3. Check it, with the help of at least one other competent person, and consult the lexicon for all lexical items in problem areas, regardless of how certain you are of their suitability;
4. Wherever the lexicon conflicts with your text examine the context for support, perhaps interpolate paraphrase or explanation if that can be done easily, and only change the item if that can be done without effort;
5. Never let the lexicon outweigh your own conviction, but do let it inform and sensitise your judgement.

In a nutshell, the lexicon should be used negatively by writers, not positively. Only in this way will the writing of materials remain writing. As Michael West has remarked, 'those most likely to do this work effectively would themselves be capable of selling an original story or novel' (West, 1964). A couple of pages of discussion along these lines would improve the lexicon greatly, and prevent its being used as a straight-jacket on interesting writing. Hindmarsh several times indicates that word levels are not everything without giving even the most intuitive help about how to limit their potential stranglehold. As Humpty Dumpty reminds Alice, 'The question is, which is to be master. That's all.' (Carroll, 1872).

This last point is really an important one. A word list such as this one does provide us with a common point of reference, and such a point of reference enables writers to defend themselves against insensitive editors. But it risks making the limited aspects of language which are at the moment susceptible to clear, even if intuitive classification the dominant ones in materials writing. However scientifically-based the materials, they must stand or fall on whether they relate genuinely to the reader. Colour and humour may be far more important than word level, information control may prevent readers from doing what all native-speaking readers do - allow approximate meanings (Ripon is a place in Britain, it does not matter for the purposes of the story whereabouts), and much EFL publishing policy may lead to the conclusion that foreign readers are ignorant, stupid and

illiterate in their mother tongues. Readers for EFL/ESL need redundancy, need interest, need to be more difficult than learners can cope with linguistically, but not too much more, and above all need to be written by people who can write well. Otherwise they are likely to train foreign learners in how not to read. The Cambridge English Lexicon is to be welcomed as a potentially most useful weapon. But we must be careful who we point it at.

Christopher Brumfit

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Note: I have discussed a number of points made in this review with various colleagues, to whom I am most grateful, particularly Monica Vincent.

NOTICES

HISTORY OF THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH / HISTORY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

I would like to make a preliminary inquiry about interest in the general field of the history of English teaching and the related field of the social history of the spread of English. If there is enough interest expressed I shall propose this as a topic for a BAAL seminar in a year or two. Particularly, I would be interested in hearing from anyone who is researching into this area, particularly if they might be willing to present a paper. I would also be grateful for any information about materials, published or unpublished, which examine any aspect of such history. If a seminar is possible, or if enough materials of sufficient interest emerge, there is a strong possibility of publication.

Please write to C.J.Brumfit, University of London Institute of Education,
20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL.

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CHINA

People completing postgraduate diplomas, M.A. or M.Phil courses, who might be interested in a one-year post in China are invited to write to Alan Maley, First Secretary (Cultural) British Embassy, Peking, enclosing a CV.

Also, Lecturers in Applied Linguistics/Methodology who could go to China for a minimum of three months to run workshops, etc. should contact Alan Maley.

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The Applied Linguistics Association of Australia has produced as its fourth Occasional Paper a collection of Varieties of Language and Language Teaching, edited by Frances Christie & Joan Pothery. There are five interesting papers on standard and non-standard English, teacher training and language teaching, and the multicultural concept. This can be obtained from Horwood Language Centre, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria 3052, Australia.

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RECENT BOOKS NOTED

- Academic Press: ed. Uta Frith - Cognitive Processes in Spelling, £17.
 Robyn Penman - Communication Processes and Relationships, £9.80.
 Svenka Savic - How Twins Learn to Talk, £15.
- Basil Blackwell: Julia Kristeva - Desire in Language, a semiotic approach to
 literature and art, £8.95.
 James D. McCawley - Everything that Linguists have always
 wanted to know about logic, £15.
 Muriel Saville-Troike - The Ethnography of Communication,
 £12, PB £4.95.
 David Sutcliffe - British Black English, £9.95 (+ cassette £10).
 ed. Paul Walton and Howard Davis - Language, Image and the
 Media, £12. P.B. £5.50.
- Croom Helm: Gillian Brown, Karen Currie and Joanne Kenworthy - Questions of
 intonation, £9.95.
 ed. Peter French and Margaret MacLure - Adult-Child Conversation:
 studies in structure and process, £12.95.
 Susan Grohs Iwamura - The Verbal Games of pre-school children,
 £ 10.50.
- International African Institute (via Oxford University) ed. Edgar C Polome & C.P. Hill - Language in Tanzania (Ford
 Foundation Language Survey report).
- Mouton: Corinne Adams - English Speech Rhythm and the Foreign Learner,
 \$ 37.75.
 ed. Mary Ritchie Key - The Relationship of Verbal and Non-verbal
 Communication, \$38.75, PB \$12.50.
 ed. William Francis Mackey and Jacob Ornstein - Sociolinguistic
 Studies in Language Contact, \$62.
- Pergamon Press: Kellerman, M. - Reading, the forgotten third skill, £3.50.

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Please send correspondence and contributions to future issues to:-

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