

William A. Foley: *Anthropological Linguistics. An Introduction*. Language in Society Series 24, edited by Peter Trudgill. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997. xvii + 495 pp. £16.99 (paperback).

In the last five years the anthropologists Salzmänn (1993; see Senft 1995), Agar (1994; see Scollon 1995), and Duranti (1997) have published introductory books on “linguistic anthropology.” These books primarily address anthropologists as their readership. This cross- and interdisciplinary field, however, needs approaches from both of its constituent disciplines — anthropology and linguistics, and Bill Foley’s outstanding textbook on “anthropological linguistics” finally appeals — as its title indicates — to the more linguistically oriented reader.

The book consists of six parts that are framed by the series editor’s and the author’s preface, Foley’s acknowledgements, a comprehensive list of references (pp. 435–468), and an excellent, detailed, and exhaustive index (pp. 469–495).

Part I of the textbook (pp. 3–40), the introduction, sets the scene for the reader. In the very first sentence Foley defines “anthropological linguistics” (from here onward abbreviated as AL) as “that sub-field of linguistics which is concerned with the place of language in its wider social and cultural context, its role in forging and sustaining cultural practices and social structures.” He points out that AL “views language through the prism of the core anthropological concept, culture, and as such, seeks to uncover the *meaning* behind the use, misuse or non-use of language, its different forms, registers and styles.” Moreover, he emphasizes that AL is “an interpretive discipline peeling away at language to find cultural understanding” (p. 3). “Meaning,” “culture,” and “language” are the central concepts in this chapter. Foley first discusses the concept of meaning, especially meaning as “mental representation” and “meaning as enaction.” He then points out that the concepts “culture” and “language” have to be regarded as “loosely structured domains of practices through which social actors navigate their way meaningfully in the world” (p. 40). After a definition of “culture” as “that transgenerational domain of practices through which human organisms communicate with each other” (p. 14) he discusses meaning in cultural practice (i.e. the field of “symbolic anthropology”), culture and cognition (i.e. the field of “cognitive anthropology”), and cultural practices and social differentiation. An extremely important domain of cultural practices is that involving linguistic practices. Foley defines them as practices “which coordinate our behavior through linguistic signs” (p. 25). He then discusses the nature of the “linguistic sign,” the idea of language as signs, and the principles of their combinations, that is, grammar. He deals with

grammar first as a computational system and then as a conceptual system with grammatical categories as its subsystems. Throughout this chapter the author emphasizes that the knowledge of the communicative practices discussed is distributed along social lines. This fact is also responsible for a certain overlap of AL with sociolinguistics. Like all the chapters, this introduction ends with a brief summary and an extremely helpful list of further reading with respect to the main topics discussed.

Part II (and chapter two) of the book (pp. 43–78) deals with “a possible scenario for the evolution of language” (p. 43). Foley discusses the theory of evolution in general, presents an overview of human evolution, and summarizes the prerequisites for the emergence of human language, its development, and the social dimension to language evolution. Foley adds to this interesting — and sometimes provoking — overview on the state of the art an epilogue on the linguistic capacities of apes.

Part III of the textbook deals with the topic “Universalism: innate constraints on mind” (pp. 79–165). This part “looks at some potentially universal constraints on the kinds of meanings that humans can ascribe to signs and the systems that these might form” (p. 81) and encompasses five chapters. Chapter three — “Mind, universals, and the sensible world” — presents a brief overview of the philosophical debate between rationalism and empiricism and Kant’s reconciliation of Platonic views with the ideas of the empiricists on human knowledge, reasoning, and the mind. Foley shows how deeply the social and cognitive sciences are influenced by Kant’s assumption that mental representations establish an intermediate level between our sensory experience and its neurological realization in our brains. The theory of mental representations views cognition “as computations using these mental representations” (p. 87). “Universals of human cognition are put down to innate constraints on the properties of these mental representations” (p. 90). The question of “where to localize and how to state these innate constraints” (p. 90) still constitutes a central aspect of much research done in the cognitive sciences these days. Foley ends this chapter by presenting the theories of connectionism and enactionism as challenges to the theoretical supremacy of mental representations in cognition.

Chapter four on “Structuralism” (pp. 92–105) and chapter five on “Cognitive anthropology” (pp. 106–130) illustrate the strong influence of the Platonic and rationalist legacy within anthropology. Chapter four points out that structuralism in anthropology, most prominently represented by the school of Claude Levi-Strauss, took up the ideas of structural linguistics — as proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure and developed by the group of scholars known as “the Prague school” — in its attempt

to construct grammars of culture in much the same way as linguists construct grammars of languages. Foley first summarizes and nicely illustrates the basic ideas of structural linguistics and its conception with respect to the meaning of the sign. Then he discusses Levi-Strauss's crucial innovations to the structuralist theory, the extension of the "notion of defining oppositional features to the analysis of meaning and . . . cultural categories" (p. 98), and the abandoning of Saussure's empiricism for the rationalist position with its claim that the human mind is everywhere the same. The basic function of human minds is to classify; this classification is done on the basis of "a finite, universally available series of semantic oppositions which underlie all cultural categories" (p. 105). Foley illustrates these basic principles for structural analyses in anthropology with the famous study by Leach (1964) concerning taboo and animal terms of abuse in English.

After dealing with this European form of structuralism Foley presents in the next chapter the American school of structural anthropology, better known as "cognitive anthropology." After a brief summary of the roots and the history of cognitive anthropology, the author points out that this paradigm "holds that culture is to be reduced to cognition and is interested in the mental representation of cultural practices" (p. 129). For the explicit representation of this cognitive organization of cultural phenomena, cognitive anthropologists use various analytical procedures and methods such as, for example, componential analysis, taxonomy, and paronymy. To describe culture practices they apply the idea of "scripts" that had its origin in artificial intelligence research. Foley briefly describes and illustrates all these methods. Moreover, on the basis of descriptions of ethnobiological classification systems he critically illustrates how in the course of time the paradigm developed more and more into a completely rationalist and universalist theory.

Another semantic domain in which cognitive anthropologists did seminal research is "kinship." This probably favorite subject within the discipline of anthropology is also "a cultural domain within which anthropological linguists have sought to identify universal constraints" (p. 148). In chapter six (pp. 131–149) Foley provides a brief but very clear introduction to kinship analysis. He discusses universals and variation in kinship systems, providing analyses of the Watam consanguineal kin terms, illustrating the Crow-type kinship system, and presenting the (once hotly debated) Trobriand case. The author ends this chapter with a brief discussion of relativist responses to the universalist approaches to this semantic domain.

The last semantic domain that is treated in this third part of the textbook is "color." In chapter seven (pp. 150–165) of his textbook Foley

first discusses the neurophysiology of color and color categorization reflected in languages. He points out that due to the panhuman neurophysiology of human vision “the systems of color terminologies among the languages of the world present a promising case for the establishment of universals in human categorization” (p. 164). Based on the classic — and recently highly criticized (see Saunders and van Brakel 1997) — work in the tradition of Berlin and Kay the author gives an overview of the research on basic color terms and universal constraints on color categorization and summarizes in the last section of this chapter the relativist challenges and responses to this approach.

In the last two chapters in this section, on kinship and color, Foley also briefly outlines some relativist responses to the universalist views presented. The fourth part of the book now takes up the philosophical idea of relativism in detail. As indicated in its title, “Relativism: cultural and linguistic constraints on mind” (pp. 167–245), this part presents the position that contrasts with universalist rationalism characteristic for the research traditions presented in part three of the book. This fourth part also encompasses five chapters.

Chapter 8 (pp. 169–178) is “On relativist understanding.” Foley presents a clear introduction to relativism, discussing the indeterminacy of translation, the “bridgehead” of understanding idea, and hermeneutics. In the last section of this chapter he briefly outlines enactionism as a challenge to relativist epistemology. As he does throughout the book, the author manages to discuss even highly problematic issues and their philosophical aspects and implications in an extremely lucid way.

In chapter 9, “Models and metaphors” (pp. 179–191), Foley discusses the “issue of the construction in language of models for construing experience” (p. 179). To illustrate how these models for understanding work, he summarizes the by now classic study by Gentner and Gentner (1982) on people’s folk theories of electricity — theories that understand the essentially invisible mechanisms of electricity in terms of either the flowing water or the moving crowd model. He illustrates that these models seem to be “good to think with” and actually “constitute people’s understanding of phenomena” (p. 181). They are constructions of language, they are metaphors constitutive of understanding especially highly abstract domains. Foley discusses some of these metaphors and demonstrates that their effect is so pervasive in language that “even the scope of grammatical categories does not escape it” (p. 191).

This important observation leads straight to the discussion of “Linguistic relativity and the Boasian tradition” presented in chapter 10 (pp. 192–214). After an introduction to the European precursors of Boas’s principle of linguistic relativity, Foley pays tribute to Boas’s origi-

nal contribution, briefly describes the development of his ideas by Sapir, and discusses Whorf's formulation of the principle, emphasizing that he is "of central importance for the ground-breaking empirical study he did of the relationship between the linguistic patterns of a people and their habitual conceptual systems of interpretation" (p. 208). The chapter ends with a sketch of more recent work by John Lucy (see also Lee 1994, 1996) and Michael Silverstein revitalizing and refining research within the Boasian tradition.

As in the previous part of the book, three more historically and theoretically oriented chapters are followed by two chapters that exemplify the theory in focus by referring to empirical studies. In chapter 11 (pp. 215–229) and in chapter 12 (pp. 230–245) Foley discusses proposed universals and recent research on relativities in the conceptualizations of space as well as universal ontology versus ontological relativity in classifiers. The domain of "space" as well as the grammatical category of "classifiers" prove to be excellent grounds for investigating the validity of the principle of linguistic relativity.

After having discussed the two central traditions of universalism and relativism within AL, the fifth part of the book on "The ethnography of speaking" (pp. 247–378) treats various sociocultural issues (paying tribute to John Gumperz and Dell Hymes and their influence with respect to more sociolinguistic aspects of AL). This part consists of six chapters.

In chapter 13 (pp. 249–259) Foley illustrates Hymes's claim that "cultural values and beliefs are in part constitutive of linguistic reality" (p. 250) with examples of litigation, the settling of disputes, and greeting rituals. Chapter 14 discusses "Politeness, face, and the linguistic construction of personhood" (pp. 260–285). Chapter 15 deals with "Language and gender" (pp. 286–306). Chapter 16, on "Language and social position" (pp. 307–344), discusses among other things aspects of social stratification, class, status, power, honorifics, sociolinguistic variables, code switching phenomena, diglossia situations, and Vernacular Black English. Chapter 17 topicalizes research on "Language socialization" (pp. 345–358), and chapter 18 on "Genre: poetics, ritual languages and verbal art" (pp. 359–378) presents a brief but fascinating introduction to ethnopoetics.

The sixth and last part of the monograph deals with "Culture and language change" (pp. 379–434). It encompasses three chapters.

Chapter 19 discusses "Contact induced language change" including the topics "pidgin languages" and "language death" (pp. 381–397). Chapter 20 on "Standard languages and linguistic engineering" (pp. 398–416) topicalizes sources, histories, and ideologies within processes of language standardization and language planning for languages such as (Standard) English,

Dutch, Norwegian, Indonesian, and Thai. And Chapter 21, finally, deals with “Literacy” (pp. 417–434). Among other things this chapter emphasizes the social impact of literacy, its cognitive consequences and effects, discusses differences between oral and written language, and presents a variety of literacy practices in different communities.

Foley manages to illustrate all the wide-ranging topics, issues, and research questions discussed in this comprehensive textbook with numerous, detailed, clear, and expressive examples that are taken from a broad variety of cultures and languages. His extensive experience as a long-term field researcher and his didactic skills as professor of linguistics put his personal, individual stamp on this book that is as fascinating as it is easy to read — despite its complex topic. (There is just one exception to this general statement. The present reviewer has great difficulties in parsing the following sentence on p. 191: “These frameworks, which guide inferences, such as, electricity is like a teeming crowd, therefore that q, is a construction of language, a metaphor . . . .”) The monograph is intended as a “textbook for advanced undergraduate or graduate students” (p. xiv). And it certainly provides an excellent basis for both basic and advanced courses in AL (as well as in sociolinguistics). However, given its clarity, its richness of detail, and its depth of discussion, other experts within the field will also profit highly from reading this book.

It is rather difficult for a reviewer to find points for negative criticism. One of the few shortcomings I noticed is that “Keesing 1981,” quoted on page 40, is not mentioned in the list of references. Another minor point is that Herder is usually referred to with his full name, Johann Gottfried Herder (and not just Johann Herder; p. 193). Moreover, contrary to Foley’s (and Greenberg’s [1975: 25]) statement (on page 231), not all but only the majority of nouns in classifier languages lack a marking with respect to the category “number” (see Senft 1996: 6). One may also wonder why Foley does not quote Hutchins (1980) in connection with litigation problems (in chapter 13) — but all this is carping.

To sum up, Foley’s book, the “linguistic ‘take’ on this crossdisciplinary field” with its “particular, coherent biologically based viewpoint to the topics covered” (p. xiv) is a unique introduction to AL, a must for every linguist and anthropologist interested in the interdependencies between, and the interrelationships of, language, biology, culture, and cognition. Foley’s book illustrates quite convincingly that “Linguistics without anthropology is sterile; anthropology without linguistics is blind” (Hockett 1973: 675).

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R. M. W. Dixon: *The Rise and Fall of Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. vi + 169 pp.

In this short book, Dixon pursues two separate goals. First, the book can serve as an excellent introduction to the general principles and some current issues concerning genetic and areal relationships between languages. If you are looking for a birthday present for a friend who is an archeologist, historian, or biologist or otherwise interested in linguists' current views of linguistic diversity on a global scale, this is an appropriate choice. (This aspect of the book will of course also be useful for linguists in other subfields such as psycholinguistics or pragmatics — but if your friend is a formal grammarian, be careful, for reasons mentioned below.) Besides general discussions of internal and contact-induced change,

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