

Book reviews

Thomas E. Payne: *Describing Morphosyntax: A Guide for Field Linguists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997, xvi + 413 pp. US \$24.95 (paperback).

According to reliable estimates, a third of the world's 6,500 languages will become extinct in the next century. More pessimistic estimates even predict the death of up to 90% of our natural languages. The disappearance, in the near future, of most of the languages (and dialects) of the world will deprive us of a significant portion of the cultural and historical heritage of mankind. In the last few years action in response to this threat of language extinction has been taking shape in the form of national and international activities for the maintenance and documentation of endangered languages. To document endangered languages, however, is not an easy task — as many of us know, and despite the fact that there are a few good books on the market that provide information with respect to how to describe a so-far undocumented language (see, e.g., Bouquiaux and Thomas 1992), there is a strong need, no doubt, for good linguistic fieldworkers' guides on how to write a description of one of the many un- or underdocumented languages of the world. Thomas Payne intends his monograph as such a guide for linguists "who desire to write a description of the morphology and syntax" of one (or more) of these languages (p. 1). And, based on this experience as a linguistic fieldworker and as a teacher of syntax and semantics courses at the University of Oregon, he has managed to come up with an excellent guidebook, indeed.

After the table of contents, the acknowledgements, and a list of abbreviations, Payne uses the introduction (pp. 1–12) to point out once more the purpose of this book and to briefly explain its structure: from chapter 2 on, "section headings and subheadings propose one possible system for interpreting, categorizing, and describing grammatical structures Section headings that contain zeros ... are extended commentary related

to the next-higher outline heading ... (and at) ... the end of each major section there appear questions that are meant to stimulate thought on key topics in morphosyntactic descriptions" (p. 2f.). Quite often the author provides references for further reading together with these questions. Moreover, Payne emphasizes that his guide cannot provide answers to all the questions that arise for field linguists in their interaction with the data; however, he also points out that this has an important pedagogical effect: in such situations "linguists learn where our theoretical conceptions need to be revised" (for some illustrations of such effects see the contributions in Reesink 1994a, 1994b); therefore this book explicitly encourages "field linguists to find holes in current theoretical understandings of linguistic structures" (p. 4). In the remaining sections of this chapter Payne discusses some central terminology and recurring metaphors like "meaning and form, prototypes and fuzzy categories, operations and operators, message world and discourse stage," etc., and he concludes his introduction by pointing out that approaches to linguistic description must be aware of the fact that "language is both a tool used by people for communication and a formal symbolic system ... (The linguists's) understanding of the formal systematic properties of language must be informed by an understanding of the purposes language serves and the human environment in which it exists" (p. 11). Thus, Payne's view on how to do descriptive linguistics can be taken as another variation of the theme, "linguistics without anthropology is sterile; anthropology without linguistics is blind" that Hockett (1973: 675) (re-)introduced a while ago (see Senft 1992: 69, 84).

Chapter 1 (pp. 13–19) deals with demographic and ethnographic information that is necessary to identify the language and to present its speech community within its ethnolinguistic and sociolinguistic context. Payne rightly emphasizes once more that linguistic researchers also have to take careful ethnographic notes throughout their fieldwork "since an essential aspect of knowing a language is knowing the people who speak the language" (and the reviewer wants to lament here again that it is indeed almost unbelievable that this insight does not yet seem to be trivial for all linguists).

The next chapter (pp. 20–31) deals with morphological typology, presenting a framework for describing the general morphological characteristics of a language. Payne first provides a general historical background and definitions of central terms and concepts like, for example, (bound and free) morpheme, clitic, allomorph, morphophonemic rules, root, stem, and derivational and inflectional operations. Then the author discusses traditional morphological typology, morphological processes, and head/dependent marking. From chapter two on it becomes immediately

evident that Payne indeed sticks to his conviction that “the best way to understand language, as well as any particular language, is intense interaction with data” (p. 3): the book provides the reader with extensive illustrative examples from a broad selection of various languages of the world.

Chapter 3 (pp. 32–70) deals with grammatical categories. Payne discusses nouns, types of nouns, and the structure of the noun word, pronouns and/or anaphoric clitics, verbs, semantic roles and their linguistic encoding, verb classes, modifiers (adjectives, nonnumeral quantifiers, and numerals), and adverbs. Again, Payne excellently illustrates this discussion of grammatical categories with examples from many different languages. Moreover, in its “guide-for-field-linguists” function the chapter presents some nice solutions to how a linguist can solve the problem of how to grammatically categorize a given form. In dealing with the linguistic encoding of semantic roles, Payne points out that the “important question for descriptive linguists is how the morphosyntax of the language is sensitive to semantic roles ... which grammatical relations express which semantic roles in which contexts?” (p. 52). This question is one of the (necessarily) recurrent leitmotifs in Payne’s book, by the way.

The next topic discussed by Payne is “constituent order typology” (pp. 71–91). In a brief introduction the author presents and criticizes Greenberg’s original six-way typology (SOV, SVO, VSO, VOS, OSV, and OVS) and replaces the traditional two-way distinction between subject and object with a three-way distinction among “semantico-syntactic roles” (Comrie 1987). Within this framework the subject category consists of the set of the A (= most agentlike argument of a multiargument clause) together with the S (= only argument of a single-argument clause), while the absolutive category consists of the set of S together with P (= least agentlike argument of a multiargument clause). In this framework languages are characterized in terms of A, S, P, and V, and Payne now presents the three most common constituent order types, namely APV/SV (e.g. Japanese), AVP/SV (e.g. English), and VAP/VS (e.g. many Austronesian languages). Within this more adequate descriptive framework, the author discusses constituent order in main clauses and then the verb phrase, the noun phrase, adpositional phrases, comparatives, question particles, and question words.

In chapters two to four many categories, structures, and operations are mentioned from a “form-first” perspective. In the following chapters these categories, structures, and operations are discussed in more detail. Chapter 5 (pp. 92–110) deals with the noun and noun-phrase operations. It “describes tasks or functions that tend to be associated with noun phrases, and presents further details concerning how morphosyntactic

operations are expressed in noun phrases” (p. 92). Payne discusses compounding, denominalization, number, case, articles, determiners and demonstratives, possessors, class (including gender), and diminution/augmentation.

Chapter 6 (pp. 111–128) deals with predicate nominals and related constructions, like predicate adjectives (attributive clauses), predicate locatives, existentials, and possessive clauses.

In the next chapter, on grammatical relations (pp. 129–168), Payne elaborates on the terms A, S, P, and V (which he introduced in chapter 4). He presents systems for grouping S, A, and P and provides functional explanations for these groupings; he discusses split intransitivity and split ergativity systems, and finally “syntactic” ergativity. The author always succeeds in making all the notions he refers to concrete with actual and excellently chosen examples.

Chapter 8 (pp. 169–222) elaborates on voice and valence-adjusting operations. After a brief introduction Payne discusses valence and predicate calculus (with the more than appropriate warning “not to bias one’s analysis of the semantics of an expression in the actual language by superimposing the semantics of the meta-language on it,” p. 175) and presents, describes, and explains valence-increasing and valence-decreasing operations.

The next chapter (pp. 223–260) deals with other verb and verb-phrase operations: Payne discusses nominalization, compounding (including incorporation), tense/aspect/mode, location/direction, participant reference, evidentially, validationality and mirativity, and a few miscellaneous verb or verb-phrase operations like lexical time reference (as opposed to tense), etc.

In chapter 10 (pp. 261–305) pragmatically marked structures are presented. Payne first discusses pragmatic statuses (e.g. given, new presupposed, focus, topic, referential, etc.) and then deals with the morphosyntax of focus, contrast, and “topicalization,” negation, and nondeclarative speech acts.

Chapter 11 (pp. 306–341) deals with clause combinations; it is “organized according to six general types of multiple verb constructions” (p. 306) and presents serial verbs, complement clauses, adverbial clauses, clause chaining, medial clauses and switch reference, relative clauses, and coordination.

The final chapter has the somewhat misleading heading “Conclusions: the language in use” (pp. 342–364). Here Payne first discusses “some general properties of discourse that tend to be reflected in language,” then he presents “a survey of various discourse genres,” and finally he suggests “several topics that may be treated in a concluding section of

a grammatical description,” (p. 343) like, for example, idiomatic expressions/proverbs and sound symbolism.

An appendix on the different qualities of elicited and text data (pp. 366–371) and another one that presents sample reference grammars (pp. 372–374) are followed by very helpful and informative endnotes to the previous chapters (pp. 376–381). In the references (pp. 382–395) Payne lists about 270 titles, and the book ends with an index of languages, language families, and language areas (pp. 396–401) and with the subject index (pp. 402–413).

The chapters of this book are very well cross-referenced (see, e.g., p. 100, p. 128), the book is clearly structured, and the author’s style is easy to read, despite the sometimes rather “dry” linguistics the book presents — the author tries to somewhat counterbalance this fact with some (generation-specific) English example sentences (see, e.g., his reference to Che Guevara, p. 49; to marijuana, p. 377; and to the sad observation that “not many people like Vonnegut,” p. 293).

There are a few typos (e.g. p. 75; read “argument” for “arguement”; p. 87: read “Reh” for “Re”; p. 389 read “Bernd Heine” for “Berndt Heine”), p. 189f. gives three variants of a proper name, “Ariberito,” “Aribertito,” “Arberto”; on p. 273 the gloss in example (22) is not properly aligned; on p. 309 example (6b) is not glossed properly; for some examples there are no sources given (e.g. p. 56, examples [35]–[37]; p. 64, examples [48]–[50]; p. 124, examples [32]–[34]); and the references to Tomlin (1986) on p. 140 and to Tomlin (1995) on p. 345 cannot be found in the list of references. Sometimes references to by-now classic or important publications are missing: Payne discusses, for example, “adjectives” without referring to Dixon (1982); he discusses “motion” without referring to the quite influential contributions to this field by researchers like, for example, Talmy (1975, 1985); and he discusses “conjunction reduction” (p. 165) without even mentioning Bühler (1934, 1990).

What is somewhat annoying, however, is the fact that in the subsection on “class (including gender),” noun-class systems and numeral-classifier systems are not clearly differentiated (although this shortcoming is partly compensated by the author’s reference to the literature at the end of subsection 5.7). Moreover, the subsection on “serial verbs” is neither up to date (see e.g. Durie 1997) nor always correct: thus, contrary to Payne’s statement on p. 308, there are languages with independent tense/aspect marking of the second verb (Senft 1986: 39ff.), and “serial verbs” should be differentiated from “co-verbs” (p. 312). Finally, the discussion of “discourse analysis” in the last chapter has little to do with discourse analysis as it is done these days. Payne’s references to the literature here are not at all up-to-date; he presents an example of “phatic communion”

(on p. 357) without even mentioning this concept, and his examples for folk stories and mythology reflect some American ethnocentrism (the European reviewer had to consult the Encyclopedia Britannica to find out that Paul Bunyan is the name of a mythical hero of the lumber camps of the USA who symbolizes size, strength, and vitality). Such slight shades of ethnocentrism are also reflected, by the way, in the discussion of the contracted form of the negative particle in English: the fact that this form is “often almost imperceptible, especially in certain environments, e.g., *I can talk* vs. *I can't talk*” (p. 284) is only true for American English. However, given the fact that Payne manages to discuss all the central aspects of morphosyntax with which linguists will inevitably be confronted in their attempts to collect enough linguistic data for writing a grammar of the language they are studying (and learning to speak) in the field, these shortcomings become rather marginal.

To sum up, *Describing Morphosyntax* is an excellent guide for field linguists (and a good textbook for introductory courses on morphosyntax, too). It presents extremely helpful information for anyone who wants “to write a description of the morphology and syntax of one of the many under-documented languages of the world” (p. 1), and it should be an indispensable component of any fieldworker’s “field kit.”

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Klaus J. Mattheier and Edgar Radtke, editors: *Standardisierung und Destandardisierung europäischer Nationalsprachen*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1997. ix + 290 pp.

The process of standardization of European languages, in particular in the course of the past five hundred years, has been the focus of much sociohistorical linguistic research. The present book is the first result in print of a new graduate course devoted to the dynamics of standard languages at the universities of Heidelberg and Mannheim; the 17 papers here printed are the proceedings of a symposium held in 1994.

Short introductions by Radtke (pp. vii–ix) and Mattheier (pp. 1–10), surveying processes in modern European languages and relating the subsequent papers to methodological concerns, are followed by two papers on Latin. Rosén points to tendencies that made classical Latin the well-regulated language it is in the time of Cicero (pp. 11–33), an account that is complemented by Corradetti’s short paper on the standardization of Latin (pp. 35–40). Both provide useful summaries for scholars oriented toward modern languages but fail to teach us whether we “can use the past to explain the present” (and not all arguments are easy to understand for people without a detailed knowledge of Latin). The next two papers discuss the present-day situation in Italy. Sobrero summarizes the expansion of standard registers and the drastic decline of broad dialect (pp. 41–59, in Italian); this is taken up in Scholz’s survey (pp. 61–86) of how registers and text types are correlated with varieties, including the questionable future of regional dialects, the functions of *italiano popolare* and special terminologies, the evolving neostandard, and the possible outcome of the ongoing restructuring. Cartegena (pp. 87–102) summarizes the problematic standardization of colonial

varieties using the case of South American Spanish (a reference to developments in postcolonial Englishes would have been welcome). González de Sarralde looks at the same phenomenon from the point of view of the Spanish Royal Academy (pp. 103–109); she sees a slow and moderate softening of Eurocentric prescriptivism in their attitudes. The complex linguistic situation of Paraguay, which is often very misleadingly designated as “bilingual,” is the topic of Thielmann’s informative paper (pp. 111–127); however, a full standardization of any of the languages/varieties involved is obviously not in sight, so the argument is slightly out of focus. Auer’s paper (pp. 129–161) on the development of the local norms in the city of Konstanz, and on Saxon migrants’ accommodation to regiolects in Konstanz and Saarbrücken is especially relevant, combining well-researched case studies with theoretical insights — and being right in the heart of the focus of the symposium. Gilles (pp. 163–169) adds some insights evolving from the formation of a modern koiné in Luxembourg. Ammon’s exemplary discussion of forms of standards and nonstandards of German is of the expected methodological rigidity and precision; it is the only contribution that also includes questions relating to pluricentric norms. Huesmann (pp. 193–199) adds another facet by analyzing the treatment of German lexis in the Austrian dictionary. The concluding papers on modern developments in Czech (by Daneš, pp. 201–213, and Schreiber, pp. 215–220), Polish (by Mazur, pp. 221–236), and Albanian (by Breu, pp. 215–257) are a welcome addition, because they provide instances of sociolinguistic processes that permit us to return to our own problems with new insights. There is an “afterword” by Haarmann, who places the topic of standardization in the framework of cultural anthropology (pp. 259–290).

The volume makes stimulating reading. It is a pity that there is no index to follow up where recurring topics are mentioned, given the absence of cross-references between individual articles (e.g. *purism*). The decision to include young scholars side by side with established linguists has proved fruitful and felicitous. The editors did not intend to give a comprehensive survey; therefore there is no reason to complain about the absence of treatments of English, French, Spanish, Norwegian, Romansch, Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian — and many other setups that would have provided ample relevant material. Most of the contributions are in German, which one hopes will not keep them from being duly noticed.