

R.R.K. Hartmann (Ed.). *Solving Language Problems: From General to Applied Linguistics*, 1st edition 1996, vi + 298 pp. ISBN 0-85989-484-3. Exeter: University of Exeter Press. Price £13,95.

Questions about the nature of linguistics and its contribution to human intellectual pursuit often appear in academic discussions and in casual conversations. While any language practitioner with a linguistic background can give an elaborate answer to these questions, the general perception, even amongst educated people, seems to be that linguistics is a somewhat esoteric discipline with little to offer towards "practical" issues such as language learning.

Hartmann's book, *Solving Language Problems*, offers an accessible survey of key areas in linguistics and their relevance in the field of applied linguistics. This edited volume, containing ten chapters, seeks to demonstrate that the relation between general and applied linguistics cannot be reducible to theory versus practice.

In their introductory chapter, Cahill and Hartmann defend the intellectual autonomy of linguistics and discuss the vast realm of applied linguistics. General linguistics has fragmented into a number of sub-areas and interdisciplinary fields and the more one moves from theory to practical problem solving, the more contact there is with other subject fields. This interdisciplinary nature lies at the heart of modern linguistics and at the same time is a defining feature of applied linguistics. The authors concede that the relation between the two appears to be mutually reinforcing rather than dichotomous. Interpretation also depends on the scope of meaning of the applied linguistics, which is viewed by some rather narrowly as a teaching-oriented field, and by others as a broadly understood study of the uses that a person makes of language and problems he or she encounters in the process.

The introduction also specifies the intended audience for the volume and recommends it as an "introduction to linguistics for students about to embark on a postgraduate course in the subject" (p. 11). The comment on the back cover of the book highlights its usefulness to undergraduates in the field of linguistics and applied linguistics. Ultimately, both these recommendations and the content of the whole volume leave one rather unclear about the target readers and how much knowledge of linguistics the authors assume a priori from their audience.

The topics selected for the volume fall into three groups: language theory, language description, and language use in context. The first includes a chapter on Transformational-Generative Grammar (Mersedeh Proctor) and a chapter devoted to Systemic Grammar (Steven Dodd). Language description comprises Phonetics and Phonology (Steven Dodd and Jon Mills) and Aspects of Lexical Semantics (Rufus Gouws) which — by the author's own admission — is not located in any particular theoretical framework. Language use in context is, predictably, most widely represented in the present volume and includes a contribution on Discourse (Mersedeh Proctor), chapters on Psycholinguistics

(Aidan Cahill) and Sociolinguistics (Mike O'Rourke), and three papers with a strong focus on applied linguistics as a teaching-oriented discipline: Orientations in Language Teaching and Testing (Diane Davies), Lexicography as an Applied Linguistic Discipline (Reinhard Hartmann) and Computers in Applied Linguistics (Jon Mills).

Given the number of contributions and the vast area of coverage, it is only to be expected that they will differ in depth of presentation; some offer a necessarily cursory view of a discipline (Phonetics and Phonology), others combine a fairly exhaustive theoretical exposition with a thorough analysis of data (Discourse). Stylistic variation is also palpable; ranging from a rigorous academic discourse of chapter 3 (Systemic Grammar), to a more casual mode of presentation in chapter 9 (Lexicography).

Although in general all contributions can be assessed as useful and instructive, a few contain certain problematic aspects.

The first contribution (by Steven Dodd and Jon Mills) provides an introduction to phonetics and phonology. While the need for the inclusion of a chapter on speech sounds and sound systems is indisputable, the description and presentation are inconsistent. The reader is acquainted with the IPA symbols, place and manner of articulation for such "exotic" sounds as the German voiceless palatal fricative, the uvular stop found in Arabic, or the uvular trill of French and German, yet the "commonplace" velar nasal found in English is referred to as the "sound written <ng>" (pp. 16, 17), with no accompanying symbol. The pulmonic airstream mechanism is described in detail but the glottalic airflow only receives a mention in the form of "implosive or explosive glottalic sounds" (p. 15), which can hardly satisfy the curiosity of a beginning student in linguistics for whom the book is intended.

The application of grammatical descriptions presented in chapter 2 (Transformational-Generative Grammar (TGG)) and in chapter 3 (Systemic Grammar), is, even according to the editor, not so clear-cut, although their relevance to linguistic theory in general is unquestionable. In fact, Proctor, after presenting her account of TGG gives three reasons why TGG cannot be used in classrooms, which is a laudable admission. She sees the lack of application of TGG in the classroom situation as resulting from the highly abstract nature of the theory, its disregard of the influence which the non-linguistic context exerts on language and its focus on a scientific description of language as an end in itself.

Proctor's treatment of thematic roles in the examples provided by her is somewhat unorthodox and I find myself in disagreement with her assignment of thematic roles. Her analysis of the sentence *Eliot drove her to hospital* is as follows (p. 55):

[Eliot] drove	[her]	to [hospital]
AGENT	BENEFACTIVE	SOURCE

While it has to be admitted that syntactic and semantic analyses are occasionally tinged with subjectivity (grammaticality judgement is perhaps the most salient example), the following assignment of thematic roles appears less controversial:

[Eliot] drove	[her]	to [hospital]
AGENT	THEME/PATIENT	GOAL

Steven Dodd's introductory account of Systemic Grammar presented in chapter 3 is packed with information and for that reason is not easily digestible for a beginning student of linguistics. It also contains a questionable exposition. On page 86, the author contradicts himself in the description and exemplification of the imperative mood, which, he says, is further divisible into *inclusive*, as in the example *Open the door!*, or *exclusive*, as in *Let's open the door*. The summing up of realisation rules at the bottom of the page presents us with an entirely different subdivision, namely: mood imperative inclusive contains the word *let*; mood imperative exclusive appears without it.

Rufus Gouws' chapter on aspects of lexical semantics offers a very informative introduction to the study of lexicon and sense relations holding between lexical items. However, bearing in mind the intended audience, one cannot shake off the impression that the wealth of factual information and new terminology can be overwhelming for a linguistic novice. For example, in his discussion of dictionaries, Gouws remarks that "[...] a dictionary has to convey a variety of information types, including information on the lexical meaning of the lemmas" (p. 100). While it has to be acknowledged that the term *lemma* has been in use for some time (e.g. Zgusta 1971, Levelt 1989), it has not been universally accepted by lexicographers and semanticists. Standard introductory textbooks in linguistics, like O'Grady *et al.* (1991) and Fromkin and Rodman (1988) also avoid the term. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the prospective student to have contentious elements of linguistic jargon explained before embarking on discussions of a more advanced level.

The chapter under discussion contains another potentially controversial point. In the section devoted to relations between lexical items and extralinguistic properties, Gouws offers an explanation of *reference* as the "relationship between an expression and its referents in the extralinguistic world". Further in the text, *denotation* is defined as the "relationship between a lexical item and the places, things, properties, persons, processes and activities outside the language system [...]" (p. 103). Given that a lexical item can also be an expression, these definitions do not seem to distinguish the two terms. Indeed, denotation is naturally connected with reference and some authorities do not draw any distinction between them. However, having these two terms discussed under separate headings might require some further elaboration. Perhaps it will be helpful to add that denotation belongs to a lexical item independently of its use on particular occasions of utterance, whereas the reference

of a referring expression is usually context-dependent.

The nature of this volume allows for a certain degree of proliferation of specialised linguistic terms but lack of adequate explanation can make the text impenetrable and unduly hard to read. Ultimately, one has to admit that it is not the link between linguistics and applied linguistics that leaves the reader with unanswered questions, but the uneven level of presentation and difference in the assumed level of knowledge.

The bottom line, however, is how much the book meets what it seeks to do at the outset, i.e. explain the nature of linguistics, its relevance and contribution to applied linguistics understood as "dealing with the practicalities of language". In this respect, *Solving Language Problems* is to be commended because of its contributors' dedicated and largely successful attempts to make the discipline more approachable and relevant. The book contains a wealth of information spanning a broad range of issues. The material presented is — on the whole — up to date, and despite stylistic and methodological heterogeneity, students with diverse academic interests and a common interest in linguistics are certain to find this volume a useful and valuable contribution.

References

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Ewa Clayton
Department of Linguistics
University of the Witwatersrand
Wits
South Africa