Tor A. Åfarli & Brit Mæhlum (eds.): *The Sociolinguistics of Grammar.* **Studies in Language Companion Series 154. Amsterdam: Benjamins 2014, 260 pp.**

This collection of articles (largely drawn from a conference in Trondheim, Norway, in September 2010) attempts to breach the gap between two 'camps' (p. 5): the grammarian camp and the sociolinguistic camp.

In the introduction by Åfarli & Mæhlum (pp. 1–12) the individual papers are introduced and a number of features are mentioned of the two 'camps'.

grammarian	*sociolinguistic*
autonomous	humanistic
speaker-oriented	humanities
speaker-free	speaker-centered
natural world	human-centered
formal	functional
syntax	sociolinguistics
	socio-historical linguistics
	actuation
	implementation/transmission
UG-based	historical
	semiotic
	hermeneutic
conceptual necessity	empirical coverage
	big processes (like globalization)
'laws'	'motivations'
knowledge-based	usage based

I will argue below that this representation or construal as two camps does not do justice to the actual state of research in this domain. First I will discuss the individual articles, however.

Mufwene (13–35) outlines the evolutionary perspective he has been proposing in a number of recent papers and books, which is item-based and emergentist. I found several statements a bit odd: 'This position does not deny the possibility that in human history some languages (such as the Romance languages) have emerged by speciation from a common ancestor, …' (21). As far as we know, there is clear evidence for this type of speciation for the vast majority of extant human languages. Also: 'The role of the mind should not be underestimated.' (30). To say the least.

Newmeyer (37–66), surveying a number of formal and functional approaches to syntactic change, argues for a fairly classical position: syntactic change involves change in specific grammatical rules, not in constructions, and not in parameters either (which are nothing but rules once reduced to microparameters). The paper contains a number of reasonable statements, but is at the same time a bit too wide-ranging and not focused enough to really drive home the main conclusion in detail.

Cornips (67–90) constitutes an interesting attempt to combine an approach to variation from a formal and from an agency-oriented perspective, focusing on two regions of the Netherlands: the province of Limburg and the urban western part of the country. She takes several morphosyntactic variables into account.

Nistov & Opsahl (91–115), in a very rich study, return to the tradition of urban sociolinguistics of Oslo, and focus on the lack of inversion (XVS versus XSV). The authors document that inversion is particularly frequent in multi-ethnolectal peer group conversations of young people, and almost absent in more formal interviews with young people of two Norwegian-born parents. The analysis is extended to include discursive and stylistic dimensions.

Fløgstad (117–135) documents the rise of the Preterite at the expense of the Perfect even in 'current relevance' discursive contexts in Rioplatense Spanish. This shift was accompanied by the emergence of *ya* 'already' in a new role as current relevance marker. The presence of many Sicilians in the original population of Buenos Aires may have been a contributing factor, but this cannot be proven.

Höder's contribution (137–152) is largely theoretical. He argues (139) that 'there has not been any successful attempt to actually integrate multilingualism as a basic feature into a coherent system of grammatical description', and proposes a formalism called Diasystematic Construction Grammar (DCxG), elaborating on the diasystem phonological and lexical item approach in Weinreich (1954). Since Construction Grammar is item based, this is a clear possibility, of course. He then applies this to a multilectal grammar comprising both Northern High German and Low German.

Åfarli & Jin (153–169) want to apply a neo-constructional grammatical model to Mandarin Chinese / Norwegian insertional code-switching, based on recordings with a bilingual child in Norway. In this type of model, the syntactic structure is generated separately from the lexicon, which is inserted at the end of the derivation, and this includes various morphosyntactic features and inflections. Notice that this approach is quite compatible with a model

such as Myers-Scotton (1993), where 'system morphemes' are taken to be part of the matrix structure in code-switching.
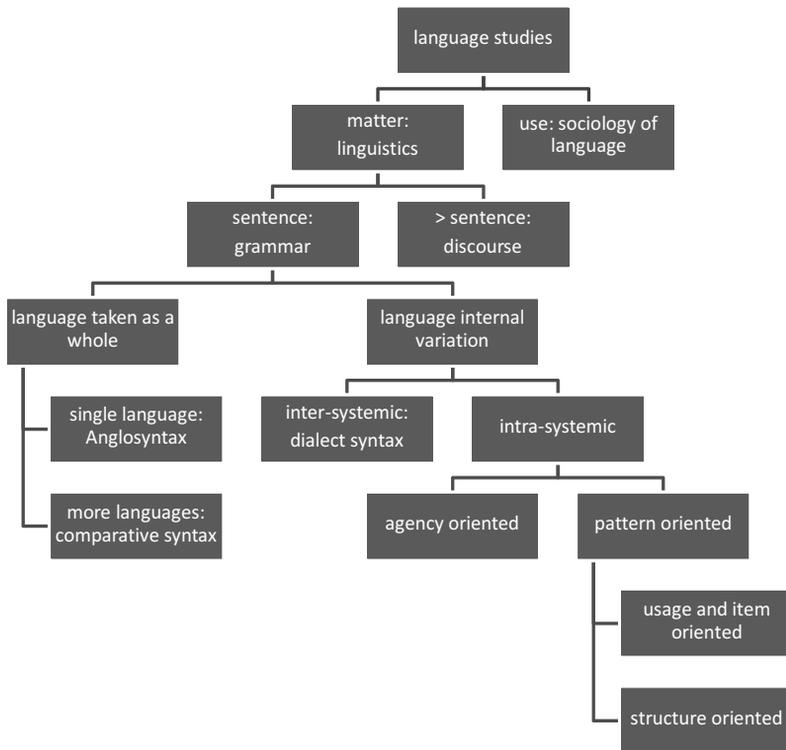
Nygård (171–189) reports on discourse ellipsis in spoken Norwegian, arguing for both structural and semantic constraints. Discourse ellipsis is treated as an interface phenomenon, while syntax itself is viewed as rigid. The paper would have been much better if it was entirely based on naturalistic data, for a topic such as this, or at least, if the naturalistic and the constructed data had been clearly distinguished.

Bickerton (191–201) returns to his Biological Program for language (the outlines of which are presented in an appendix), to explain creole genesis, and defends it against charges that it promotes 'creole exceptionalism', charges which are largely ideological in any case.

Aboh & DeGraff (203–236) focus on bare nouns in Haitian Creole and Gungbe, trying to explain their relatively wide distribution in these languages, and arguing for a mini-Transatlantic Sprachbund. The paper would have profited from insights from the WALS on the distribution of bare noun phrases (Dryer & Haspelmath 2013), although admittedly the information there on their syntactic distribution is limited.

Gregersen (237–257) compares several studies of spoken Danish, focusing on the variable (a), and argues that profound changes in the sociolinguistic make up of Copenhagen Danish are not only reflected in the socio-phonetic variants encountered but also in the different generations of researchers involved in coding and studying these variants. Sociolinguistic findings themselves are historically situated. The paper reminds me a bit of the discussion about transcription practices of the recordings of the last Americans who had been born in slavery (Bailey et al. 1991). How scholars perceived these recordings influenced very much their way of transcribing.

Having given a much too brief overview of the papers in the volume, I can now try to evaluate its contents, on several levels. On one level, it contains some very good empirical studies, next to some interesting theoretical proposals. At another level, it presents a number of attempts to combine some level of theoretical linguistic analysis with data related to language variation. It strikes the reader that there is a wide array of theoretical positions taken, and in this sense the introduction oversimplifies things a bit. Here I will try to schematically present some of the choices made in a tree diagram, a partial map of some domains of language studies.

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                        ┌──────────────────┐
                        │ language studies │
                        └──────────────────┘
                          │              │
              ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
              │ matter:      │      │ use: sociology of│
              │ linguistics  │      │ language         │
              └──────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
                │          │
        ┌────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
        │ sentence:  │  │ > sentence:  │
        │ grammar    │  │ discourse    │
        └────────────┘  └──────────────┘
          │        │
 ┌────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
 │ language taken │  │ language internal│
 │ as a whole     │  │ variation        │
 └────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘
    │                   │            │
 ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
 │ single       │  │ inter-       │  │ intra-       │
 │ language:    │  │ systemic:    │  │ systemic     │
 │ Anglosyntax  │  │ dialect      │  └──────────────┘
 └──────────────┘  │ syntax       │    │          │
 ┌──────────────┐  └──────────────┘  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
 │ more         │                    │ agency   │  │ pattern      │
 │ languages:   │                    │ oriented │  │ oriented     │
 │ comparative  │                    └──────────┘  └──────────────┘
 │ syntax       │                                    │
 └──────────────┘                              ┌──────────────┐
                                               │ usage and    │
                                               │ item oriented│
                                               └──────────────┘
                                               ┌──────────────┐
                                               │ structure    │
                                               │ oriented     │
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In this map a number of the crucial choices are mapped, relevant to the papers in this volume.

The first distinction is whether the focus is simply on *use* (when is which language used) or on *matter* (particular features of language). Use approaches fall under the sociology of language in a broad sense.

Second, there is the issue of whether the level of organization above or below the sentence is of crucial concern. Is the analysis centered on individual sounds, words, or sentences or do larger units of discourse play a role? Within discourse studies we find an array of approaches ranging from conversational analysis to discourse grammar.

Third, is variation viewed between or within languages? In the first case, there is a further split between viewing language from the perspective of a single system, Anglosyntax, or from a more comparative perspective, often with parameter style (micro-)variation, or taking a typological approach.

Fourth, is the variation represented within the formal representation of

language itself or not? Is the object of study knowledge of a system (competence) or use of that system in actual conversation (performance)? In the competence-oriented approach we often find micro-variation with parameters and multilingualism, as in the work of Kroch and Roeper.

When the variation is viewed as part of the system itself, there are many usage based approaches with strong emphasis on agency and on the interpretive component, as in the work of Eckert. Here intentions and motivations of speakers at the local level of the speech act (agency) play a role.

When the patterns of variation themselves are the key focus, there may be systematic attention to social factors (gender, class, education, etc.), as in Labov's and Poplack's work. Or the approach may be usage based with little concern for speaker or group related variation, as in Bybee's work.

Finally, the approach may be more structure oriented, and involve constraint rankings or variable rules of specific kinds. Here lies the real challenge, which this book makes a first attempt to tackle but does not yet quite resolve.

References

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Pieter Muysken
Department of Linguistics,
Erasmusplein 1,
6525 HT Nijmegen,
The Netherlands
p.muysken@let.ru.nl