

past, the present and, to some extent, to point toward the future of a theory which has revolutionized science and which, in consequence, has exercised enormous influence in disciplines other than linguistics.

The book does basically two things: first, it summarizes Chomsky's formal theory of language - hence the chapters on syntax, semantics and phonology - and second, it shows how starting from Chomsky's concern about child language acquisition, it is possible to establish a link between the universal structure of human language and the genetic nature of man. In doing so, it attempts to answer the following questions: How do children learn language? What makes language learnable? What aspects of language are genetically determined and which are not? Why and how do languages change? What is the relationship between language and mind? Most importantly, however, Lightfoot relates all these questions to each other, presenting a coherent picture within the specific framework he is working with.

In sum, **The Language Lottery: Toward a Biology of Grammars** is an intriguing, profound book about ourselves, about our very nature and our status as the "talking species".

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Adrian Akmajian, Richard A. Demers, and Robert M. Harnish.
LINGUISTICS: AN INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE AND
COMMUNICATION. (Second edition).
Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1984.
536 pp. \$16.95.

This book is an excellent introduction to generative grammar. From the outset it adopts the Chomskyan perspective that language is a uniquely human cognitive ability and backs this up with a comparison of animal and human communication systems. The book's strong points are the section of the structure of human language, covering core theoretical topics, and the chapter on pragmatics, which presents an inferential model of communication. The section in the first edition on animal communication has been considerably condensed, the chapters on core linguistic theory have been reworked and extended, and chapters have been added on the psychology of language and first language acquisition.

The book is divided into three sections. The first introduces language as an area of study and puts forward the Shannon and Weaver message model of communication in relation to a well-presented description of animal communication systems. The second section, which comprises two-thirds of the book, contains chapters on morphology, phonology, syntax, semantics, language

variation and language change. In the morphology chapter the excellent description of productive word-formation has now been supplemented with a useful overview of traditional morphological terminology. The presentation of syntactic analysis is particularly good, the authors' view of grammar being well-motivated by their analysis of data, given with no unnecessary formalisation. The chapter on language variation develops some rules of informal style in English, a style many students would consider to be sloppy and therefore not worthy of study. The authors well illustrate the systematicness of different varieties of speech. The third section, entitled "Communication and cognitive science", loosely binds together some remaining topics. The chapter on pragmatics, surprisingly divorced from the discussion of semantics, argues convincingly for an inferential model of communication. It is a much broader and, at the same time, more focused discussion than that of the previous edition. A chapter on the psychology of language has been added, giving an overview of experiments in speech production and comprehension and in a chapter on language acquisition, chimp and child are illuminatingly compared. The book ends with a fairly technical discussion of language and the brain. There is a bibliography at the end of each chapter and a good glossary of the main linguistic terms at the end of the book. The excellent exercises on each chapter have now been revised and graded for difficulty (many of them could form the basis of research projects), and they have been supplemented by a list of study questions.

The authors say that they are concerned "with imparting basic conceptual foundations of linguistics and the methods of argumentation, justification and hypothesis testing within the field" (p.xiii). This is the book's strength and for this very reason I would not recommend it being used for anything less than a two-semester course, despite the authors' suggestions of how to use it for a one-quarter course. Only if at least the core theoretical chapters are treated in detail with time for class discussion of the accompanying exercises will the book be of real benefit. Otherwise a more accessible, more general introduction such as Fromkin and Rodman, with its chattier style, would be more successful. Akmajian, et al. is a book for students who are going to continue to do linguistics, rather than for those who just want an idea of the range of the field.

A corollary of the book's focus on methods of argumentation is its almost exclusive use of American English data. The authors make the valid point that they want students to be able to evaluate the factual claims made. "In presenting conceptual foundations of linguistics to students who have never been exposed to the subject before... we feel it is crucial that they should be able to draw upon their linguistic intuitions when required to make subtle judgements about language, both in following the text and in doing the exercises" (p.xiv). The student who is not a speaker of the American dialect used is at an obvious

disadvantage; no concession is made to, for example, British English speakers, even in the phonology chapter. The focus on English means that certain areas of description are overlooked, for example inflectional morphology and syntactic universals. The book also fails as a general introduction to linguistics by ignoring more applied areas. There is little on socio-linguistic topics such as bilingualism, language attitude, language and education, or language and culture, all linguistic concerns of great interest to the student taking linguistics as a subsidiary subject.

Despite these critical comments, this is a book I warmly recommend as succeeding within the theoretical terms it sets itself. Any student continuing in linguistics will find it excellent not only as an introduction but also as a book to refer back to, and anyone teaching linguistics would be well advised to have it on their shelf as a source of material for a range of introductory courses.

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References

- Fromkin, V., and Rodman, R. (1978). *An introduction to language* (Third edition). New York: CBS College Publishing.
Shannon, C., and Weaver, W. (1949). *The mathematical theory of communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

J. Donald Wilson, Ed.

AN IMPERFECT PAST:

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY IN CANADIAN HISTORY.

**Vancouver: Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction,
University of British Columbia, 1984.**

218 pp. \$10.00.

An Imperfect Past is a collection of readings on Canadian educational history. The book's ten essays, each written by a different author, are organized around five themes: historiography and educational reform; literacy and female education; native peoples and education; schoolmasters, reformers and ideology; and rural education and ethnicity. Most of the essays were given originally as papers before a joint conference of the Canadian History of Education Association and the American History of Education Society in Vancouver in 1983.

What makes a good book of readings? An essential condition of the genre is that the parts are interrelated, that they come together to form a more or less coherent whole. This chemistry is wanting in *An Imperfect Past*. The essays are so specialized