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Slobin, D.I. 1981. The origin of grammatical encoding of events. In Deutsch (ed.). 185-99.

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R.M.W. Dixon, *Where have all the adjectives gone?—and other essays in semantics and grammar.* (Janua Linguarum, Series Maior, 107.) The Hague: Mouton, 1982. Pp. xiv + 256.*

This collection of nine essays deserves to be studied, not merely read.[1] The book draws on a plethora of linguistic data, ranging from the major language families of the world to in-depth study of some Australian Aboriginal languages. It takes us much deeper into linguistic analysis (via a semantics-first, norm-and-extension approach) than one could have hoped for prior to 1965 – in this regard it is important to note that six of the essays date from 1968-70. Dixon has established himself as a forerunner in the field of linguistic theory, so that both the data and the analysis are as important now as they were over a decade ago.

The first chapter describes the fate of 'descriptive adjectives', defined semantically along the parameters 'value', 'dimension', 'physical property', 'speed', 'human propensity', 'age' and 'colour' in languages that are adjective-deficient (hence, the title). It is a tour de force of the best of a semantics-first approach, initially on English, later extended to sixteen languages. The chapter is full of insights and many valuable generalisations. Although the author is 'aware . . . of the many oversimplifications . . . and the gratuitous theoretical assumptions' (62), the bulk of the data he presents supports his views and conclusions,[2] even the almost risqué observation 'that a large adjective class is a relative luxury . . . as languages originally developed, although some adjectives may have been present in small, early lexicons, a superfluity of adjectives may have been one of the last things which a language achieved' (59, n. 61).

The second and third chapters are dedicated to the hypothesis that verbs are either 'nuclear' (i.e. semantically primitive and describable in terms of the grammar of the language) or 'non-nuclear' (i.e. definable in terms of nuclear verbs.) While Dyirbal's Guwal (normal, everyday) vs

[*] I am grateful to my colleagues Gavan Breen, Paul Black, Graham McKay, and Anna Shnukal for comments and advice incorporated in this review.

[1] Only Chap. 8 represents a new publication; the eight others have appeared in print between 1968 and 1977 (see pp. vii-x for details). Chaps 5 and 7 have undergone considerable revision.

[2] A minor point: Dixon, following Zimmer, proposes that 'positive' human propensity adjectives alone have *un-* counterparts, ignoring forms like *unselfish, unimpeachable, unpretentious.*

Jalnguy (mother-in-law) speech styles empirically support this, a carefully worked out componential AND definitional analysis reveals that nuclear verbs are closely matched on a worldwide scale, 'whereas non-nuclear verbs tend to be rather culture-specific and to differ much more from one language to another' (63). Clear and thought-provoking analysis in Chap. 2 leads to the establishment of seven sets of verbs in Dyirbal: position, affect, giving, attention, speaking/gesturing, breaking ('meta' with respect to verbs in other sets), and other bodily activities (a residual set) (101). The third of these, the giving set, is contrasted with English in Chap. 3. The detailed discussion of grammar in both of these chapters illustrates that Dixon is not blindly or blithely proposing semantics ALONE in determining parts of speech and linguistic universals; even extralinguistic, cultural phenomena play an important role (see, for example, pp. 129 and 134).

Chap. 4 illustrates that the determination of syntactic orientation (e.g. properties of the referent of the subject or object)[3] is inexorably involved with semantic analysis. Certain adverbal concepts ('start', 'finish', 'do well/badly/slowly/quickly') are probably semantic universals with varying syntactic manifestations: ADVERBALS in Dyirbal, but English VERBS (*begin*, *finish*) vs CONSTRUCTIONS (Verb . . . *well*). Inter- as well as intra-linguistic norms such as restrictions on usage (leading to ungrammatical utterances) and topicalisation rules support Dixon's hypothesis, which is at the heart of the semantics-prior approach.

Chap. 5 sets out the phonological, grammatical, semantic and cultural bases of noun classes. Dixon usefully defines noun classes as '(1) a grouping of all the nouns of a language into a smallish number (2 to 20) of classes, (2) so that there is some overt indication of the class of a noun within certain types of sentence in which it occurs with one of a certain set of syntactic functions, and (3) this indication is not entirely within the noun-word' (160-1).[4] While this recognises the SYNTACTIC nature of this phenomenon, he illustrates that a SEMANTIC and CULTURAL analysis goes far in delimiting noun classes in Dyirbal, and should similarly do so with other languages where a mere taxonomic approach leads to chaos.

Chap. 6 deals with the nature of and discovery tactics for noun classifiers in Yidiny. Two types are isolated: 'inherent nature' vs 'function/use' classifiers, which correspond to the interrogatives *wanyirra* 'what (species)?' and *wanyi* 'what (genus)?' respectively. Again, the usefulness and importance of semantic and cultural criteria is demonstrated quite vividly. Dixon also points out the socio-semantic equivalence of Dyirbal

[3] Thus *finish* implies something about the object (it is all used up or gone) while *cease* implies something about the subject (he/she was bored or tired, or has had enough)(142). I feel that the use of English causatives (*make*, *let*, *have*, *get*, *cause*) would further illustrate the melding of syntactic and semantic analysis Dixon proposes.

[4] As Dixon observes, only two languages are known to have more than 20 such classes: Nauruan with 40 and Nasioi with no less than 115 (167)

noun classes and Yidiny classifiers despite drastically different grammatical properties of each.

Chap. 7 contains a speculative but interesting discussion of semantically motivated phonotactic change. Olgolo has evolved in such a way that all words are vowel-initial, yet speakers optionally add an initial *n-* (animals, insects), *y-* (fish, oyster, eel), or *w-* (various inanimates), which 'might be the diachronic beginnings of a system of noun classes' (209).

Chap. 8 outlines the semantic similarities but grammatical differences between noun classes (discussed in Chap. 5) and noun classifiers. The latter do not successfully 'divide up' the classes of noun in a language and are statistically more numerous (between 50 and 100), while the former are not REQUIRED by a specific grammatical environment (e.g. with a numeral or demonstrative) and are generally smaller in number (average of 2 to 20). Noun classes are morphological while classifiers are lexical phenomena. Amongst the three prevailing linguistic typologies, it is interesting to note that isolating languages tend to have or develop classifiers, while inflectional and agglutinative languages tend to systems of noun classes. There is a valuable and incisive analysis of some unusual cases from Micronesian and Amerindian languages and on the origin and development of noun classes vs classifiers.

The last chapter deals with a semi-converse situation from that described in Chap. 7, namely the semantic neutralisation for phonological reasons of English *'s* for plural *are* (in *where's* for *where're*) and *are* for singular *am* (in *aren't* for **amn't*).

The book is well laid out and presented. Given the disparate nature of the topics, a reversal of the order of Chaps 7 and 8 might have been considered (to bring the discussion of noun classes and classifiers nearer to Chaps 5 and 6, and the phonological chapters closer together). Only a few typographical errors were noted, but with the prestige and quality of Mouton books, one could perhaps hope for perfection? One important error leads to a contradiction: Jalnguy and Guwal have identical 'phonology' not 'vocabulary' (66, line 3). Spelling 'Wolgolo' (209) for 'Olgolo' serves to make the point about the optional noun class marker (*w-*), but departs from the convention of referring to a given speech variety with one standard label.

Most linguists are becoming aware of seven levels of analysis: phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, semantics, discourse, and culture – whether these equate with the stratificationalists' view is a moot point (I am not aware of anyone intrepidly proposing more than four 'strata'). Less than three decades ago, some linguists were still serious in keeping semantics outside of the domain of linguistic science (cf. Nelson 1958, esp. pp. 31f) or did not consider meaning in the overall framework of a theory of language design (cf. early versions of transformational grammar). Dixon is among those who have reacted insightfully and successfully to these views. He offers substantial evidence for the priority of semantics in linguistic analysis, and takes into account important aspects of culture

(see, for example, pp. 58, 61, 65, 139, 179-83, 204, 226), discourse (133ff, 148, 153f, 217), and lexical structure (23, 33, 65, 132ff).

While he acknowledges four (semantic, syntactic, morphological and maybe even phonological) 'norms' (141), he certainly has addressed the seven I have suggested above. He has a pleasant, undogmatic approach (see 107, 111, 137f, 160), yet the data and analysis stand as a testament to his ingenuity and insight.

Much of this book will make invaluable supplementary readings for units or courses on the structure of English (Chaps 1, 3, 9), semantics or syntax (most chapters), linguistic theories (§§1.2, 2.2, 4, 4.4-5, 6.3, 8.5-6), even phonology (Chaps 7, 9) or field methods (particularly §§5.6 and 6.1-3). A hurried reader will be grateful for Dixon's several suggestions for getting at the gist of an essay and for the thorough summaries. I highly recommend this collection to lecturers, and to linguists who could well emulate Dixon's techniques in fieldwork and analysis.

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PREPARATION OF THE MANUSCRIPT. All copy must be typewritten, on one side of the sheet only and double-spaced throughout – including footnotes, quotations, diagrams, etc. Leave margins of at least three cms on all four sides; do not end a line with a hyphen. Footnotes, references, tables, figures and extended quotations should be typed on separate sheets following the main text. Italics should be indicated by single underlining (even in preference to the use of an italic typewriter font), small capitals by double underlining.

Cited forms and sentences appear in italics or, when special symbols such as ŋ are required, in phonetic type-face; they may also occur in phonetic or phonological transcription enclosed in square brackets and obliques respectively. These conventions apply even where the example is set out on a separate line. Examples with morpheme-by-morpheme glosses should be set out as follows:

(1) *Moeginakoez-in Kala-n puy -n mathaman.*
boy ERG Kala ACC tree INSTR hit-SG
'The boy hit Kala with the stick.'

Phonetic symbols and diacritics should normally be drawn from the following inventory:

m n ɲ ŋ ɴ p b t d c k g q ɢ ʔ ɸ β f v θ ð s z ʃ ʒ x ɣ χ ʁ ʍ ʕ
h ɦ ɹ j y w ɬ l ʎ r ʀ ɾ i ɪ ɨ ɯ y ɑ u e ə ɤ ø o ɛ ʌ œ ɔ æ a ɑ ɒ
ʰ ʱ ʲ ʷ ˠ ˤ ˞ ˑ ˈ ˌ ˀ ˺ ˻ ˜
˚ ˷ ˍ

Full bibliographical details of literature referred to should be given in an alphabetical list at the end of the manuscript. Entries should conform to the models below, with titles of journals abbreviated in accordance with the conventions of the Permanent International Committee of Linguists' annual *Linguistic bibliography* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff) and the following abbreviations used for Australian institutions/publishers: AIAS – Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, ANU – Australian National University, PL – Pacific Linguistics (Dept of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, ANU).

Chomsky, N. 1966a. *Topics in the theory of generative grammar.* (Janua Linguarum, Series Minor, 56.) The Hague: Mouton.

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Within the text references should normally be given in the following way: 'As was emphasised by Chomsky (1966a:29), . . .'