

Thomas E. Payne. 2006. *Exploring language structure — A student's guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 365 pp.

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This book is intended as a textbook for introductory linguistic courses. Thomas Payne writes that the book is dedicated “to all beginning students of linguistics who have ever felt they were drowning in a sea of strange terminology and mysterious concepts”. The mystery is resolved by introducing the reader to the most important topics in linguistics as they pertain to morphology and syntax — two areas consistently revisited in the book.

Through his clear, precise and engaging writing style, Payne maintains the reader's attention and interest while illustrating the usefulness and applicability of the book's content. Additional useful features that Payne offers are the conceptual summaries and practice questions located at the end of every chapter. Should the reader ever feel overwhelmed with or confused by any of the content, the ten chapters in the book are followed by a twenty-eight page glossary that provides students with definitions to the most important concepts discussed in the text.

The author's motivation to create the most useful resource possible goes beyond the actual pages of the book. Payne has created a website for the text that includes additional exercises, solutions to exercises provided in the text (although this feature is available to instructors only) and a listing of known errors from the book, which is still under construction.

Chapter 1 presents an introduction to morphology and syntax. The chapter introduces the idea of language as a tool that allows users to accomplish their communicative goals. This analogy is further used to clarify concepts like grammar, lexicon, morphology and syntax.

Chapter 2 covers morphological processes and conceptual categories. Examples from several languages are used to illustrate ten fundamental morphological processes and the relationship between variation in form and variation in function.

Chapter 3 introduces the reader to morphophonemics, while Chapter 4 discusses word classes. The discussion on morphological rules is both lengthy and presupposes some familiarity with the topic. Payne addresses this concern in the preface and writes that, although a previous course in phonetics could be beneficial, one class session would be enough to familiarise the student with the necessary phonetic transcription used in the chapter. The section devoted to word classes discusses major word classes and touches briefly upon how they differ in different languages. Given the importance of the content presented in this chapter, one wonders why the discussion on word classes did not follow the first chapter on morphology and syntax.

Chapter 5 explores subclasses by attempting to elicit the hidden linguist within the reader. Payne presents the procedures necessary to analyze the subclasses of any word class in a language and offers particularly interesting and educating practice questions at the end of this chapter.

The following chapter covers constituent structures and addresses everything from universal properties of syntactic structures and their accompanying tests to phrase structure rules — all of which are thoroughly covered and easily comprehensible. Payne's introduction to syntax is slightly misleading, as the author oversimplifies the concept by writing that syntax is implicitly available to speakers — an idea hotly debated amongst researchers (see Tomasello, 2000; Parisse, 2005).

Language typology and grammatical relations are covered in Chapters 7 and 8 respectively. Payne's discussion in Chapter 7 illustrates the benefits of language typology and a detailed analysis of VO and OV languages. The chapter on grammatical relations covers a lot of content, but it is well structured. The section concludes with instructions on how to analyze grammatical relation systems.

Voice, valence and multi-clause constructions are discussed in the ninth and tenth chapter respectively. By relying on the metaphor of communication as a play and verbs as activators of scenes in the minds of speakers, Payne introduces the concept of valence, its adjustments and combinations through which valence can occur in speech. The tenth and last chapter talks about how different clauses are used to create grammatically accurate constructions. The discussions on serial verbs, direct and indirect speech, and coordination are particularly well written and illustrated through well thought-out examples.

To conclude, Payne has succeeded in creating a textbook that covers the most fundamental topics in linguistics, one that will successfully prepare students for future, more advanced studies in linguistics.

References

- Parisse, C. 2005. New perspectives on language development and the innateness of grammatical knowledge. *Language Sciences*, 27, pp. 383–401.
- Tomasello, M. 2000. The item-based nature of children's early syntactic development. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4, pp. 156–163.
