

An Introduction to Language (4th edition), by Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988, paper, xiv, 474 pages, \$32.95 CDN, ISBN 0-03-006532-1.

1. This is the fourth edition of a hardy perennial which first appeared in 1974; subsequent editions followed in 1978 and 1983. An Introduction to Language evidently gathers little dust on the shelves of university bookstores across North America, and the new version continues to have the sort of appeal which has ensured past success in the marketplace.

As noted by almost all previous reviewers, Fromkin and Rodman's text scores high marks for clarity, readability and liveliness of style. Much of its attraction for students lies in its use of a variety of formats and typestyles. Offset matter, epigraphs, charts, diagrams and cartoons contribute to the impression that this medium is, if not positively 'hot', then definitely warm, and certainly of the present moment. The fourth edition takes the concern with layout one step further: margins are wider, several type size and style variations appear on nearly every page, and, most important, subheadings clearly indicate the internal organization of each section. The discussion headed **Linguistic Knowledge**, for example, in the first chapter of the third edition, occupies six and one-half unbroken pages of text, while in the new edition the same stretch is separated by four subheadings. The difference is visually striking, and aptly illustrates the publisher's counterpart to the culinary principle that a meal is more appealing when presented as a series of small, attractive helpings instead of a heaped plate.

There is other evidence of updating as well. The references cited at the end of each chapter have been augmented by 19 new titles dated 1983 or after, some new cartoons and epigraphs appear while others have been excised, and the chapter organization has been altered. The syntax section is now sandwiched between morphology and semantics, as in most similar texts; the chapter on writing now follows the one on language change; and there is an entirely new chapter which takes up the theme of language processing developed in the first edition of the book but abandoned in the second and third editions.

But an instructor's decision on adopting this text for an introductory course will depend less on these mainly cosmetic considerations and more on changes and improvements in substance. This review therefore will concentrate on the new elements of this

upgrade, and try to determine whether the authors have responded to comments made on their text in earlier assessments and upheld their claim to have substantially revised the book, especially in those core areas of linguistic concern which they label the **Grammatical Aspects of Language**. And in view of the recent appearance of O'Grady and Dobrovolsky's Contemporary Linguistic Analysis, produced at the University of Calgary and targeted at the same market, I shall also make comparisons between the two texts where the two approaches diverge.

2. The phonetics chapter may be the one which has benefitted the most from attention to clarity through layout. Boxed summaries, diagrams and charts abound, and, in response to observations made in previous reviews (Horrocks 1979:385, Whitley 1978:68, Embleton 1985:84-89), correspondences between IPA symbols and those traditionally used by US linguists have been provided. Useful résumés of diacritics and additional symbols follow their discussion in the text, and there are new examples of vowel and consonant length. In keeping with a general pattern throughout the book, the exercises have been renumbered; otherwise, they are virtually the same as in the third edition.

In their preface, Fromkin and Rodman point out that one of their substantial revisions to the book is a discussion of syllable and metrical structures in phonology. What this involves in fact is a single new paragraph on syllable structure (p.85), a slightly recast section on tone in which tones are represented on a separate tier, and a diagram of primary and secondary stress patterns in noun-verb pairs such as subject - subject which uses a sigma-notation to represent the syllables in question. Apart from this acknowledging nod in the direction recent developments in phonology, no changes have been made to incorporate these revisions into the formulation of their phonological rules. This is in sharp contrast to the corresponding section in the text by O'Grady and Dobrovolsky, for example, who introduce these notions and then proceed to use them in the operation of their rules.

Fromkin and Rodman's phonological rules are unchanged from edition three, but the phenomena they account for (assimilation, dissimilation, addition, deletion and metathesis) are now presented after instructions on formalization have been given. The result is less backtracking through the text to link up rules with the data which motivate them. Students are provided with more opportunities for practice in rule writing, and 'slip of the tongue' errors as evidence for the regularity of phonological processes are skillfully blended into this chapter.

The morphology chapter is virtually unchanged, the one exception being a new example from Russian illustrating the liberating effect on word order of a rich nominal case system. This will hardly satisfy those like Horrocks (1979:385) who thought that the treatment of inflectional morphology in earlier editions was weak: a very brief discussion of cases in Finnish and Russian and of one tense change in French will continue to send instructors to other sources for more comprehensive illustrations of these non-marginal phenomena.

It is the syntax section which has undergone the most extensive revision. There is a much more explicit discussion of the elements used in tree diagrams; the Phrase Structure Rules have been enriched by the use of bar-notation, with COMP, N', S' and AUX joining the set of symbols expanded by the rules; and the place of the Lexicon within the overall organization of the grammar is clearly set out. Once the arsenal of formal apparatus is in place, however, the presentation stalls.

Previous editions used extensive discussion to motivate three transformations, involving movement of WH-words, Negatives and Particles. Even these were insufficient, however, in Whitley's (1979:68) view, to justify the Deep Structure - Surface Structure distinction. But instead of tackling the issue head-on, Fromkin and Rodman have now decided to avoid it altogether. In its place we find the versatile Move-Alpha, presented as a sort of metaphor for relating pairs of sentences identical except for the fact that their AUX and WH elements occupy different positions. Two brief paragraphs alluding to universal conditions on representations are then offered; these are meant to reassure those concerned by the "word hash" resulting from the untrammelled operation of a rule empowered to move anything anywhere. The words "subjacency" and "recoverability" are brandished, and then a warning is posted that these matters are just too incredibly complex to be dealt with in an introductory text.

Those students who are tantalized by this peek into the circuitry of grammar are advised to look to the cited references for more information. I suspect, though, that these will be in the minority; the rest will simply remain puzzled about where such a system might lead, and without an opportunity to see how things might operate in practice through step-by-step derivations, will leave this chapter with an impression that syntax is all very vague and wooly. Fromkin and Rodman's approach to syntax is thus very different from that of O'Grady and Dobrovolsky. The latter believe in letting students get their hands dirty, leading them through derivations in a variety of languages so that they get a feel for the way the details work out. This is a more useful approach, in my opinion, than sketching the outlines of a grand overview.

The core area of semantics has not changed substantially in content or approach, although there have been some additions. A half-page of text each and two new exercises have been devoted to meaning postulates and thematic relations, and Grice's maxims introduce a reorganized section on discourse analysis. (The absence of such a section was one of the main complaints of Frazer's (1984:448) rather bilious review.) The overall impression left by this chapter is that it is comprehensive and very approachable, and more suitable as an introduction than the more sketchy and structure-oriented outline in the O'Grady and Dobrovolsky text.

3. Treatment of areas of concern for the student not committed to the study of core linguistics have also undergone certain modifications. The discussion of animal communication has been reduced by half, with the section called **Chimps and Language** reassigned to the chapter on language acquisition. The chapter entitled **Brain, Mind and Language** contains more examples of aphasic speech than its earlier counterpart. Diagrams of the brain are less anatomically realistic, but contain more information. And there is an interesting account of recently applied techniques of emission tomography which provide evidence for the modularity of brain activity underlying distinct cognitive systems.

The chapter on **Language Acquisition** has been expanded by roughly three pages, and contains new examples and classifications of errors which throw light on the process of rule acquisition. Evidence of early acquisition of syntactic categories and relations, rather than solely semantic ones, is also provided, as well as an expanded consideration of second language learning.

Language Processing: Human and Machine is the title of the concluding chapter: most of its contents are new. Along with the section on acoustic phonetics imported from the phonetics chapter of the third edition, there are discussions of the techniques of psycholinguistic research which provide evidence for a model of speech production, computer processing of language, machine translation, speech synthesis and recognition, parsing and artificial intelligence. The authors succeed admirably here in introducing potentially bemusing material with great clarity.

4. Instructors of Linguistics 101 who have already considered and rejected An Introduction to Language are unlikely to be persuaded to adopt the fourth edition, despite the changes mentioned above. Nothing of real substance has been added to the core chapters, and where changes have been made, they have not always been well integrated into existing material. And with its largely expository presentation, this text will still not appeal to those who prefer

students to be involved with methods of argumentation, justification and hypothesis-testing. This niche in the marketplace is still probably best filled by Akmajian, Demers and Harnish's Linguistics: An Introduction.

Those considering adopting an expository text for an introductory course would do well to short-list Fromkin and Rodman's book, especially if the course is aimed mainly at generalist students. Its breezy style and wealth of data, useful summaries, exercises and index, discussion-provoking cartoons and eye-catching layout all make for definite reader appeal.

I would also suggest that O'Grady and Dobrovolsky's text be included on that list, for reasons that are more than nationalistic. It too is attractively packaged, provides summaries, notes, extensive discussions of sources and copious sets of exercises at the end of every chapter, and positively overflows with non-English data. (The core chapters of Fromkin and Rodman's text refer to 34 languages other than English; O'Grady and Dobrovolsky's refer to 45, and elsewhere there is no contest: their chapters on **The Classification of Languages** and **Amerindian Languages of North America** would tax the capacities of a good-sized database management system.) It is also much more contemporary: as this is its first edition, it shows no sign of attempts to patch the new in with the less-new, which is occasionally obvious in An Introduction to Language.

The choice will in the end depend on the judgement of instructors; they will no doubt take into account the needs of their students, and assess whether cartoons and apt quotations from Alice in Wonderland are more worthwhile than discussions of Cree and Newfoundland English.

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