Semantics of the English Subjunctive, by Francis James, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986, cloth, vi, 186 pages, $15.00 CDN, $12.00 US, ISBN 0-7748-0255-3.

The basic premise of this book is an interesting one: that the difference of meaning between indicative and subjunctive, in English and elsewhere, lies in a simple binary contrast between verb forms that are a "blueprint" for action and those that are a "sketch" of action (photograph would have been a better term). The blueprint precedes the building of a house, whereas the sketch or photograph is made of the house after it is finished; the blueprint is a BEFORE, the sketch an AFTER.

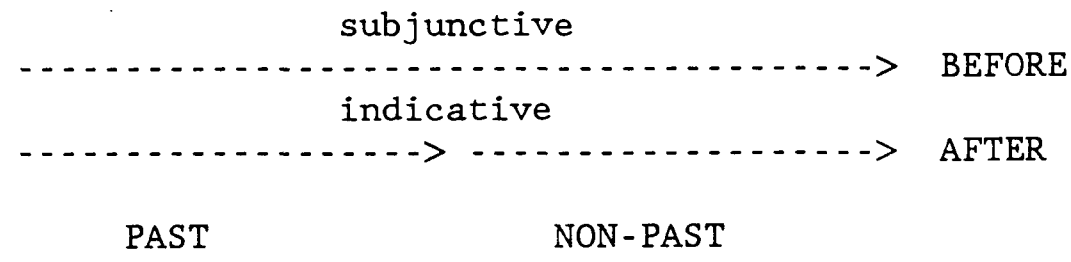
Such a proposal is praiseworthy for several reasons: (1) it challenges the separation of syntax and semantics and the treatment of grammar as meaningless; (2) in proposing a single underlying meaning for the subjunctive the author is recognising the necessity of such a principle unless linguistic meaning is to be atomistic and incoherent, as phonology would be if there were only allophones and no phonemes; (3) grammatical meaning is often a matter of simple binary contrast (e.g. singular vs. plural), and BEFORE/AFTER covers the elusive subjunctive/indicative distinction:

1. They believe that it is so. (AFTER the event)
2. They require that it be so. (BEFORE the event)

There are two further important theoretical principles that must be mentioned at this point, both of which are enunciated by Jakobson (1936): (1) every underlying element must, by its nature, be different from all the surface elements that it determines, in the same way that a protolanguage must be different from all its daughter languages; (2) any underlying entity is necessarily part of a system; it is the restraints set up by the contrasts in the system that will justify and determine the surface data and usage. The high front vowel of a three vowel system, for example, will cover a wide range of allophones, a range which is determined by the contrasts with the range of the other two vowels. In a three vowel system all vowel sounds will fall into three different areas which are entirely determined by the contrasts (+front, -low), (-front, -low), (+low). A high front vowel in such a system would not be /i/ (which is really only one of the allophones) but (+front, -low), which is a position in a system.

A subtle problem exists therefore for the underlying status of the author's BEFORE/AFTER contrast. A subjunctive is a blueprint for an event, whereas an indicative is a record of an event; but there are no events in the underlying system, so that this kind of contrast cannot be an underlying contrast. It would appear, in fact, that this BEFORE/AFTER- the-event contrast is a major alloseme or surface meaning, a Hauptbedeutung in Jakobson's terms. The problem is not serious, however, because it is possible to find a very simple and elegant BEFORE/AFTER systemic contrast that is only removed from James' proposal by one step. The clue to this further step is the fact that the subjunctive is not governed by the sequence of tenses, whereas the indicative normally is, as James, following Hirtle (1964) points out (pp. 2-3).

Since the so-called present subjunctive is in fact tenseless, occurring freely after both past and non-past tenses, we may conclude that the subjunctive represents indeterminate time that is neither past nor present. Such indeterminate time is necessarily a representation of time BEFORE the past/non-past contrast is introduced, whereas the two-tense system of the indicative is the result of introducing this contrast: the indicative is therefore the representation that is achieved AFTER the introduction of the contrast between memorial and non-memorial (i.e., experiential and non-experiential) time:



(Here the terms BEFORE and AFTER represent positions in the underlying system). Such a system would present us with a subjunctive that is capable of being a blueprint, and an indicative that is capable of being a record: an event represented by a subjunctive can occur anywhere - it is a potential event, whereas an event represented by an indicative belongs to time that is represented as experiential, past or non-past.

Such a solution also helps us with another problem that is both theoretical and practical: the status of the so-called past subjunctive, which the system I have sketched above does not allow for. The text, after an introduction, concentrates the next two chapters on the present subjunctive and the past subjunctive, leaving Chapters Four for the modals and Chapter Five for the general question of subjunctives in human languages. In Chapter Four the whole question of whether there is, in fact, a past subjunctive in

Modern English is discussed, and the conclusion drawn that there is not. It would have been preferable to have had this question discussed before Chapter Three, Semantics of the Past Subjunctive, during which I personally spent much time complaining that there is no semantic, morphological or syntactic evidence for any such category in Modern English. I am aware, of course, that there is one solitary morphological form, were with a singular subject; but was can always replace it, except in the inversion were I, were he, which to me is a frozen archaism of the type Would I were. Apart from these "quaint" forms, there is no past subjunctive, there is only the use of past indicative in its counterfactual sense:

3. If I knew I would tell you.

which is parallelled by indicatives in other languages, as in the French equivalent:

4. Si je savais, je vous le dirais.

Immediately after restricting the Modern English subjunctive to the so-called present, the author writes (p.126.): "...we may find it unrealistic to claim the existence of the present subjunctive as well." This comment, occurring as it does towards the end of the book, illustrates how the argument wanders around and is not properly signposted: we are never quite sure where it is going next. What we need is a clear discussion of these issues at the beginning of the book, and then a clear plan of campaign, so that we can follow and understand what the author is doing as he does it.

We should congratulate the author for having the sense to interweave the historical dimension with his synchronic analysis. This makes it possible to show how the modals have tended to replace the subjunctive, undoubtedly because the subjunctive is not distinctive enough and the modals carry "more specific or more accurate" information (p. 100). The comparison could be made with the prepositional phrase, and the way that it has replaced bare cases in many IE languages.

One useful concept for dealing with certain historical shifts is that of the NORM, first introduced by Hjelmslev (1942), which is the way that a given system is exploited. It is possible for the norm to change, such as the subjunctive after verbs of hoping and believing, and also (as in modern German) after saying and asking (p. 30), without change in the system itself. Old English, just like modern German, could have a subjunctive in clauses that represent assertions, which is no longer the norm in modern English:

5. Er sagt, dass es wahr sei.
   He says, that it be true.

In such cases the systemic element, the subjunctive, is not substantially different: what has changed is the norm, the way of exploiting the system.

Let me at this point indulge in a few minor cavils of personal preference. (1) I find the terms practical (=BEFORE) and theoretical (=AFTER) quite inappropriate, in spite of their etymological justification. A report of an empirical observation, for example, would have to be classified as "theoretical", a quite inappropriate usage. (2) I found the formalization of sentences used throughout the book an annoying distraction. Such formalization has little to recommend it - it is basically an elaboration of the obvious- and many inadequacies: it distorts, oversimplifies, explains nothing, and puts language in a straightjacket. For example, when the author formalizes the verb insist as REQUIRING A HUMAN SUBJECT, what are we to make of "... the deep lane insists on the direction into the village" from T.S. Eliot's East Coker? (After writing this I heard a native speaker complain of a word-processor "It insists on placing hyphens where I don't want them"). Why do linguists waste time making formalizations that are manifestly inadequate? Language is far too supple, and subtle, to fit a Procrustean bed. (3) It is a shock to find the expression "semantically empty" used of the grammatical auxiliaries do, be, and have (p:106). There is no question that the meaning of these auxiliaries is extensively dematerialized, but if they were "dummies", we could not have a meaningful contrast in the following minimal pair

6. The missionary had eaten that morning.
7. The missionary was eaten that morning.

Chapter Four, which is mostly about the modal auxiliaries, I found to be the most interesting; this chapter could probably prompt a long review article, so much did it set me thinking. Modality is the representation of possibility, of the necessary conditions for the realisation of an event, or the necessary result of such an event, and may be achieved through (a) verbal moods (e.g. subjunctive), (b) verbal lexicon (e.g. modal auxiliaries), (c) other grammatical items (e.g. conjunctions such as if), or (d) other lexical items (perhaps, possible, maybe, ever). The author, in wondering why the were form may be used with as if but not with like (p. 108),

8. He's behaving as if/like he was sick.
9. He's behaving as if/*like he were sick.

has not realized that it is the occurrence of _if_ that allows us to use the modal variant _were_. Conjunctions such as _if_ are just as important as representations of modality as is a modal or a subjunctive, as Gustave Guillaume has shown us (1929:49-50) with conjoined French conditional clauses of the type

10. Si vous arrivez et que je ne sois pas là
    If you arrive and I am not there

where the modality is marked in the first clause by _si_, and the second clause, because _si_ is not used, requires a subjunctive.

There are many interesting insights on the modal auxiliaries themselves. _Should_, for example, is no longer the past of _shall_, indicating that the whole question of the system of the modals needs to be rethought. Perhaps, now that _shall_ seems to be disappearing, at least in some dialects, _should_ will become, like _must_ and _ought_, a relic of an ancient past form whose present has been lost. And with the loss of the past subjunctive, perhaps the past of the modals has been automatically recategorized, as James suggests (p. 113).

In conclusion, there are many provocative initiatives in this book that will interest the reader. We should also give a bouquet to the University of British Columbia Press for producing a quality book - I found only one trivial misprint (_may_ for _my_, p. 145) - and a handsome cloth bound volume for only $15, a price which allows us to own the book! (In a recent letter an American colleague told me that he would like to have sent me a copy of his book, but at 225 DM he could not afford it himself!). Whatever their secret, the UBC Press cannot fail to succeed with a product of this quality and price.

REFERENCES

GUILLAUME, Gustave. 1929. _Temps et verbe_. Paris: Champion.

HIRTLE, Walter H. 1964. 'The English present subjunctive.' _Canadian Journal of Linguistics_ 9:75-82.

HJELMSLEV, Louis. 1942. 'Langue and parole.' _Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure_ 2:29-44.

JAKOBSON, Roman. 1936. 'Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kasuslehre.' Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague 6:240-88. (Reprinted in Readings in Linguistics II, ed by Eric P. Hamp et al, 51-89. Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

John Hewson
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Leçons de linguistique de Gustave Guillaume, publiées sous la direction de Roch Valin, Walter Hirtle et André Joly, Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval & Lille: Presses Universitaires. Vol.6, Grammaire particulière du français et grammaire générale, 1985, paper, 332 pages, $24.00 CDN, ISBN 2-7637-7055-X; Vol. 7, Esquisse d'une grammaire descriptive de la langue française, 1986, paper, 358 pages, $25.00 CDN, ISBN 2-7637-7113-0; and Vol. 8, Grammaire particulière du français et grammaire générale, 1987, paper, 375 pages, $29.00 CDN, ISBN 2-7637-7128-9.

These are the sixth, seventh and eighth volumes of the texts of Gustave Guillaume's lectures given between 1938 and 1960 at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris, now appearing at a regular, even accelerated rate. Vols. 6 and 7 are lectures given in 1945-46 (at one point he mentions 'the Occupation,' which brings the period into perspective), and Vol. 8 is from 1947-8.

These texts are of particular interest to anyone who teaches French or who has an interest in French linguistics: Vol. 7, for example deals with the French verbal system. At several points Guillaume contrasts the architecture of the verbal systems of the Romance languages, which commonly have a framework of five tenses in the indicative, with that of the verbal systems to be found in Germanic languages, which have a framework of two tenses. His purpose is to show us that such systems are what Hjelmslev called content systems, systems of meanings, where each element takes its meaning from its position in the system.

This aspect of language has been sadly neglected, partly for lack of an established methodology, partly for lack of convincing analyses, partly because some 20th century linguists have assumed, in spite of extensive evidence to the contrary, that all grammar is syntax, and syntax is meaningless - the syntax vs. semantics shibboleth, which stems from the old behaviourist doctrine that 'structure' is to be treated independently of meaning. Guillaume clarifies many of these issues, making explicit the notion of linguistic system (1985:51ff), and distinguishing between system and use-of-system, that is between langue and norme (1986:112), borrowing the latter term from Hjelmslev's seminal article 'Langue and parole' (1942).

We may illustrate this by saying that if both British and Americans share the knife and fork as a common 'system,' the British

norm of usage at the dinner table differs from the American. And likewise the British contrast of have you/ do you have is unknown in American English, although both groups share the same verbal system. As Guillaume points out, the Norm is a question of 'la capacité permissive du système' - the exploitation, in different ways, of what the system allows. Understanding the functioning of language requires, therefore, a threefold discrimination between tongue (langue), norm (norme), and discourse (discours = Saussurian parole). The simple mechanical systems belong to tongue, their traditonal exploitation creates a norm, and discourse is what is said or written by using a tongue and following a norm.

Whether Guillaume's analyses of the French verb are convincing or not I leave to the reader. I was fortunate to have been taught by Guillaume's principal disciple, Roch Valin, and to have had the privilege of arguing out in the classroom what puzzled me. What I found convincing I have subsequently taught to students of French, often to be confronted with the comment 'This is so simple and clear, why wasn't it taught to us like this in the first case?' What I found less than convincing, I have often subsequently worked on profitably because the trail-blazing had been done. What I found unconvincing, and it amounts to a small percentage, I still reject, and for the same reasons. The last two lessons of Vol. 7., for example, present us with an analysis of French verb morphology that uses abstract underlying forms: my objection to abstract underlying forms, and their inherent confusions, are on record (Hewson 1971). Curious, that Guillaume, an unabashedly 'God's truth' linguist when he discusses content, should resort to 'hocus pocus' when he comes to discuss morphology. Whereas, in fact, his 'God's truth' analyses of the content side of language are totally convincing to undergraduate students, the 'hocus pocus' analyses of the expression side of language are unconvincing even to dedicated Guillaumians.

If the coherence of Vol. 7 lies in its concentration on the French verbal system, Vols. 6 and 8 must be seen as quite different. Vol. 6 is Guillaume's lectures for his 'beginners,' whereas in Vol. 8 he deals, as he says in the final sentence of the volume, 'un peu témérairement de sujets qui étaient encore pour moi des sujets d'étude.'

Vol. 6 begins with a thumbnail sketch of the recent history of linguistics in which Guillaume relates his own position to that of Saussure and of such post-Saussurians as Meillet ('mon maître Meillet'), Hjelmslev, and Trubetzkoy. The rest of the volume deals with what Guillaume considers to be the fundamentals of linguistics: the distinction between (a) tongue, the underlying level (he uses the sousjacent/surface distinction as early as his

1929 book Temps et Verbe) and (b) discourse, the surface level. Every linguist, according to Guillaume, must alternate between being a linguiste de langue and a linguiste de discours. As a linguiste de langue Guillaume describes and compares the underlying content system of number (singular/plural) with that of the articles (indefinite/definite); he illustrates the surface usage of these systems by quotations taken from sources as diverse as Aucassin et Nicolette and La Tribune de Genève.

Vol. 8 continues the same fundamental method, but at a level of sometimes striking profundity. He is not afraid to raise the question of linguistic universals (the time is 1947-48!), and discusses at length the nature of the personal pronouns, and how far they might represent universal categories of language. He discusses languages that normally omit pronominal reference (Chinese, Korean); this happens in English when we say 'Bought it yesterday,' allowing the context of situation to complete the subject, which will be first person for an affirmation, second person for a question. He also discusses the difference between those languages that express person through verbal inflections (Italian, Russian), and those that require separate pronominal subjects (French, English).

There is, of course, no one system of personal pronouns that is universal. What is universal, however, as Guillaume carefully points out (p.188), is the distinction between what is immanent to the linguistic system, and what transcends it: third person is always immanent to the system; first and second, however, because they are the two poles between which the act of language takes place, are established outside the system, and change with every change of speaker. They are necessarily deictic elements, in a way that third person is not. It is not surprising that in child language third person is a very early development, with the child using third person for self reference; use of first and second person pronouns is a reasonably late development.

The editors have continued with their policy of giving us an exact transcription of Guillaume's manuscript notes, marking clearly the rare instances where they have corrected or emended the original. Such lecture notes are, of course, a mixed bag. Some are wordy and repetitious; these the discriminating reader quickly scans, and passes on. Others have such food for reflection that they can only be read slowly, and indeed it is profitable to reread them. The typescript is easily readable, and the errors very few indeed. The editors have also developed in the more recent volumes an extensive Table analytique, where each lesson is reviewed in a couple of pages; the review in Vol. 8 covers pages 257 to 313, for example, and is followed by an extremely useful and extensive

index which runs from page 315 to page 375 - altogether more than a hundred pages of reference material.

REFERENCES

HEWSON, John. 1971. 'Underlying forms.' Lingua 27:170-83.

HJELMSLEV, Louis. 1942. 'Langue et parole.' Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure 2:29-44.

John Hewson
Memorial University of Newfoundland