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Review: [untitled]

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Reviewed work(s):

The London School of Linguistics: A Study of the Linguistic Theories of B. Malinowski and J. R. Firth by D. Terence Langendoen

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tically odd sentence, "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously," was itself constructed by analogy, I wonder if he realizes that in this case the process must be extended in such a way as to operate on five sentences at a time (since all two-word sequences in the sentence are presumably novel) and that through this extension the notion loses its "equation-solving" character altogether.

It would be easy to give a longer review of this book. It contains a great many insights into the issues that American linguists faced in the first half of this century, and it presents many assumptions about the nature of linguistic research that deserve to be challenged carefully. It makes clear at least, though somewhat tediously, that reasoned challenges to the validity of the competence/performance distinction are conceivable. It will help keep the conversation going for a while.

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The London School of Linguistics: A Study of the Linguistic Theories of B. Malinowski and J. R. Firth. D. TERENCE LANGENDOEN. Foreword by Howard W. Johnson. Research Monograph 46. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968. xii + 123 pp., selected bibliography, index. \$5.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by JOHN LYONS
University of Edinburgh

This book is a revised version of an M.I.T. dissertation (1964), written under the supervision of Noam Chomsky. According to the preface: "Except for the addition of an appendix to Chapter 3 dealing with John Lyons' *Structural Semantics* . . . and the elimination of a chapter dealing with the work of Sir Alan H. Gardiner, only relatively minor changes in the thesis have been made." There are four chapters (in addition to the short introduction): "The Linguistic Views of B. Malinowski" (pp. 7-36); "The Early Views of J. R. Firth" (pp. 37-48); "The Later Views of J. R. Firth" (pp. 49-75); and "Exemplifications of Prosodic Analysis" (pp. 76-115).

Judged by the author's statement of his purpose ("to acquaint linguists and others interested in the development of linguistics in this century with the character of the dominant school of descriptive linguistics in Great Britain today," p. 1), the book must be declared a failure. Whether it is "the first historical account of the men and ideas of the London school written from a critical vantage point" (as the blurb suggests) depends very largely on the sense in which the epithet "critical" is taken. The "vantage point" from which Langendoen criticizes "the London school," whether in phonology or semantics or in matters of methodology and linguistic theory in general, is that adopted by Chomsky in such works as "Current Issues in Linguistic Theory" (1964) and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). Even when credit is given to Malinowski or Firth, or one of Firth's followers, for what (from the "vantage point" adopted) may be described as the "correctness" of their insights on particular issues, it tends to be somewhat grudging. One instance will suffice to illustrate this feature of the book (p. 5): "[Firth's] rejection of the principle [of complementary distribution in phonology], unlike Halle's and Chomsky's rejection of it, was not for any logical reason but for an aesthetic one."

The first thing we look for in a historical account of any intellectual movement is a sympathetic understanding of its aims and attitudes. This is conspicuously lacking in the present work. Some of Langendoen's own sources (to which, incidentally, he might have referred at times even for criticisms he himself makes) give a much better introduction to the work of "the London school." But we still need a full history of the movement.

To say that Langendoen's book does not fulfill its declared purpose is not to say that it is entirely without interest. I will leave to other reviewers the task of evaluating Langendoen's reformulation of various "prosodic" analyses in terms of context-dependent rules operating upon matrices of distinctive features (noting only that the similarity between a prosodic analysis of vowel harmony and Harris's "long-component analysis" was in fact mentioned in my paper to which Langendoen refers on p. 115). As

Langendoen himself points out, many of the "prosodic" articles he discusses "must be considered to rank among the outstanding publications in the linguistics literature of that period" (p. 6).

The sections dealing with semantics are disappointing; and the criticisms that Langendoen makes of Firth's (and Malinowski's) views on "meaning," when valid, have often been made before. Since my own book, *Structural Semantics*, is singled out for particular attention, I may be forgiven for pointing out one or two errors of interpretation: (1) I am *not* "committed to the position that if, say, a verb and a noun appear morphologically to be related by a nominalization transformation, then *ipso facto* they are" (p. 70). Langendoen's citation of evidence that I overlooked in constructing my example does not invalidate the point I was making, but merely demonstrates that I chose a bad example. (2) My use of "operational" was unfortunate, I admit, but it was *not* intended to refer to "the familiar condition imposed by positivists generally" (p. 70). (3) Langendoen's discussion of my attitude to "mentalism" (p. 72) is confused by his adoption of Chomsky's interpretation of the term. I was of course employing the term in the sense that most linguists would have given it at the time I was writing. (4) The point made about intensionality in relation to my proposed definition of "meaning" is irrelevant; although I quoted Reichenbach (and Russell) in support of a *relational* approach to "abstract properties," I have never adhered to an extensional definition of "meaning." (5) My reason for saying that "synonymy is on a completely different level from the other meaning relations" (p. 74) was quite different from that suggested by Langendoen. (6) I am gratified by the comment that my *Structural Semantics* "doubtless represents the most important original contribution to semantic theory to come out of British linguistics since Ogden and Richards" (p. 4), but it should be pointed out that, although I was influenced by Firth (as Langendoen says) through my own teachers, there is a lot in my approach to semantics that Firth himself would have found distasteful. I should perhaps record, for the

benefit of any future historian of this period of "British linguistics," that, on the only occasion that I came into direct contact with Firth, he roundly condemned me for suggesting (at a meeting of the Philological Society) that he and his associates gave undue weight in their theorizing about language to what Saussure called "*les locutions toutes faites*."

Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics. JOHN LYONS. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968. x + 519 pp., 23 figures, 12 tables, table of symbols and notational conventions, notes and references, bibliography, index of proper names, index of subjects. \$11.50 (cloth), \$3.75 (paper).

Reviewed by KARL V. TEETER
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Recent years have seen the multiplication of introductory textbooks to the field of linguistics, but here is the first one I have found to be usable without constant correction of emphasis. What Mr. Lyons offers us is a bold new departure: the application of techniques is not the point, but rather the field is surveyed against a historical background, emphasizing both continuity and, especially in the important and usually neglected area of semantics, pointing out directions for future research. I am glad to see a text that again assumes that linguistics is an autonomous study, neither "part of psychology," as stated in another recent textbook, nor a branch of speculative philosophy, as the trend of some recent work on universal grammar would suggest. Best of all, in a field where contempt for the work of those beyond one's own narrow group has been almost typical, is Lyons' intelligent eclecticism, accepting work from all points of view as honest in intent and treating all from a perspective unified by a historical sketch and characterized by a search for the best general theory of language.

All this said, specific and general reservations remain. Phonology is very inadequately treated and, despite an apology ("I have deliberately given less space to phonetics and phonology," p. x), would have been better omitted altogether than given only 33 of 510 pages. Historical linguistics and language in culture and society are only