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REVIEWS

Linguistic speculations. By FRED W. HOUSEHOLDER. London & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971. Pp. xiv, 352. $17.50.

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The rise and development of transformational-generative linguistics has resulted in fairly widespread disaffection, frustration, and bitterness among those who do not grant primacy to that theory. In the preface of this book, Householder gives eloquent expression to this bitterness, which is directed both toward Chomsky and Halle, as a result of their famous exchange in the *Journal of Linguistics* (Householder 1965, Chomsky & Halle 1965), and toward their followers.

The following passages make the point: 'In 1965 (just about the time I started this book) an article of mine appeared in the first issue of *Journal of Linguistics*. In this, I asked a number of questions about the phonological theory which had two years earlier been launched (or better, perhaps, fired) at a complacent linguistic establishment, and which is now the new orthodoxy. I thought I asked my questions in an amiable and friendly manner, but the response, which appeared in the next issue, was frightening in its lack of courtesy or of any attempt at that effort to understand without which communication must always fail. And (so far as I can tell) none of my questions was answered, and my puzzlement by certain arguments evoked repetition of the same arguments. It reminded me somewhat of the cliché rustic who believes that by shouting loud enough he can make the monolingual foreigner understand him' (vii) ... 'In reading for polemic, one takes advantage of the enormous ambiguity of language by looking for a grammatically possible interpretation of each sentence which will make it inconsistent with itself, obviously false or ridiculously tautological. Many scholars have developed wonderful skill at this, and the technique is much admired by the young' (x) ... 'What are the qualities of the Chomskyan revolution which have proved most attractive to the young? When it all began ... the outright rejection of those linguists who were then most highly respected was undoubtedly very appealing ... But more recent students have never read these giants of the forties and fifties, ... and know their names only from contemptuous discussions by Postal or Chomsky, so that this appeal is no longer valid. A little bit later ... there was the appeal of belonging to an élite repressed by the authorities, working in underground cells to prepare the day of freedom for mankind. This, too, is now gone ... What remains is the style of argument, from second-order implied premises that are assumed to be obvious to the initiate, with footnoted references only to unpublished papers and oral communication, ... with the subtle machinery of claims, strong claims and metatheoretical considerations' (viii–ix).

H is under no illusions about the impressions his book will make on those who now constitute the linguistic establishment: 'I formerly supposed that a high degree of success in communication was within my grasp—or anyone's. I now know better. Nothing can be so clearly and carefully expressed that it cannot be utterly misinterpreted. Possibly certain formal propositions of mathematics are exceptions to this rule, but I'm not even sure of this. What I am sure of is that you who read this book will miss my meaning again and again' (xiii–xiv).

The book itself consists of sixteen essays that are loosely organized and largely self-contained. They all involve, in one way or another, a restatement of linguistic principles from various traditions, ranging from neogrammarian to Prague School, American structuralist, and transformational-generative. These principles are then judged for the consequences that would follow from accepting or rejecting them. Concerning this technique, H says: 'In doing this I may seem to some to be firmly committed to a positivist or operationalist or empiricist view of things, as

opposed to a rationalist or idealist view. In a sense, this is so' (ix). But this is not possible: the difference between empiricism and rationalism has nothing to do with whether or not arguments are conducted on the basis of the careful weighing of consequences of adopting a given principle. Rather, the difference has to do with the kind of principles one adopts in the first place (e.g., whether it is reasonable to infer differences in mental states when there is no difference in overt behavior). Since H is willing to consider all sorts of principles without limitation, he is really taking himself out of the conflict (though it does seem to be the case that he leans toward empiricism).

I find the book mostly unsatisfactory, partly because H does not really carry out the laudable program he describes in the preface, but mostly because his restatements of linguistic principles are almost always inferior to their original counterparts, so that the consequences of accepting his restatements turn out to be worse than the consequences of accepting them in the original. I give two examples of many that can be offered, one from H's discussion of principles of American structuralism, and one from his discussion of principles of transformational-generative theory.

The structuralist principle is that of complementary distribution. H says: 'These distinctions [that a native speaker attends to] must then be represented by means of a minimal alphabet. This economy is achieved by considering the position in which the longest list of distinctions is maintained, and using for all other positions letters selected from this list only, provided there is sufficient phonetic similarity ... This is the principle of complementary distribution' (195–6).

But H's restatement is inferior to any of a number of original statements of the principle, e.g. that in Hockett ([1942] 1957:100): 'if A and B are in complementary distribution (i.e. if they occur in mutually exclusive positions), they may be—though they are not necessarily—members of the same phoneme.'

Consider a hypothetical language L with the distribution of consonantal phones as follows:

(1) Initial: [p t k b d g r]
    Medial: [m n ŋ]
    Final: [t d n].

Since the longest list of distinctions is made in initial position, the consonantal phonemes in L are, according to H's principle, to be represented as /p t k b d g r/. The phones [m ŋ] may be analysed as allophones of /b g/ respectively. But what about [n]? Since it contrasts with allophones of both /t/ and /d/ in final position, and with allophones of /b g/ in medial position, it must be an allophone of either /p/, /k/, or /r/. The criterion of phonetic similarity eliminates /p k/, leaving /r/. Such a phonemicization, while certainly possible, is not the only one possible; a more likely analysis involves taking /n/ as the phoneme-letter, with [r] as its variant in initial position. Possibly, /m ŋ/ would also be set up as phonemes in their own right, adding to the phoneme inventory, but increasing pattern congruity. What is wrong with H's restatement of the principle of complementary distribution is its misplaced emphasis on the position in which the largest number of distinctions is maintained, and the failure to note the non-coercive nature of the principle.

The transformational-generative principle that H restates is that of extrinsic rule ordering. His definition of that notion is as follows: 'If two or more rules are so related that they can actually be executed in either or any one of several orders so as to yield different outputs, then they are called ordered in the strict sense. This is extrinsic order as defined by Chomsky' (110; emphasis omitted).

The passage in Chomsky (1965:223) that H actually refers to does not define extrinsic order at all, but only considers what it is not. Whatever the correct definition, it is clear that H's restatement is faulty. First, if two rules are related in the way he suggests, and both outputs are grammatical (or would lead, upon application of later transformations, to grammatical outputs), then clearly the rules must be unordered. But if ONLY ONE of those outputs results in a

grammatical sequence, the rules must be extrinsically ordered. Second, as far as I know, this situation as H describes it does not arise; nor do proponents of the doctrine of extrinsic rule order claim that it does. What they do claim is that if two rules are ordered in a particular way, then their resulting statement is simpler than if they are ordered in any other way, and the extent of that simplification more than offsets the complication of having to order them explicitly. Note that such a formulation clearly presupposes an evaluation measure that assesses the relative cost of rule-order statements vs. complications in the formulation of rules. Many stock illustrations of this point have been presented in the literature, but the one that has been around the longest is still perfectly useful: Imperative and Reflexive in English. For some reason, H chooses to use illustrations of his own making that do not work. In one case, that of Passive and Pronominalization, he himself notices the failure of the illustration, and comments ruefully: 'But, at any rate, this illustrates how the principle might work' (114). Another purported illustration, using *It*-deletion and Extraposition, is simply irrelevant. On the basis of this discussion, at least, one would have to conclude that H does not fully control the fundamental principles of transformational-generative grammar, despite his tremendous erudition. This, combined with his passion to restate every principle he discusses, leads to baffling and inadequate formulations of ideas that usually are not all that complex or even controversial.

To me, Chapter 13, 'The primacy of writing' is the most interesting in the book. H starts by retelling the story of how Tarzan learned to read; he then launches into a discussion of the relationship between spelling and pronunciation. He argues, correctly, that it is simpler to formulate rules for mapping English spelling onto pronunciation than for mapping pronunciation onto spelling. Finally, he takes up the relationship of Chomsky–Halle underlying representations to spelling. He says: 'As is commonly known nowadays, Chomsky and Halle posit for their deep or "systematic phonemic" representations of lexical items a "distinctive feature matrix" which, for words of Latin origin ... corresponds roughly to the surface or "systematic phonetic" representation which would match this spelling in classical Latin ... Since this deep representation is clearly based on the orthography, it would obviously be rather easy to derive the orthography from it directly. But why is it needed? If we are required to provide the orthography anyway, and if we can reach the phonology from it without an intervening deep feature specification, Ockham's razor would suggest that we dispense with this "systematic phonemic" level entirely, replacing it by the orthography, at least for words of this class' (256–7).

Following further discussion of English non-latinate vocabulary, H draws the following conclusion for literary languages generally: 'In an economical DESCRIPTION of such a language, however, the stored form must be primarily graphic, but suitably modified to serve as a convenient precursor for both the ultimate graphic shape (derived by a short set of rules applied early) and the ultimate phonemic (and allophonic or broad phonetic) shape' (263).

What H is trying to do here is to save his cherished notion that phonological segments should be represented as alphabetic units, rather than as bundles of distinctive features. The argument is this: since the phonological component must account for the relationship between spelling and sound, since spelling is alphabetic in nature (H must now limit his claim to languages with alphabetic writing systems), and since rules for relating orthographic symbols to pronunciation are relatively straightforward, we may dispense with underlying distinctive-feature representations as superfluous and unnecessary. But even if we grant all of H's premises, the conclusion does not follow, since he has not shown that alphabetic representations

are superior to distinctive-feature ones for expressing generalizations about morpho-phonemic alternations. H is not unaware that he must show this in order for his argument to succeed; but rather than provide the argument, he dismisses the matter with a series of rhetorical questions: 'will there be any net gain in economy [if underlying segments are represented in terms of distinctive features]? And how about generality?' (257). By refusing to answer these questions, H tries to leave the impression that the answer is no. But in fact the answer is yes. Thus we may agree with Householder that 'there is no excuse for leaving orthography out of our grammars' (264), without altering significantly our concept of the nature of phonological entities, or of the organization of the phonological component.

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Modern theories of language. By PHILIP W. DAVIS. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973. Pp. xii, 404.

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In this book Davis sets out to summarize and discuss the linguistic theories associated with nine scholars or recognized schools: Saussure, Hjelmslev, Bloom-field, the post-Bloomfieldians, tagmemics, the Prague School, Firth, stratificational grammar, and transformational-generative grammar. These chapters are preceded by a brief introduction, and are followed by a briefer 'Final comment'.

The order of D's chapters can, to a considerable extent, be justified historically. Saussure marks the opening phase of 20th-century structuralism, influencing every later linguist to a greater or lesser degree, but Hjelmslev's glossematics can be said to follow directly from Saussure in that it pushed his doctrines à l'outrance. As D points out, the Prague School also follows closely after Saussure, chronologically and doctrinally; but D brings Bloomfield in at an early stage in his book, as the founder of a generation of American structural linguists—leading to the post-Bloomfieldian distributionalists, represented here primarily by Bloch, Trager, Harris, and Hockett. Tagmemics belongs naturally right after the post-Bloomfield-ians—since, among currently active schools, Pike and his associates are in many respects closer than others to Bloomfield's work with languages.

Chronologically Firth could have come in earlier, as having been responsible for the first major rejection of several of the Bloomfieldian positivist and operation-alist tenets. But D links Firth with the Prague School in what he says is their shared recognition of distinct sub-levels of patterning: the Prague separation of syntax and morphology involves difference in kind and not just in size (224), and the Firthian refusal to separate form and meaning (as the other eight schools do) is seen as involving his whole analysis in something like the Prague School sub-levels (266).