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A. J. B. N. Reichling, E. M. Uhlenbeck, and W. Sidney Allen (eds.), *Word Classes* (reprinted from *Lingua* 17), North-Holland Publishing Co., Amsterdam, 1966. viii, 261 pp.

The study of the problem of word classes, we are assured by the editors of *Lingua*, is once again becoming linguistically fashionable. We are further assured by them that the problem is unsolved both for particular languages: "Even within the confines of one single language it is hard to find an analysis in terms of word classes which satisfies all" (p. v), and for universal grammar: "... it remains hard to give a satisfactory answer to the question whether and to what extent universal principles can be discovered behind the word class distinctions which may perhaps be revealed by the study of individual languages" (p. v). Consequently, the editors hoped by obtaining discussions of the problem of word classes in particular languages by specialists noted not only for this work in those languages but for their contributions to general linguistics as well that "an important contribution to the clarification of the word class problem could be achieved", (p. vi) and that a "new perspective [would be gained] on one of the oldest and in our opinion most crucial problems in linguistic theory" (p. vi).

The eleven contributions included in this volume deal with Greek, Latin, Chinese, Japanese, English; the African languages Bilin, Igbo, and Northern Sotho; and the Amerindian languages Navaho, Yokuts, and Yurok. Of the eleven contributors, seven are British, three American, and one South African. They represent a variety of theoretical positions from American structuralism (Hoijer, Newman) to Firthian (Carnochan) to generative-transformational (P. H. Matthews). On the whole, we will have to say that even the very modest aims of the editors (the gaining of a new perspective on the word class problem) have barely been achieved by this volume. Despite a few clear, lucid presentations of various aspects of the problem, notably by David Crystal and Peter Matthews – these articles do at least furnish some very fresh perspectives – no significant advance in our understanding about word classes is reported in any of the contributions to this volume. Most of them make in addition for tedious, even painful reading; Harry Hoijer's contribution on Navaho, for example is, I am sure, intelligible only to those Amerindianists who have learned by patient practise to make sense of contributions to *IJAL*. But Hoijer's style (if it can be called that) is completely out of place in a volume such as this; fortunately Newman's article on Yokuts proves by its example that Amerindianists do not have to write that way. Other contributors go to great lengths to hedge even inconsequential claims about their language; we find Carnochan, for instance, informing us about interjections in Igbo: "they are not very numerous, but

it would seem unnecessary to ignore them" (p. 21). The articles by Crystal on English (pp. 24–56), and by Matthews on Latin (pp. 153–181) are by far the most interesting theoretically and will receive the most attention here. The remaining articles will each be commented on briefly at the end of this review.

Crystal begins his discussion by noting that contemporary grammarians of English have inherited an unfortunate complacency about word classes which is manifested in a general acceptance of vague terminology, of an emphasis on word classification as an end in itself, and of a multiplicity of approaches to classification with insufficient attention being paid to the evaluation of these approaches. Moreover, the relationship of word classes to problems of typology and of universal grammar has until very recently been largely overlooked. He then proceeds to examine critically the terminology used in discussions of word classes, and the criteria by which such classes are usually established.

First, Crystal takes note of the elementary and intuitive fact that the ratio between number of classes established and number of criteria used to establish them is approximately constant; he then comments on the current tendency to do more and more refined subclassification, and on the confusion currently surrounding the terms 'class' and 'subclass' (and, may I add, of 'category' and 'subcategory'). One might note in this connection what has happened in generative grammar – earliest accounts treated subcategories as categories, introduced by phrase-structure rules of the type:

$$(1) \quad N \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} N_{\text{anim}} \\ N_{\text{inan}} \\ N_{\text{abst}} \end{array} \right\}$$

$$(2) \quad V \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} V_{\text{intr}} / \text{---} \# \\ V_{\text{tr}} / \text{---} \text{NP} \end{array} \right\}$$

later accounts treat subcategories as features, and for good reason (see Chomsky (1965)). Now, Chomsky (1968) would again have us believe (incorrectly, I think) that there is no fundamental distinction between syntactic categories and features, that every category in syntax is a feature specification of some sort.

Crystal then launches on a lengthy, and quite helpful consideration of a number of oppositions used in discussions of word classes in English and other languages: full/empty, open/closed, lexical/grammatical and variable/invariable. One of his major points is that the corresponding terms in each of the first three sets of oppositions are not, as is commonly supposed, equivalent; another is that in many if not most cases application of these oppositions in an effort to determine linguistically significant word classes is

useless. Concerning the criteria used to establish word classes, however, Crystal says little more than that syntactic criteria have more weight than phonological, morphological, lexical, and semantic ones, and that among the various syntactic criteria some sort of statistical ranking is required. He concludes by showing that given particular sets of criteria for defining the class of adjectives, there are many words which only partially satisfy them. The point of this exercise is apparently to show that there are words which belong to classes which lie between such major classes as adjective and adverb.¹ I do not find the exercise particularly convincing. At least for the criteria exhibited by Crystal, the facts could be handled by analyzing the words in question as belonging to the class of adjectives, but that they are exceptions to particular syntactic rules of English, or that they undergo very special syntactic rules applicable only to them. A detailed theoretical mechanism to handle such cases has been developed by George Lakoff (1965), and if such a mechanism can be shown to be well-motivated in general, the case for the existence of bridge classes of the sort described by Crystal would be wiped out.

Matthews' article on Latin is the only one which treats the problem of word classes from the generative-transformational point of view. Its main purpose is to exemplify the kind of syntactic analysis possible within the special framework developed by Matthews to handle certain problems posed by inflecting languages (reported on in Matthews 1965b, c) and problems of selection (Matthews (1965a)). In marked contrast with the rest of the contributions to this volume, it makes a number of points so well that two of them deserve to be quoted in full. The first has to do with the theoretical status of the parts of speech in general:

"...the metalanguage in which one may make statements of the type: 'Latin has a class of prepositions, but no class of articles' has as its object-language the language of descriptive grammars, not the language which any grammar describes. Such a statement is a statement *about* a class or group of classes which the grammar may in some way be said to define. It is moreover likely to be of typological rather than of strictly descriptive significance: thus the statement that Latin grammars do not define a class of articles (more precisely, that they define no class to which the term 'article' is applicable) is of most value when Latin is compared with some language which is different in this respect, for example English or Greek. At this point we presuppose, of course, that terms such as 'preposition' and 'article' may be defined independently of any single grammar. A language cannot be said to 'have prepositions' or 'have articles' merely in the sense that some description of this language defines a class for which the symbol 'preposition' or ... 'article' happens to have been chosen: it would be as good or as bad a description, *qua* description,

¹ Crystal also refers the reader to similar studies by Quirk and others which reveal the existence of comparable bridge classes between other pairs of major classes.

whatever the symbolization. Instead there must be some class to which it assigns a symbol, or possibly the union of various such classes, which can be shown to satisfy the conditions for 'article-hood' or 'preposition-hood' prescribed by some general theory of parts of speech. If so, then the statements are true so long as the description itself is not found wanting. (pp. 155–156.)

The second has to do with the status of *participle* as a part of speech. After showing that the traditional definitions of it as such are inadequate, Matthews comments:

The way out of this difficulty, surely, would be to define 'participle' not simply in terms of shared characteristics, but by distinguishing certain rules as rules for 'participialization'... I do not know if this approach will succeed; but if it does, one might well wonder if it is the class-term 'participle' (as opposed to the rule-term 'participialization') which is really useful. To return to our typological statements, why cannot one say simply that 'Latin has rules for participialization' or that 'Latin shows more types of participialization than Spanish'? (p. 180).

Matthews is also to be congratulated for his exemplary style (nicely illustrated by the foregoing quotations), and for his elegant manner of glossing Latin examples.

Matthews also raises the interesting and important question of the categorial status of lexical items introduced transformationally, and suggests the possibility that all conjunctions may have such an origin. He observes that the consequent definition of the category *conjunction* would be in the same spirit as those of the classical grammarians and Aristotle (p. 166).

We turn now to brief considerations of each of the remaining contributions to the volume. J. Carnochan's article on Igbo (pp. 1–23) pays more attention to morphophonological detail than to anything else – not that this detail is not interesting, but it is difficult to see its relevance to the general problem of word classes. F. J. Daniels on Japanese (pp. 57–87) takes as a fundamental dichotomy the inflected/uninflected opposition, despite Crystal's strictures. He proceeds to describe Japanese paradigms using as labels the inflectional endings themselves. He also engages in a lengthy critique of other work on Japanese word-class identification, notably Bloch's and Jorden's.

Harry Hoijer's article on Navaho (pp. 88–102) is, as was mentioned earlier, practically unintelligible, and this is not all due to the complexity of Navaho, surely. Fred W. Householder's contribution on Ancient Greek (pp. 103–128) includes an amusing introduction in which he disclaims the importance of providing operational definitions of the parts of speech, thanks to the insights now current about deep and surface structure, and yet justifies them because working them out is fun and intellectually profitable. The remainder of the article is a sketch of an algorithm for making part-of-

speech assignments to words in existing Greek texts. It will be some time yet before the program is machine-implemented.

P. Kratochvíl outlines the areas in which further research on Modern Standard Chinese (Mandarin) is called for before the word-class problem can be said to have been solved for it (pp. 129–152). Stanley Newman, on Yokuts (pp. 182–199), does not present any material on the word-class problem in that language which he has not already previously published. Indeed the problem hardly seems to exist at all in Yokuts since all the major criteria provide essentially identical results, at least as far as major classes are concerned.

Similarly, there do not seem to be major obstacles in the way of establishing the word classes of Bilin, according to F. R. Palmer (pp. 200–209). Along the way, however, he presents some fascinating facts about the language, such as that only the last word in a noun phrase is inflected for the case of that noun phrase, even if that word is not the head of the noun phrase. Moreover a particular noun may be multiply inflected for case; an example of the nominative of the genitive of the Bilin word for *man* is exhibited. It means of course 'of the man's'. R. H. Robins' account of Yurok word classes (pp. 210–229) also does not significantly amend what Robins has already published on the language. Yurok is one of the languages of the world in which adjectives do not differ from intransitive verbs in general, except in morphological detail.² This observation is of particular interest in light of the controversy regarding the categorial status of the noun/verb/adjective distinctions (see for example Lakoff (1965, Appendix A); Lyons (1966); Bach (1968); Chomsky (1968)).

E. B. Van Wyk's contribution on Northern Sotho, pp. 230–261, includes an elaborate and doubtless unworkable methodology for undertaking word-class analysis. One especially noteworthy point of Van Wyk's is his treatment of Northern Sotho infinitives as simultaneously nouns and verbs, and not as nominal forms of verbs, or following Matthews as forms having undergone infinitivalization. Van Wyk's stance regarding these forms can be taken as the best possible *reductio ad absurdum* for the identification of the parts of speech on the basis of shared characteristics.

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² Some serious differences over the significance of 'adjective' exists among the various contributors to this volume. For Carnochan, for example, only attributive adjectives are 'adjectives'. These may or may not resemble other intransitive verbs (p. 17).

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