The London school of linguistics. By D. TERENCE LANGENDOEN. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968. Pp. xii, 123. $5.95.

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Langendoen's study 'is intended 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' (1). What we are given, in fact, as the product of his doctoral dissertation written under Chomsky's supervision, is a reasoned exposition and criticism, written by an adherent of transformational-generative theory, of what Langendoen holds to be the central points of Firthian doctrine. This leads him in his evaluation to commend those aspects of London linguistics that appear to anticipate current TG attitudes, and to compare the shortcomings that he sees with what he considers the better treatments of linguistic data by linguists of the TG persuasion. One cannot grumble at this; and if Firthians protest that their work, at least in its prosodic phonological manifestations, was historically a reaction against Jonesian and Bloomfieldian phonemics and should be considered primarily in relation to what went before rather than to what was to come after, they[1] must bear a large part of the blame for not undertaking a comparable exposition and critique themselves. Langendoen is right in stressing the need for a systematic study of Firth's theories and of the work that has resulted from them (3).

The book falls into three main parts: an exposition of the development of Malinowski's thought on language, the final stage of which was the most influential with Firth (Chapter 1); a summary and critique of Firth's theories, concentrating on context of situation, collocation, and prosodic phonology (Chapters 2 and 3); and accounts, with comments, of selected examples of prosodic analyses, together with some restatements in generative rule form (Chapter 4).

In referring to the 'London school', Langendoen points out (1) that this is now, and always has been, a doctrinal, rather than a geographical, designation. Daniel Jones' phonology, largely developed and expounded while he held the Chair of Phonetics at University College, London, from 1921 to 1949, is not dealt with; nor is work published after 1960, the year of Firth's death, except for two items, Bendor-Samuel 1962 and Lyons 1963. This policy excludes, as Langendoen admits (6), the 'Neo-Firthian' school centered around M. A. K. Halliday, who, incidentally, is no longer in Edinburgh, as Langendoen states, but since 1965 has headed the Department of Linguistics at University College, London, where much of the characteristic neo-Firthian linguistic development is con-

[1] Perhaps rewrite *they* as *we*, since I would certainly wish to be included, as I am included by Langendoen, among those who have contributed to the elaboration, explication, and application of Firthian notions in linguistics. In this connection one might mention Robins 1957, not listed in Langendoen's bibliography. There is no ground for complaint at this, as the article was obscurely published in a somewhat inaccessible journal. It was, however, probably the first attempt to give some sort of summary of what prosodic analysis was about in general terms, and, it is hoped, avoided the rather messianic tendencies referred to by Langendoen (55), to which some Firthians, like adherents of other theories, have been liable.

tinuing. Langendoen's self-imposed limits are fair enough, but they result in his ignoring several important studies on collocation, an aspect of Firth's theories that the neo-Firthians have perhaps most directly taken over, and on context of situation, as well as a number of prosodic studies further applying and illustrating prosodic theory.[2] Langendoen also excludes Firth's work on the history of linguistics (4). While this is legitimate within an account of his linguistic theories, it should be pointed out that, as an immediate consequence of Firth's interest, this study was established in publication and research in Britain a decade or so before its now widespread recognition and incorporation into courses of instruction in American universities.

It has been a source of disappointment to everyone associated with Firth that he never published a full and explicit statement of his linguistic theories. Whether he would have ever done so, had he lived longer after his retirement, we shall never know. He spoke of an intention to write such a book, and shortly after he retired, a London bookseller's catalog rashly listed his *Principles of linguistics* as 'forthcoming'; but the title was soon withdrawn, and his literary executor reports that no such manuscript, or even outline, has been found among his papers. As Langendoen says (3), Firth concentrated on two areas of linguistics, semantics and phonology—the latter, under the guise of prosodic theory, leading to the most immediately productive applications. Though Halliday and the neo-Firthians differ considerably in their phonological theory from much of Firthian work in this field, it is notable that it is in the realm of grammar (syntax and morphology) that they have had to build up their model of a comprehensive linguistic description from the ground, virtually without any dependence on Firth at all.

Langendoen criticizes the idea of context of situation as used both by Malinowski (in his later formulation) and by Firth in framing a theory of semantics. It is not hard to see some of the obvious inadequacies of Malinowski's exposition, particularly in his 'Problem of meaning' (1923), with its carelessness of expression (19), gratuitous and unjustified assumption of a basic difference between the languages of primitives and the literate languages of civilization, and the particularism (22, 31) in referring the meanings of utterances to each actual context—a weakness already pointed out by Carroll (1953:39–40), which was to be remedied by Firth's interpretation of context of situation as an abstract set of semantically relevant categories. But the main weight of Langendoen's attack falls at the same point on both Malinowski and Firth, in that they failed to distinguish the possible utility of context of situation in the disambiguation of sentences inherently ambiguous (33); in accounting for the irrelevance, in the formulae of 'phatic communion', of most of the lexical meanings of the words in other types of discourse (24); in delimiting different styles of speech by reference to their habitual contexts (46); and, generally, in dealing with language use as against language meaning (23), given the alleged position of situational context at the base of all semantic interpretation of utterances. Certainly Malinowski was careless in his treatment of these questions, and Firth left little exemplification of

[2] Several of these studies directly stemming from Firth's main fields of interest are to be seen in the recent memorial volume edited by C. E. Bazell and others (1966).

what he hoped to achieve through contextual analysis. But both of them were endeavoring to face the problem of lexical meanings and their basis in the acquisition and intuitive knowledge of a language, and the problem of explicating the relation between language and what is not language. The priority of word meaning vs. sentence meaning is a controversy that has long been debated. At least one set of linguistic thinkers in ancient India came down, like Firth and Malinowski, on the side of the priority of sentence meaning, from which word meanings were derived by abstraction; Western linguists, from Aristotle onward, have tended to start with word meanings as in some way given. This latter is the position of Langendoen (64), following the semantic theory favored by TG linguists and set out in works such as Katz & Fodor 1963, and Katz & Postal 1964. It would seem doubtful at present whether the native speaker's knowledge of word meanings can be adequately displayed in diagrams like the 'semantic trees' of Katz & Postal, which have been applied so far to words with rather obvious and clear-cut differences of meaning. A semantic theory must account not only for a speaker's competence in using and interpreting the more or less discrete meaning differences of words like *bachelor*, but also for his ability to handle sets of words associated in scales and fields, like *apprehensive*, *anxious*, *worried*, *afraid*, *alarmed*, etc., with multiple relationships and indeterminate cut-off points.

The role played by innate ideas in our knowledge of certain basic categories of cognition and perception has been a bone of contention for a long time. It is quite possible that Malinowski (in his later stage) and Firth underestimated the a-priori content of our linguistic competence (cf. 34), though Firth insisted on both 'nature' and 'nurture' as jointly responsible for man's behavior as a member of a social group (cf. Firth 1937:101–2, a characteristically allusive passage). But in any case, a great deal of our knowledge of the meanings of words is clearly not a priori and is in no way language-universal. By some sort of abstraction from utterances heard in contexts, we acquire, intensively in childhood but also throughout our lives, the ability to use and understand the vocabulary of our language, together with its sentence patterns. Even if the currently favored TG model can be made adequate to explicate this, it still takes the acquisition and the experiential basis of this competence for granted. Context of situation and collocation, the latter of which Firth never intended to cover more than a part of the semantic analysis of words, were at least suggestions of what lies behind this knowledge which is taken by Langendoen and others as given. To be sure, it may so far have proven impossible in practice to state more than a small part of word meanings in such terms (cf. Lyon's requirement of operational adequacy, 70–1). But when Langendoen chides Firth, and those following out his ideas, for making context of situation 'a convenient dumping ground for people's knowledge about the world, their own culture, etc.' (50), and assigns Mitchell's 1957 study of the language of buying and selling 'to the realm of ethnography and not of semantics' (65), one could reply that it is just such areas that must somehow be involved in the lexical knowledge of much of the vocabulary that the individual acquires and internalizes.

A point of divergent emphasis becomes clear in Langendoen's objection to

Firth's alleged denial of creativity in language (3, 48), on which TG linguists rightly put so much importance. But Firth did not, in fact, deny the infinite creativity of language in the mouth of a native speaker; any linguist who did would simply be talking nonsense. Nor did he assert it; his emphasis was on the essential diversity of socially and contextually determined differences of language contained within the notion of 'a language' as ordinarily used. Firth maintained that an adequate theory of linguistic description must take account of this. His answer to Langendoen would surely be that all creativity must be achieved within one or more of the socially prescribed styles recognized in a language and a society—subject, of course, to the gradual (or sudden) emergence of new styles as forms of response to changing circumstances. Firth may have overstressed diversity and social determinacy; but it is equally possible to overstress the unity of a language with too ready an acceptance of clear-cut boundaries of 'deviance'.

The creativity requirement is relevant to the Firthian 'renewal of connection', which Langendoen appears to misunderstand (60–1). Firthian descriptivists do, as Langendoen says, claim the right to subject grammatically distinct parts of a language (e.g. verbs, nominal phrases, etc.) to separate phonological analyses, and such deliberately restricted phonological analyses have been published; but in any living language the material to which the analysis is intended to apply, and by which it is to be tested by 'renewal of connection', is infinite. Restriction by reference to the results of a prior grammatical analysis has nothing to do with this, though it is, of course, one respect in which prosodic phonology differed from the formerly dominant American 'monosystemic' phonemics.

On prosodic phonology, Langendoen's general standpoint is made clear both in his brief summary (50–61) and in his critical presentations of selected prosodic studies (76–115). He has no particular affection for the prosodic interest in the highlighting of syntagmatic relations and the structural function of sound features; but he highly approves, as anticipation of the TG position, the steps taken by several Firthians, and specifically allowed for in the theory, to include grammatical information in the relevant data for phonological analysis. Langendoen rightly shows that Firth gradually evolved his ideas on prosodic analysis from the rather general dissatisfaction felt with current phonemic phonology in the 1930's. He cites the early work on Chinese of Firth & Rogers 1937, and the influence of Twaddell 1935 on Firth's thinking (43–4). But, like others, he dates the period of prosodic analysis proper from the publication of Firth's paper, 'Sounds and prosodies' (1948), in the decade roughly contemporaneous with the apogee of Tragerian ('Bloomfieldian') phonemics, just prior to the appearance and widespread expansion of TG theory. This seems to have led him to identify Firth's prosodies with the long components of Harris (1951) in all but small details (54), and to regard most of what is valuable in prosodic analysis as better restated in terms of phonological rules of the type familiar in generative grammar.

Certainly there are analogies in both directions. Harris's long components do cover some of the data that would be treated prosodically by Firth, and certainly Firth and others made use of the descriptive rule (51–2, 87–8) at a time when it was less fashionable elsewhere. There are, however, important differences, to

which Langendoen pays insufficient attention. In comparison with long components, it is not only that a feature assigned to a prosody in one structure need not be assigned to the same prosody throughout the language when different structural relations apply (this difference, made explicit by Allen 1957, is referred to by Langendoen, 55–6); long-component analysis is essentially a post-phonemic procedure, based on a prior assignment of the phonetic data to phonemes. No particular structures are identified with the domains of long components, whereas it is cardinal for the abstraction of a prosody that the feature or features assigned to it as its exponent(s) should either characterize or demarcate a definite structure. Moreover, since prosodic analysis rejected, in advance of TG linguistics, any biuniqueness requirement, the structures to which prosodies are referred may be grammatical (word, affix, etc.) as well as purely phonological (syllable, syllable group, etc.). This in fact is the case with the abstraction of Igbo prosodies by Carnochan 1960, which Langendoen regards as wholly a long-component analysis (115). Carnochan points out that his analysis relates solely to the verb and to verb-pronoun complexes, and that in the language as a whole (op. cit., 156), numerous exceptions to vowel harmony are found. Since Langendoen commends the prosodists' readiness to admit grammatical classifications to phonological relevance (159), it is hard to see why he should declare (93) that Allen 1956, in a strictly prosodic statement, would be unable to keep apart phonetically identical diphthongs occurring in grammatically distinct contexts. The possibility of differential phonological analysis of what amounts to the same phonetic material was recognized as a part of prosodic theory by Firth (1948:132) and repeated by subsequent writers (Bendor-Samuel 1960:355, Henderson 1966:179, Albrow 1966:7).

The comparison of prosodic analysis with description by rules is a rather different matter, in that such a system (unlike long-component analysis) had not been worked out when prosodic analysis was at its most active stage of development. In the 1940's and 1950's, the goal of analysis was in general a static presentation, either a phonemic inventory and transcription, or a set of syllable-structure formulae, etc. Prosodic analyses sought to display the syntagmatic functions of sound features in structures of different types (e.g., Henderson 1949), giving a more comprehensive picture of the interrelations involved than a phonemic analysis was required to provide. Langendoen finds no difficulty in converting such analyses into sequences of generative rules, and in replacing, for example, Henderson's prosodies of polysyllables and sentence pieces by 'rules which change inherent features or delete inherent segments' (82); and one need not doubt his claim that in certain cases some further generalizations are made possible by this mode of treatment (90), though it seems that his reanalysis of Henderson misreports the tonal possibilities of Siamese syllables closed by a stop consonant (81). However, some observations that are specifically made clear in a prosodic analysis are obscured by statements of rules based, like long-component analysis, on a prior recognition of distinctive versus non-distinctive features. Thus the rule statement of Allen's 1951 analysis of the Sanskrit 'law of cerebralization' confines itself to the consonants 'distinctively', i.e. phonemically, retroflexed following a retroflex consonant (84); but a major point made by

Allen (op. cit., 942) is that a (subphonemic) retroflex quality is also to be inferred, and that such retroflexion, no less than the distinctive retroflexion of the consonants, is part of the exponence of the prosody. The same point is made by Waterson (1956:579), who regards differences in consonantal articulations along with 'phonemic' vowel quality differences as together constituting the exponence of Turkish vowel harmony prosodies; and it is wholly beside the point for Langendoen (114–5) to dismiss Palmer's elegant 1956 prosodic treatment of Tigre vowel harmony (and vowel-consonant harmony, though Langendoen does not mention this) as in part involving subphonemic features. This was precisely one deliberate aim of prosodic analysis, to make possible phonological statements without the prior recognition of an overall, ultimately transcription-oriented, division of the phonetic material into what was 'distinctive' and what was 'non-distinctive'. It is, of course, possible to bring out all these same observations in other analyses; what is relevant, however, is to compare the merits of different systems of analysis in facilitating their integration with economy and consistency.

In commending Allen's 1956 work on Abaza, Mitchell's 1960 study of accentuation in Arabic, and Bendor-Samuel's 1962 description of stress in Terena as 'the three "deepest" phonological descriptions' considered in his book, Langendoen adds (114) that they 'are not orientated prosodically but go well beyond the constraints imposed by the prosodic framework, as it has been developed by the London school'. This conclusion follows from his prior judgment that the theory of prosodic analysis had been exhaustively worked out and definitively formed, if not publicly stated, within Firth's active professional life (he retired in 1956). This is not the case, as continuing publication of prosodic analyses shows; and it becomes quite clear to anyone who, like myself, has had the occasion to teach a course on prosodic analysis at American universities. Langendoen regards the London school as much more unitary in doctrine than in fact it ever has been. It is certainly true, as he says (67), that Robins 1959 and probably also Palmer 1962 owe nothing to specifically Firthian theory, but it is quite impossible to set a cut-off point in distinguishing what is prosodically oriented and what is not. We can only ask the question: would this or that piece of work have taken the form it did without the influence of Firthian theory? In the three cases mentioned by Langendoen, it seems very doubtful if they would.

The indeterminancy of prosodic theory, and indeed of Firthian theory as a whole, was made inevitable by the failure of Firth or anyone else to set out a full-scale statement of the Firthian position during his lifetime. One might ask: at what point would the most recent turns of Chomsky and some other TG linguists have been regarded as going 'well beyond the constraints imposed by transformational theory', if they had been written by others and if Chomsky himself had failed to publish anything after 1957? But the situations of TG and of Firthian linguistics are in this respect wholly different, and it may be important in the sociology of doctrinal change in the sciences to enquire into this. Firth's most active and productive period extended over thirteen years, from 1944 until 1956, during which time no adequate general statement of his linguistic theories was attempted by him or by anyone else. In the eleven years since 1957, Chomsky

has published several theoretical expositions; and at least two TG textbooks, Bach 1964 and Koutsoudas 1966, have been produced. Leaving aside differences in scholarly personality, this state of affairs must in part be attributed to the lack of an adequate challenge to Firthian linguistics during the Firthian period, as contrasted with the continuous challenges faced in America and Europe by Chomsky and other TG linguists. During the 1940's and early 1950's, American linguists were little interested in British development, and in consequence Firth never had to face from an American phonemicist a detailed and documented critique of the sort represented by Hockett 1968 and other similar shorter publications. During the Firthian period in England there existed no adequate alternative viewpoint from which to criticize Firth positively and publicly either on context of situation or on prosodic phonology. Jonesian phoneme theory was the only phonological alternative; and this was felt by most linguists to need considerable amendment and amplification anyway. Firth in fact suffered by being early in the growth of linguistics in Great Britain (indeed, he was himself largely responsible for that growth) and by antedating the full development of the constant international interchange of views and of scholars in linguistics that is now so well established, at least in the western world. Had his productive years been at a time when theoretical positions on linguistic semantics and on exhaustive phonological analysis were as well grounded and recognized in England as was the case in America when Chomsky began publishing and lecturing, Firth's scholarly activity and output and that of his associates would surely have been different. As it is, the neo-Firthians, especially Halliday, have now had to attempt what an adequate external contemporary challenge would have forced Firth and the Firthians to do in his lifetime (cf. Halliday 1961:242). To take a specific point: where does reference (denotation) fit in Firth's context of situation? This necessary question was first asked in print by Lyons (1966: 293), though there is a passing reference to 'naming' in Firth and Rogers (1055), and 'directive reference' is listed as part of what is involved in meaning in Firth 1930:41. In my opinion (from which, however, Lyons dissents—1966:301–2), reference must fall within Firth's category of 'relevant objects'; but the point here is that, despite a good deal of discussion on context of situation, this question was never, to my knowledge, actually put in so many words to Firth. Had Lyons been actively working on semantic questions a decade earlier, it seems hard to believe that Firth would not have been compelled to face this question openly.

Even more to the point, if Langendoen's study, or a comparably detailed and reasoned critical exposition and examination of Firthian linguistics, had taken place during Firth's active lifetime, Firth himself would surely have been moved to reply with an equally reasoned account and defense of his own position, probably with considerable amendment on certain points. Firth did not fear controversy and argument, though he could be proteanly awkward to pin down on specific details; it would have been good for him and for his most enthusiastic followers to have had to read and digest something like Langendoen's *London school*. Thus, although in a sense the book has appeared fifteen years too late,

Langendoen must be congratulated for writing his stimulating critique, which one must hope will provoke from a dedicated Firthian the sort of response that it deserves.

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