

## REVIEWS

**Spontaneous spoken English:** An integrated approach to the emergent grammar of speech. By ALEXANDER HASELOW. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. 326. ISBN 9781108417211. \$110 (Hb).

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In his monograph, Alexander Haselow outlines a model for the grammatical description of spontaneous spoken English as it emerges in the flow of speech. He thereby focuses on linguistic expressions that are traditionally left aside in grammatical work, namely so-called unintegrated or extracausal expressions like discourse markers, parentheticals, general extenders, or final particles (Ch. 4), and fragmented syntactic phenomena, such as minimal structures or ellipses, segment-chaining structures, and far-reaching projections (Ch. 5). According to the author, these linguistic structures are typical of spontaneous speech and ‘escape the syntactic formats predicted in sentence-based models of grammar’ (80). This thus calls for an alternative. Indeed, the main motivation for writing the book is given right from the beginning, namely: ‘[t]he search for an alternative to established structuralist and generativist approaches, both of which see language structures as relatively fixed prior to verbalization and as conforming to abstract, allegedly “descriptive” rules rather than as being schematic and inherently open’ (2). I come back to this point later.

The main hypothesis of the work is that of a dualistic organization of grammar. H defends the idea that grammar is a two-component system, where one component deals ‘with the internal organization of emergent syntactic units in terms of linearization and hierarchization, the other one with the organization of language based on cognitive, discourse-structural and interactive principles of language use’ (30). This dual organization is referred to as the GRAMMATICAL DUALISM ASSUMPTION, meant to account for linguistic structures of both microgrammar and macrogrammar. The former accounts for linguistic expressions that are hierarchically integrated (relations of dependency and embedding), while the latter concerns the linearization of linguistic segments that are relatively autonomous from a morphosyntactic and semantic point of view. This reference to micro- and macrogrammar relates H’s descriptive work to the notions of microsyntax and macrosyntax as they are used in the description of (spoken) French syntax (in particular, Berrendonner 1990, 2002 and Blanche-Benveniste 2003, cited in the volume, but see also Avanzi 2007 and Corminboeuf & Benzitoun 2014, among others). The author acknowledges that his plea for a dualistic approach to grammar is also present in work by Kaltenböck and colleagues distinguishing sentence grammar from so-called THETICAL GRAMMAR (Kaltenböck, Heine, & Kuteva 2011) or in the FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR approach by Dik (1997), pursued today in Hengeveld and Mackenzie’s FUNCTIONAL DISCOURSE GRAMMAR (2008).

H’s endeavor differs from these previous works by providing neurolinguistic evidence to support his dualistic approach. He does this convincingly in Ch. 6 by referring to a select number of neurolinguistic studies that demonstrate that the forms, structures, and functions which have been identified by H as belonging to microgrammar or macrogrammar are indeed processed differentially. More specifically, it seems that the left brain hemisphere takes care of structures and forms involving morphosyntactic and semantic relations, as well as embedding, belonging to microgrammar, while the right hemisphere is in charge of discourse organization, speaker-addressee relationships, and formulaic expressions outside hierarchical structures (286). In other words, not only is grammar dualistic, but so is human cognition. Thus, H wants to propose a theory of grammar that is descriptively adequate for spoken (spontaneous) data, which would be at the same time a cognitively plausible model of language. Only then, he argues, will we be able to EXPLAIN the corpus data as we find them in spontaneous interactive discourse. In his view, this requires revision of the—in his eyes—traditional view of a product-based grammar, and replacement by a process-based one. This is needed in order to do full justice to the structural properties of spoken language as they are produced under cognitive constraints, including mainly ‘limitations in work-

ing memory capacity and the quasi-simultaneousness of speech planning and production' (3). In line with Hopper's (1998) emergent grammar, H sees grammatical structure-building 'as an incremental process, based on structural patterns that are never fixed or determined prior to the production of an utterance, but based on structural blueprints that are constantly open and in flux in ongoing speech' (17).

H's study has many strengths; it also has some weaker points. I briefly review the two sides following the chronological order of the chapters.

The introductory chapter is a useful one, introducing the concept of grammatical dualism and the notions of microgrammar and macrogrammar, and presenting the empirical data. These are composed of a subset of the spoken components of the ICE-GB (the British component of the International Corpus of English (ICE); Nelson, Wallis, & Aarts 2002), namely private and public dialogues, thus restricting the data under study to interactive and spontaneous contexts, collected in the early 1990s. The subcorpus covers approximately 375,000 words and was annotated with additional prosodic information by the author.

For his ambitious program, H sets up a metatheoretical framework, which he refers to as an 'interfield approach' (Ch. 2). It is meant to bridge linguistic/grammatical analysis with sociological conversation analysis and cognitive neuroscience of language in the framework of an emergentist perspective on grammar. The three components are seen as interdependent but are not forced into one uniform analytic apparatus (43). In other words, in order to account for the dualistic nature of both linguistic structure and cognitive processing in concrete communicative contexts, H calls for an integrative approach including linguistics, social action, and cognition. While I completely agree with the added value of combining grammatical analysis with conversation analysis and neurolinguistic evidence, I have some difficulty grasping in what way this interfield approach differs from more traditional multidisciplinary studies.

Ch. 3 forms the theoretical core of the linguistic apparatus. It presents H's conceptualization of grammar as a knowledge system and an activity that is always contextualized. Thus, grammar is understood as 'a phenomenon emerging in the flow of time, based on moment-by-moment decisions taken by the speaker on how to continue the linearization of linguistic forms at the leading end of a structure-in-progress' (84). In this view, grammar is not a set of fixed rules constraining the production of grammatical contra ungrammatical sentences or clauses. Following this procedural perspective on language production, speakers make use of prepatterned input based on their prior experience with language, making the continuation of a structural unit predictable to some extent, yet always open-ended. Thus, H repeatedly insists that language is a social and cognitive activity that cannot be accounted for in terms of a rule-based grammar with a priori categories, such as phrases or clauses, which he considers to be 'fixed-code approaches to linguistic structure' (91). In his view, the microgrammatical and the macrogrammatical organization of language and the relation between these two levels are meant to capture the language-specific regularities in the (asymmetric and symmetric) linear order of segments, but it is not assumed that these (hierarchical) relationships exist prior to use (93).

This is, in my view, a critical point. While I understand the author's endeavor to describe and explain why spoken language is structured the way it is by means of a process-based approach rather than a product-based one, I believe that one of our tasks as linguists is to systematically analyze language as it is by means of reusable structural regularities. From an analytical point of view, this requires us to abstract away from the conditions of production to focus on language as a product, in order to uncover the 'rules' that best describe how language is put to use in its many manifestations, be it in edited writing, or scripted or nonscripted speech. Common tools of description do not entail that some uses would be 'wrong' and others 'correct', nor that grammar would be a constraining set of rules that is fixed once and for all. Rather, it accounts for the fact that there is a (language-specific) structural system that speakers acquire in interaction and adhere to in a conventionalized way. In other words, in my view, language is both a process and a product, and we need a descriptive apparatus that is able to account for both. Whether the uncovered regularities should be called 'blueprints' or 'rules' seems to be more of a terminological issue, not a theoretical one.

The focus of Chs. 4 and 5 is on the macrogrammatical organization of unfolding spontaneous speech by means of fine-grained conversation-analytical descriptions. The two chapters form the analytical core of the book. A strong relation is established between the cognitive phases at work in the flow of language planning and production and the linguistic serialization in three main fields: the initial, the medial, and the final fields of the ‘unit of talk’. H shows that macrogrammatical expressions occur in privileged positions and that this can be explained in terms of cognitive efficiency in real-time production. While the conversation-analytic method does not allow systematically generalizing nor quantifying the extent to which these expressions fulfill the described expectations, I believe that the work can be taken further from this point in a more systematic corpus-based study. This would, for instance, require strengthening the operationalization of the criteria used to segment the flow of discourse. Indeed, the definition of H’s unit of talk as ‘a stretch of speech produced under one coherent intonation contour with illocutionary force of its own’ (65) is a vague one and lacks operationalization for systematic analysis (see e.g. Degand & Simon 2009 for a discussion and overview). This being said, the work presented is strong and convincing and invites a systematic crosslinguistic follow-up.

As already mentioned, Ch. 6 provides neurolinguistic support for the dualistic approach to grammar. While H does not put specific hypotheses to the test with proper experimental studies, he does present intriguing evidence from existing neurolinguistic studies that microgrammatical and macrogrammatical linguistic structures are indeed processed differentially. As linguists, this should strengthen our efforts to reach out beyond the boundaries of our discipline and work further on cognitively plausible models of language description. The author concludes his work in Ch. 7 with the ‘hope that the present book has offered new perspectives of thinking about “grammar” in a more comprehensive way’ (295). I can without any doubt state that this is the case. Not only does this work invite us to think further, but it also demonstrates that shifting our focus onto spontaneous speech may challenge traditional views on grammatical description. In this sense, the book offers a welcome, thought-provoking contribution.

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