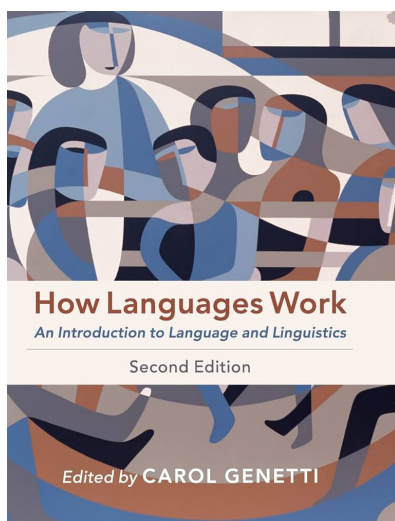


BOOK REVIEW



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| Title: | How Languages Work: An Introduction to Language and Linguistics |
| Author: | Carol Genetti |
| Publisher: | Cambridge University Press |
| Year: | 2019 (2 nd Edition, Revised version) |
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| Reviewers: | Unaree Taladngoen, <i>Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna Phitsanulok, Thailand</i> & Sasa Watanapokakul, <i>Mahidol University, Thailand</i> |

How Languages Work: An Introduction to Language and Linguistics (2nd edition) is a beneficial textbook for graduate students and teachers that composes together all the classic, fundamental, and indispensable concepts of language and linguistic studies. Edited by Carol Genetti, this revised version was published in 2019, and contains two main parts: Part I (Primary Chapters) and Part II (Language Profiles). The Primary Chapters in Part I provide insights into all elements of language and linguistics, from introductory concepts and principles to language acquisition and language use in specific contexts, while Part II deals with language profiles and depicts fourteen language profiles from different language origins along with their similarities and differences.

Part I of the book comprises 15 chapters contributed by well-known experts in the field, and each chapter emphasizes different but connected fields of language and linguistic studies. Chapter 1, contributed by the editor Carol Genetti, begins with the introductory concepts and principles of language and linguistics, aiming to encourage the reader to understand the importance of language, discuss language issues, and identify facts and issues of the world's linguistic demography, vitality, and endangerment. The chapter ends with an overview of prominent linguistic fields as a bridge towards introducing the other chapters.

Chapters 2 to 6 deal with the core linguistic fields of phonetics and phonology (by Matthew Gordon), morphology (by Marianne Mithun), and word classes and syntax (by Carol Genetti). These five chapters aim to introduce fundamental linguistic concepts and principles to the reader and allow the reader to familiarize themselves with basic linguistic terms. Here, the authors also clearly explain key concepts and terminology with examples (e.g., exemplifying the sounds /z/ and /s/ to contrast the voiced and voiceless consonant sounds; providing paired words like 'sled vs. slayed' and 'singer vs. finger' to demonstrate minimal pairs; and demonstrating an analysis of the word 'unbelievable' to show its internal word structure of prefix {un-} + root {believe} + suffix {-able}, respectively) to facilitate ease of comprehension and understanding

for the reader. Moreover, figures were also included to highlight key points and attract the attention of readers, especially visual learners.

Chapter 7 by Michael Israel delves into semantics and discusses conventional meanings of words and linguistic expressions. Also, fundamental methods in considering truth-conditional meanings of words and phrases, and their subjective effects on a language user's imagination are introduced. Therefore, semantics mediate how a language user conveys and understands conventional meanings.

As not all aspects of meanings are adhered to with linguistic forms and not always explicitly expressed, pragmatics, presented in Chapter 8 by Mira Ariel, come into play and emphasize inferred meanings of language expressions, and how a language user interprets them with the aid of various relevant contexts, such as social, cultural, and interactional contexts. For example, as presented in one exercise, when a speaker mentioned that the fish she bought from a reputable market was smelly, it could be implicated that the fish was possibly spoiled despite it being expensive, based on the denotation of 'smelly' and the connotation of 'reputable market.' To reach this assumption, both the speaker and the interlocutor required a shared social context.

Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 cover the concepts of discourse or larger language units beyond the sentence, as well as prosody (how a speaker's intonation or pitch affects communication). Discourse, as discussed in Chapter 9 by Wallace Chafe, looks at the language in larger stretches and emphasizes different genres of verbal communication. As Chapter 9 focuses on how spoken conversations are used in communication, then comes Chapter 10, which discusses the concept of prosody. Also contributed by Wallace Chafe, prosody is considered the music of language. Since communication involves the use of larger stretches of language, and the speaker intends to convey different emotions and attitudes, all while attracting the listener's attention simultaneously, prosody, including pitch, volume, timing, and voice quality, is therefore employed to achieve this effect. For instance, when a speaker says, "Sarah loves John." with a primary stress placed over 'Sarah' and ends the speech with a falling intonation, the speaker is making a statement, and it is Sarah, not somebody else who loves John. On the other hand, if the same speaker ends the utterance with a high pitch, he or she would then display disbelief or uncertainty.

Chapter 11, contributed by Mary Bucholtz and Lal Zimman, introduces language as a social activity, which includes the use of registers among legal and religious groups, slang among teens in a casual social context, and different greetings depending on situations and contexts. Different aspects within a language and between languages are also considered in this chapter. In addition, the chapter looks at the concepts, principles, and practices of language ideologies, language variation, linguistic diversity, as well as the relationship between language variation and language change.

Chapter 12, contributed by Marianne Mithun, covers the concepts of language change. The author regards languages as dynamic systems, which means languages constantly change over time. The chapter discusses sound changes (e.g., lenition or weakening of the vowel /e/ to

/ə/), changes in the sound system (e.g., assimilation showing influences of neighboring sounds under complementary distribution), sound shift (e.g., the Great Vowel Shift and mergers), and grammatical changes (e.g., grammaticalization of 'beside' and 'besides'). Also, as changes do not occur randomly, the chapter introduces and describes simple linguistic rules that govern these changes, including a conditioned sound change and the concept of complementary distribution.

Chapter 13, contributed by Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, deals with language contact and areal linguistics. The sociopolitical relationships of language communities are introduced in this chapter as languages vary based on the nature of their use and contact. Significant contact languages including pidgins and creoles are discussed. Also, the chapter emphasizes that social, political, and geographical factors influence languages and how speech communities are defined, such as societal bilingualism which embraces the coexistence of multiple distinct languages and the majority of people communicating in more than one language; diglossia which conditions how two varieties of the same language are used in high or low functions; the creation of pidgins as contact languages among workers who speak different mother tongues; and the evolution of pidgins to creoles over time.

Finally, Part I of this book ends with how individuals acquire their first and second languages, as discussed in Chapter 14 by Patricia M. Clancy and in Chapter 15 by Dorothy Chun and Jan Frodesen, respectively. Chapter 14 details first language acquisition theories and concludes that individuals acquire their first language through the cognitive and social demands of everyday language use. Also, methodologies in language acquisition research are introduced here. However, the author does not provide detailed explanations or exemplify each methodology with research studies. If sample language acquisition studies were provided, the reader would have obtained a clearer picture of how language acquisition research should be conducted. For Chapter 15, significant linguistic issues regarding second language acquisition were explored. Interestingly, the authors mention an excerpt from a Russian learner of English in which he says that insufficient English pronunciation instruction and learning could lead to ineffective acquisition and development of intelligible communication. This is true as in the era of English as a lingua franca, the acquisition of intelligible pronunciation is deemed more essential over correct pronunciation as governed by the standards of native speakers. These statements are bound to shed some light for EFL teachers to start focusing more on teaching intelligible pronunciation instead of only adhering to correct pronunciation.

Part II of the book collects 14 language profiles, where the contributing authors follow the same conventions and discuss certain typological features of these languages, including their phonetics, phonological system, morphology, and syntax. Among the 14 language profiles, African-American English by Anne H. Charity Hudley and Christine Mallinson was newly added to this edition. Spoken by millions of people in the United States and other countries, the authors consider African-American English a systematic and rule-governed linguistic variety, not substandard English. Although it is not explicitly mentioned why African-American English was selected and added in this edition, it is possible that the language was included since it is such a popular variety in mainstream media due to its prevalence in many forms of art, such as songs, films, speeches of well-known individuals, and poetry about the African-American culture.

Although the book has been published for almost five years, it remains an ever decent manual for graduate students and teachers interested in English linguistics. However, even though the book claims to be suitable for university students with limited background in linguistics, some concepts, such as entailments, contradictions, and pragmatics theories, can still be complicated for them since the chapters do not only discuss the concepts at a surface level. Moreover, the linguistic profiles tend to be more beneficial for graduate students and novice researchers in linguistics as well, rather than for EFL students and teachers.

However, with that said, each chapter does provide extra resources for learning, such as STOP AND REFLECT activities that trigger the reader's thoughts toward what is being discussed, SIDE BAR boxes that provide additional sources, examples, or suggested readings associated with the discussed topics, exercises that allow the reader to review concepts and principles, and a wireless icon that allows the reader to access online resources when completing the exercises or readings. These additional resources more than readily facilitate self-study for the readers. However, it would be more convenient if answer keys to exercises were also provided so that the readers could perform a self-check after completing each exercise.

Still, the most compelling aspect of the book is that it provides the reader with a globalized perspective as examples included in the chapters do not cover only American or British English, but a variety of different languages as well, such as Hupa, Finnish, Mohawk, Karo, and Spanish among others. With data sets from different languages, the reader is ultimately able to paint a bigger and clearer picture of how languages really work not just in one continent, but across the world as well.

THE REVIEWERS

Unaree Taladngoan is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of Languages and Communication, the Faculty of Business Administration and Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna Phitsanulok, Thailand. She is also a PhD student in Applied Linguistics at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Mahidol University, Nakhon Prathom, Thailand. Her main research interests are centered around English language teaching, language course design and development, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

unaree@rmutl.ac.th

Sasa Watanapokakul, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of English in the Faculty of Liberal Arts at Mahidol University, Thailand. Her fields of interest are in English language teaching (especially in active learning, gamification, and creative teaching methodology), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), applied linguistics in English phonetics and phonology, and event management.

sasa.wat@mahidol.edu

REFERENCE

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