Immler, Manfred:

Generative Syntax - Generative S症niatik.


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Immler's book is a useful and well organized introduction to the theory of TGG: it combines lucidity with wealth and accuracy of technical details (moreover, in some cases the author integrates data on English which were used for traditional generative argumentation with data from his dissertation 'Deutsche Kausativverben und Probleme der Tiefenstruktur' in the Generative Transformationsgrammatik' [cf. pp. 146-46 and p. 154]) Although the book was written at a period in which the differences between generative syntactic and generative semantics were still alive, looking at it after a few years it appears to be in a well-balanced analysis of the two opposing positions, and chiefly a useful work, both to the non-specialist and to the specialist. The former will find in it a key to the understanding of what has become one of the most esoteric branches of Theoretical Linguistics, the latter will have a bibliographically systematic outline of the development of the theory. This development is run through from its earlier stage (linked, as is well known, with Harris's name), when purely formal methods were used in the study of linguistic regularities. In the first chapters, Immler points out the characteristics of this stage that have influenced not only Chomsky's earlier production (mainly 'SynStr', for which see ch. 7). Chapters 4-5 deal with an important change introduced by Chomsky in the Harrisian theoretical apparatus: the concept of DS conceived as an abstract level of representation. As to Immler, Immler first reconstructs the formal conditions as set forth in 'SynStr' (pp. 52 ff.) and then analyzes their validity, formulating the following alternative definition of the concept: "The DS of a sentence $S_j$ is that structure $P_j$ related to the surface structure $S_j$ only and just by the set of transformations $M_T^{-1}(T_1, ..., T_n)$ (p. 156)." According to the author, neither Chomsky nor his scholars have ever defined the set $M_T^{-1}$, and, even if they had, we would always be able to say that the existence of natural languages of such a level of DS as the one formulated in 'SynStr' and 'Aspects'. The above criticism used by Immler to demonstrate that DS is not essential to a theory of GG seems quite weak to me: it might reflect the same realistic point of view which appears elsewhere in the book. The question of whether we can accept the notion of DS, a point that has been greatly debated in the quarrel over generative syntax and generative semantics, is proposed again in ch. 7, p. 72 and pp. 76-77 and is carried on in ch. 9. Here Immler analyses the main objections made by semiticians to the notion of DS as developed by Chomsky in 'Aspects'. He finds that, even if these objections cannot be answered in the affirmative, the concept of DS remains valid. The reason is that the semantic apparatus of generative semantics, as well as with the arguments for and against it. Among the arguments against the above theory, a criticism which, in Immler's opinion, constitutes a fundamental weakness of generative semantics, concerns its lack of an autonomous word level (cf. pp. 165-68). In fact, the SR of a lexical unit through semantic atoms does not express its meaning as independently from the individual lexical characteristic that break the regularity of the linguistic system 'in vielen kleinen Stellen'. That is why the semantic structures generated by this theory are not n -ative; generative semantics is unable to capture irregularities that infiltrate the system, in other words, it is unable to capture the meaning nuances that every word takes on in the syntagmatic concatenation with other lexical units. In addition to the problem of relative word autonomy, there is another question which, in Immler's opinion, generative semantics does not deal with adequately: it is the problem of the place of syntax in a TGG. Syntax, too, requires a relative autonomy. Thus Immler's conclusion as to this point is that, although a semantically based grammatical theory is a better model, it is erroneous to assume that all language characteristics are determined by semantics (cf. p. 202 and p. 205). On the whole, the contraposition of the two theories aims primarily to give some contribution to the question of the form of a theory of natural languages. Rather than the formal aspects of this problem (this seems to be confirmed by the fact that in the book little space is devoted to OGs as formal systems), there is an interest in the degree of freedom to the researcher as to their psychological implications: the mental processes of the language user are always considered as a decisive criterion in evaluating alternative technical solutions. As a matter of fact, from the very first page Immler stresses the fact that the processes of conversion of a 'geistiger Inhalts' into a 'sprachlichen Ausdruck' and vice-versa occur in the speaker during communication. Here, as elsewhere in the book, the author seems to reflect his personal views on the treatment of the subject. The competence-performance distinction, for example, never becomes clear, so that the reader may be misled as to the place assigned in the theory to Sprachwendennd und to Sprach bewußtsein. Even the treatment of the problem of 'directionality' may cause misunderstandings when Immler talks about a directionality of speech acts. Another instance of his realistic approach to GG is also evident when he writes that: 'Die verschiedene Wahl der Basisregeln, die GS [generative semantischen] und IS [interpretive semantischen] vornehmen, hat sehr - wenn man davon ausgeht, daß die Basisregeln einer Grammatik nicht nur irgendwelchewillkürlich postulierte Konstrukte sind, sondern eine Realität, nämlich die der Sprachverwendung zugrundeliegenden geistigen Strukturen, abhängen - entscheidende Implikationen: die GS behauptet dann, daß alle sprachlich vermittelte Wahrnehmung der Wirklichkeit einer einzig Grundstruktur folgt; der eines Prädikats und eines oder mehrerer Argumente, über die durch dieses Prädikat etwas ausgesagt wird. Die IS behauptet auf der anderen Seite, daß es keine unabhängigen Regeln gibt, die die Struktur der Bewußtseinsinhalte, die die Zuwiderstimmungen festlegen, keine primären Prinzipien also, aufgrund derer wir die Reali- tät tatsächlich einmal nach gewissen Grundkategorien und den zwischen ihnen be-
tehenden Beziehungen aufgliedern und sie auf eine begriffliche Struktur ab-
bilden, um dieser dann eventuell eine sprachliche Form zu geben" (pp. 212-13).
Even if in some cases we can agree with Luhmer, however, we must be aware of the fact that his perspective does not coincide with the epistemological back-
grounds of the traditional generative approach, where modelling leads only to
formal representations of a given process: so the algorithms defined by the
linguist are "simulations" of unobservable phenomena (those which Luhmer
terms "die der Sprachverwendung zugrundeliegenden geistigen Strukturen") and
who means can be said et simpliciter related to them. Particularly inter-
esting, looking at it from an historical point of view, is the conclusion of the
book: it underlines the importance of a pragmatic approach to the study of na-
tural languages as communicative systems.

Notes:
1) The following abbreviations have been used in the text:
   TGG = Transformational Generative Grammar
   SynStr = Syntactic Structures (Chomsky 1957)
   Aspects = Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (Chomsky 1965)
   DS = Deep Structure
   GG = Generative Grammar
   SR = Semantic Representation.

Alvar, Manuel und Lope Blanch, Juan M.:
En torno a la sociolingüística (= Cuadernos de Lingüística. 3).

Alvar, Manuel und López Morales, Humberto:
Estudios sociolingüísticos (Cuadernos de Lingüística. 5).

Rezensiert von: Reinhold Werner
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ledes der beiden rezensierten Hefte enthält zwei nicht neue Arbeiten.
Heft 3: Manuel Alvar: 'Lengua y sociedades'; Erstveröffentlichung in: Travaux
55-64. - Juan M. Lope Blanch: 'La sociolingüística y la dialectología hispánica';
Erstveröffentlichung in: Frances M. Aid, Melvyn C. Resnick u. Bohdan Saciuk
Heft 5: Manuel Alvar: 'Actitud del hablante y sociolingüística'; Erstveröffent-
lichung in: Travaux de Linguistique et de Littérature de l'Université de Stras-
478-489.

In allen vier Arbeiten sollen grundsätzliche Probleme zur Frage nach dem
Zustand einer Disziplin Soziallinguistik behandelt werden. Während in den
Arbeiten von Lope Blanch und López Morales direkt das Problem einer sinn-
vollen Abgrenzung der Disziplin behandelt wird, bringen die beiden Arbeiten
von Alvar zwar auch ein Bewusstsein dieser Problematik in expliziten Fragen
um Ausdruck, vermeiden jedoch eine eindeutige Stellungnahme, wenn man vom

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