Reviews
Comptes rendus

Li Wei (ed.). 2014. *Applied Linguistics*. Malden, MA/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. Pp. 328. CAD $45.95 (softcover).

Reviewed by Ross Bilous, *independent researcher*

This book introduces the reader to the field of applied linguistics and consists of an introduction followed by four parts, each of which contains three chapters; thus, there are in total thirteen contributions. Each chapter starts with aids, such as a chapter outline, learning outcomes, and key terms. The study material is presented afterwards in several sections, some of which contain a study activity, which can prove useful to stimulate the reader's analytical thinking skills. A brief summary, study questions, and recommended readings conclude each chapter.

Chapter 1, "Introducing Applied Linguistics", authored by the editor, initiates the reader to linguistics and its different branches, tackling some questions that have to do with the essence of human language and different approaches to studying it. The branch of applied linguistics is introduced as using a "problem-solving approach" (p. 5). Applied linguists are seen as "jacks of all trades" (pp. 6, 13) who work across different disciplines or as individuals who solve problems raised within a given area of language use (e.g., language teaching). The branch of applied linguistics is said to be a "research methodology" (p. 13) or a set of "principles" (p. 13) that define the application of varying methods or specific techniques/tools in collecting and/or analyzing different data, also studied by other branches of linguistics. Although there is no unique or universally adopted methodology, the stages in seeing a research project through are typically the same: defining study questions, collecting data, and finally, analyzing the collected data and explaining the results.

Part 1, entitled "Language in Development", includes chapters two to four. Chapter 2, "First Language Acquisition" (Zhu Hua), addresses the facts and problems related to the acquisition of the mother tongue in typical and atypical environments. It is shown how the type and amount of linguistic input plays a crucial role in the development of the first language. Also, despite certain individual variations in the output,

children's learning processes in a typical setting follow the same acquisitional stages, reflecting the existence of innate developmental universals. Chapter 3, "Second and Additional Language Acquisition" (Jean-Marc Dewaele), deals with the acquisition of languages other than the mother tongue (which starts at birth). Second-language learning starts later, often after the first language is acquired, after the age of three (in accordance with the Critical Period Hypothesis). One of the puzzling issues mentioned is that some second-language learners manage to achieve native-like competence, while others do not. Anxiety, aptitude, and motivation (positive/negative attitudes) are some of the factors that tend to influence the outcome. As far as the "learning of a third or an additional foreign language" (p. 60) is concerned, one of the facilitating factors is prior linguistic knowledge or language learning, since experienced learners have better communicative skills and greater (meta)linguistic competence; they also, among other things, handle anxiety better. Chapter 4, "Language and the Brain" (Marjorie Lorch), deals with some major issues of language impairment (LI) and loss. The discussion focuses on how language processing works, how language interacts with other cognitive domains of the brain, what effect maturation and aging have on the manifestations of LI, how challenges with language are related to difficulties with social aspects of language use (or pragmatics), and how impairment in written language processing (a cognitively complex task) is linked to multiple cognitive domains (e.g., visual, perceptual, types of memory, etc.).

The chapters in Part 2, "Language in Use", discuss language use in different communicative contexts. The role of context in the interpretation of meaning is explicated in Chapter 5, "Language in Interaction" (María Elena Placencia). In some contexts, meaning can be expressed directly (as the surface or literal meaning), whereas in others it can be implied (as an intended or underlying meaning) or expressed indirectly. Also, depending on one's cultural background, the same meaning can be interpreted in different ways. Finally, the same meaning can be interpreted differently when used in different contexts. It is shown that language is action, since different ways of constructing meaning can affect reality (e.g., an apology can initiate a better relationship). Chapter 6, "Intercultural Communication" (Zhu Hua), introduces the field of intercultural communication (IC), whose main concerns are factors behind mis- and non-understanding in IC, culture-specific ways of communication, interculturality as interaction between cultures, and ways of developing intercultural communicative competence. From Chapter 7, "Literacy and Multimodality" (Li Wei, Lisa J. McEntee-Atalianis and Marjorie Lorch), the reader learns about basic components of literacy, literacy acquisition and performance, a variety of reading and writing systems across languages, ways of teaching reading and writing skills, second language literacy/biliteracy and social literacy, as well as new modalities for representing language and for serving communication in view of the increasingly multimodal (linguistic, digital, electronic, graphic, etc.) nature of communication.

Part 3 ("Language in Society") covers the issues of language diversity and contact (Chapter 8), the relation between language, identity and power (Chapter 9), and language planning and language policy (Chapter 10). Chapter 8, authored by Penelope Gardner-Chloros, deals with why it is important to study the relation between language and society, ways of classifying different languages and their

varieties based on their characteristics, why languages change over time, and why some languages are more powerful than others. Chapter 9, by Lisa J. McEntee-Atalianis, tackles the questions of what linguistic identity is, whether it is something one has or something one does, how identity is constructed and negotiated through narrative, how one's ascriptions of identity vary according to context and motivation, and how the media can "represent, construct and challenge particular identities" (p. 186). Chapter 10, written by Li Wei, identifies the major domains of language planning/policy, which are family, school, religious organizations, the workplace, government, and the nation/state. There are two societal factors that motivate language planning: the necessity of raising the status or standing of a given language within a community, and the necessity of codifying, standardizing or modernizing a given language. The chapter also explains how different institutions can implement their language policies and what the varying consequences of the implementation are.

Finally, Part 4 ("Language in Public Life") contains information on the role of language in public life. Chapter 11, "Language Assessment" (Li Wei), reveals the issues related to language assessment, whose sociopolitical uses, design differences and ethical consequences can be staggering. Language assessment tools, varying from formal grammar tests to informal judgement tests, are powerful not only in the domain of education and learning, but also in diverse social, professional and political contexts; furthermore, they can considerably impact certain democratic principles. Chapter 12, "Language in Media, Health and Law" (Malcolm Edwards), focuses on how language functions in major domains of human activity. Language is depicted as a tool in constructing health and illness, in the representation of events, groups and individuals, in framing reality and in creating "markedly different representations of the same event" through "different linguistic choices" (p. 230). The last chapter of the book, "Translation and Interpreting", also by Malcolm Edwards, outlines the subfields of translation and interpreting and their major challenges, some of which are as follows: literal versus free translation, the issue of interlinguistic equivalence, the role of pragmatic and sociocultural aspects in the process of translation, challenges in audiovisual translation, and interpreting as mediation. Through the discussion of these issues, the reader is led to consider that the field of translation "now embraces a large number of independent disciplines, many of which have only partial or tenuous links with linguistics" (p. 260), since in this era of globalization, translation needs to be more "localized" or "culture- and country-appropriate" (ibid).

Although it is not directly stated by the editor, the textbook under review is intended primarily for undergraduate university students who have limited or no prior experience with the field of applied linguistics. As a whole, the volume is well written and structured. Still, some issues could have been addressed more fully. For example, the book "aims to provide a comprehensive survey of the theories, methods and key findings within Applied Linguistics, covering a wide range of topics" (p. 21). However, the branch of dictionary making/compilation (monolingual/bilingual and multilingual) is not given any attention at all. The expression *translation studies* is only mentioned in the summary of Chapter 13, although three out of four sources in the Recommended Reading section of the chapter use this important phrase. The importance of Vinay and Darbelnet's (1958) approach

within the theory of translation (Bilous 2014: 2, among others), which is the most authoritative in the field, should not have been overlooked. In addition, in Chapter 3, it should have been clearly stated that second language acquisition and second language teaching (with its approaches, methods, strategies and techniques) are two separate and fast-expanding branches within applied linguistics. Furthermore, since the targeted readership is undergraduate students, it would have been worthwhile to make a clear distinction between the terms *acquisition* and *learning*, and it would have been useful to introduce the concepts of second language incomplete acquisition, attrition and loss as well. The Theory of Universal Grammar (Chomsky 1965 and much subsequent work) could have been given more attention in Chapters 1 to 3, as well as the question of its access to L2/L3-L$_n$ (see Bilous 2009, White 2003, among others).

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Frederick J. Newmeyer and **Laurel B. Preston**, eds. 2014. *Measuring Grammatical Complexity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. xvi + 370. US $110 (hardcover).

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Measuring Grammatical Complexity is an edited collection of papers presented at the "Formal Linguistics and the Measurement of Grammatical Complexity" workshop held in Seattle in March 2012. Consisting of fourteen chapters, the volume addresses grammatical complexity differences among languages from a formal linguistics approach. Each chapter explores the concept of complexity either from a grammar-based (e.g., Minimalist program) or user-based (e.g., Construction Grammar) perspective in order to highlight the complexity of specific grammatical elements or their degree of difficulty for language users. The volume also contains two chapters that deal with the contributions of neurolinguistics to the measurement of complexity. Covering both the trade-off hypothesis and interpretive complexity, the volume provides a new methodological perspective in bringing together empiricist and generativist stances in the assessment of grammatical complexity.