

REVIEWS

The Germanic Languages. By Wayne Harbert. (Cambridge Language Surveys). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. xii, 510. Paperback. £23.99, U.S. \$45.00.

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This book's ambitious task is to provide the reader with an overview of the languages that constitute the Germanic language family. Given the broad scope of this objective and the wealth of information presented, the way in which Harbert organizes information indelibly shapes his text and should be discussed first. As Harbert notes (p. 1), in contrast to an approach that surveys Germanic by treating the individual languages as self-contained units, this book is organized according to grammatical structures and systems and discusses how these features find expression across the broad spectrum of the Germanic languages. Emphasis, therefore, is placed on the structural similarities and differences evident from one language to the next. In his discussion of the various grammatical features, Harbert gives historical forms of Germanic the same status as he does the modern standards. In particular, Gothic and Old English are well represented throughout the book. Dialectal variants are also given equal footing in this treatment, though most of the text focuses on the standard varieties.

Harbert's organizational choices necessarily yield a primarily comparative (that is, synchronic) presentation of the Germanic languages in which diachronic developments are, in most chapters, somewhat obscured. Harbert's focus is therefore mostly on structural differences exhibited from one language to the next. Linguistic theory does not play a large role in his presentation of different constructions. Harbert, though, is clearly working within a generative framework, which maintains that all languages conform to a set of universal principles, and accounts for linguistic variation through the setting of parameters. As Harbert notes, "the construction-by-construction, side-by-side format of the volume serves to highlight such patterns of [structural] variation, as are found" (p. 3). However, explicit discussion of parametric variation across Germanic is not a conspicuous feature of the text, which is more descriptive rather than analytic in its focus. Theoretical issues aside, the

resulting book is a comprehensive and accessible reference to which the Germanic linguist may turn to get the basic facts of a grammatical structure or system, which are presented in as theoretically neutral terms as possible. In this treatment, Harbert also highlights basic areas of controversy in the scholarship and often points to references to guide the reader's further inquiry. Before proceeding with a description of the book's substantive chapters, it is worth noting that the broad range of structures treated in this work naturally make it impracticable for this review to discuss them all. Rather, the remainder of this review focuses on giving the interested reader an overview of the type of information he or she will find, as well as how that information is presented.

After a comparatively brief introductory chapter in which Harbert provides a succinct overview of the Germanic family tree and description of the different linguistic groups, chapter 2 examines the Germanic lexicon, looking primarily at processes of word formation, such as derivation and compounding. The chapter also discusses borrowing as a means of introducing new words into the different lexicons. The author chooses to discuss discourse particles and phrasal verbs (also known as particle verbs or separable-prefix verbs) in this chapter, likely because these two categories of lexical items do not readily fit into any of the subsequent chapters, as I discuss below.

In chapter 3, Harbert turns his attention to the phonemic inventories of the Germanic languages and their phonological alternations, beginning with stops and working his way up the sonority hierarchy to vowels. Unlike subsequent chapters, a strong diachronic narrative runs throughout this chapter, in that the discussion considers the phonetic state of affairs in common Germanic and discusses how change proceeded from that point. Harbert's decision to focus on diachrony in this chapter necessarily means that the synchronic analysis is less comprehensive; that is, for a comprehensive description of the individual languages' phonologies, one should turn to more specific works, such as Wiese's (1996) *The Phonology of German* or Booij's (1995) *The Phonology of Dutch*. The author instead highlights those classic sound changes of Germanic that have been the focus of much scholarship over the years. At the same time, though, he does not merely recite the standard accounts of these changes. An example of Harbert's approach can be found in his discussion of the Verner's Law alternations, in which he first presents the standard account and then more recent analyses, such as

Iverson and Salmons 2003, where Verner's Law is described as an instance of "passive voicing" (p. 50). Lastly, this chapter also includes a welcome discussion of the prosodic phonology of the Germanic languages, something that is often missing from more standard accounts that tend to focus on the segmental, rather than the suprasegmental level.

In contrast to the emphasis on diachrony in chapter 3, chapter 4 settles into a more synchronic analysis with its comprehensive description of the noun phrase in Germanic. Harbert organizes the chapter according to grammatical structure and, after a short historical interlude in which he discusses general changes in nominal inflection in Germanic, begins with a discussion of the internal syntax of the noun phrase, which includes a treatment of nominal inflection and the range of words that comprises the noun class (predeterminers, determiners, pronouns, etc.). Harbert also describes those structures that are syntactically linked to the noun phrase, such as the adjective phrase, which can take a noun phrase as its complement, and the genitive phrase, which has a number of different structural expressions across the Germanic languages; that is, it can be realized as a noun phrase with an inflectional affix (for example *the man's*), as well as a prepositional phrase, which takes a noun phrase as its complement (as in *of the man*), the latter structure being one that is realized in practically every Germanic language, with the exception of Danish, Standard Swedish, and Icelandic (Delsing 1998). Perhaps the most valuable section of this chapter is the one that focuses on the external syntax of the subject noun phrase (§4.9). In this section, Harbert discusses, for example, the ways in which Germanic expresses grammatical relations between the subject and other constituents in the finite phrase (subject-verb agreement, subject-complementizer agreement, and concord between the subject and non-verbal predicates). He also looks at the typology and distribution of expletive arguments. He does this within the framework of the pro-drop parameter, noting that some languages, such as Gothic, allow subjects to be freely omitted, whereas others, such as English, require overt subjects in finite clauses (p. 224). Finally, this chapter explores the interface between syntax and semantics by considering the different semantic roles the grammatical subject may play in an utterance vis-à-vis the verb; that is to say, the role of agent or patient.

Harbert's analysis in chapter 5 is similar to that of chapter 4, in that the focus again is on synchrony, with grammatical structures related to

the verb phrase compared across the Germanic languages. Harbert begins the chapter, though, with a brief treatment of two significant diachronic developments that serve to distinguish between Germanic and Indo-European: the historical shift from an inherited system of root alternation in verbal inflection (that is, ablaut) to one in which verbs are inflected primarily through suffixation, as well as the collapsing of the more articulated Indo-European tense/aspect system into the simpler Germanic system that distinguishes only between past and present (p. 271–272). The bulk of the chapter, however, is concerned with the different expressions of modality, tense, and voice in Germanic. Regarding the latter topic of voice, which was also treated in chapter 4 inasmuch as it grammatically relates to the noun phrase, the focus of chapter 5 is on the different ways in which Germanic verb phrases inflect for voice. Harbert also includes a discussion of non-finite verb forms (such as infinitives and participles), as well as a comparatively short section on the relative ordering of the phrasal head and complement within the verb phrase. Regarding this latter section, it is interesting that Harbert chose not to describe the SOV/SVO distinction in explicitly parametric terms, specifically, as variation in the setting of the head parameter. Some consideration of diachrony would have also been a worthwhile addition. Though Harbert, citing Kiparsky 1995, does note that SOV is the older of the two structures, there is no discussion of the parametric shift that led to the bifurcation of the Germanic languages into these two syntactic categories or reference to literature on the topic.

As the two previous chapters have already treated certain aspects of the internal and external syntax of the noun and verb phrase, chapter 6 describes those characteristics of clausal syntax that fall outside of the scope of the previous two chapters. At the chapter's outset, Harbert presents the basic syntactic structure of the Germanic clause, as conceived within extended X-bar theory. The initial section of this chapter does not, however, offer the diachronic perspective found in beginning pages of chapters 4 and 5. Readers will not find, for example, any treatment of the transition from the Indo-European clause to that of common Germanic. The approach of chapter 6, then, is entirely synchronic and is most aptly demonstrated by Harbert's discussion of the V2 parameter in Germanic. Harbert outlines three parameters that account for the variation exhibited in Germanic (p. 399) and then presents data that indicate how these parameters are realized in the individual languages. In laying out the

final parameter, which determines the types of main clauses that do and do not trigger V2, Harbert highlights a typological distinction between strict V2 and residual V2 languages as defined in Rizzi 1991 (p. 404). Of the modern Germanic languages, English is the only one that can be characterized as a residual V2 language, whereas the rest are strict V2. Harbert also includes historical variants in this discussion, including Old English, Old High German, and Gothic, and points to literature in which one finds evidence that these languages pattern more closely with Modern English and might be better characterized as residual V2 languages (see Eythórsson 1995 for discussion of verb position in Gothic). The chapter also includes discussion of the syntax of negation, embedded clauses, and relative clauses, considering how each is realized from one language to the next.

The book ends somewhat abruptly, with a final section on the syntax of filler-gap constructions (such as, relative clauses, *wh*-word questions, and fronting constructions). A final chapter may have afforded Harbert the opportunity to fill some of the diachronic holes left by his comparative analysis, as well as provide some commentary on general trends of development across Germanic. However, a comprehensive list of references does follow the final chapter, as does a serviceable index. These features, in conjunction with the vast wealth of information presented, make this book a valuable reference work for the linguist interested in Germanic. Though, as one could expect with a work of this magnitude, every reader may feel that the author left out something he should not have or failed to discuss a point comprehensively enough, Harbert's choices regarding what to include in his text and how that text should be organized were good ones. The focus on syntax throughout the book is a departure from more traditional approaches, which describe variation in Germanic in primarily phonetic-phonological terms. In addition, Harbert's presentation of structures is certainly informed by, if not entirely explicit about, modern linguistic theories that seek to explain them—also a difference from traditional approaches, which usually tend to be more descriptive. Finally, the structure-by-structure comparative approach is instructive, allowing, for example, the German linguist to consider Icelandic data and vice-versa. Given these qualities, this work constitutes a valuable contribution to the field of Germanic linguistics.

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