Western Washington University
Western CEDAR

Modern & Classical Languages

Humanities

12-2006

Review of: Gender in Indo-European

Edward J. Vajda
Western Washington University, edward.vajda@wwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl_facpubs

Part of the Modern Languages Commons

Linguistica generale: Esercitazioni e autoverifica [General linguistics: Exercises and solutions]. By SILVIA LURAGHI and ANNA M. THORNTON. Rome: Carocci, 2004. Pp. 139. ISBN 8843030973. €9.

This volume offers 121 introductory-level exercises in the basics of general linguistics under five headings: semiotics; phonetics and phonology; morphology; syntax; and lexicon, semantics, and pragmatics. The book is meant primarily for short introductory courses (twenty-four to thirty-six hours), but it is suitable for semester-long courses as well. The great majority of the exercises call for discursive answers; a few are true-or-false or multiple-choice. Solutions to all exercises are given in the back. A preface explains the goals of the book; the appendices contain the IPA chart and a diagram of the human articulatory mechanism.

The primary source of the language material is Italian but some data come from other languages including Arabic, Basque, Chinese, English, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Irish, Japanese, Latin, Modern Greek, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, and Vogul. The phonetics and phonology problems test for knowledge of basic articulatory phonetics, phonetic transcription, and distributional analysis including phonemes, allophones, and phonotactic generalizations. The morphology section focuses on morpheme types, derivation, compounding, and other word-formation types, and on morphological typology. The syntax questions are about phrase structure, dependency structure, valence, coordination, subordination, subordinate clause types, constituent order, and word-order typology. The section on lexicon, semantics, and pragmatics has exercises on semantic relations, metaphors, metonymy, etymology, presuppositions, and speech acts. A particularly interesting exercise (65–67) lists equivalents of the words *telephone*, *television*, *computer*, and (computer) *mouse* in several languages asking students to identify the word-formation or borrowing method used in creating these terms in each language. Another exercise asks for an analysis of the script of a telephone conversation and a classification of the individual speech acts.

The most innovative part is the one on semiotics. Eleven exercises present international road signs, icons used in weather-forecast reports, hand gestures, the Morse code, the manual alphabet of sign language, logographic writing systems, and pictures of dogs' tail positions asking students to determine whether the signs are arbitrary symbols or if not, whether they are icons or indices.

This book is a follow-up to *Esercizi di linguistica* by the same two authors joined by Mirian Voghera (Rome: Carocci, 2000). While this latter collection does not deal with semiotics, it is larger than the 2004 book both in size (203 exercises) and in coverage: it has exercises in historical linguistics and discourse analysis as well employing data from forty-three languages and dialects.

Both books serve as excellent sources of illustrative material to be used in class, of home assignments, and of exam questions. The instructions are in Italian, but in many cases, even instructors who do not know this language can figure out the required tasks based in part on the nature of data given and also by the help of cognate linguistic terms. The exercises are not keyed to a particular textbook nor are they couched in the terms of a specific theory and thus are of wide applicability. [EDITH MORAVCSIK, *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.*]

Gender in Indo-European. By RANKO MATASOVIĆ. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2004. Pp. 252. ISBN 3825316661. €38.

This book takes a fresh look at the development of gender in Early and Late Proto-Indo-European. Matasović reduces the diachronic picture to a few basic facts, while also making informed comparisons with non-Indo-European (IE) languages. Early Proto-IE appears to reveal a binary noun-class opposition between a common gender and a neuter gender, with the feminine arising only later. M speculates that this opposition arose based on the dichotomy between count and mass nouns. At the same time, he finds that the semantic core of gender distinctions in IE at all demonstrable stages revolved around notions of animate/inanimate and male/female; this distinguishes Eurasian noun-class systems from the shape-based systems found in Sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, M claims that gender as a grammatical feature is remarkably stable, disappearing only under the influence of significant areal interaction with genderless languages. However, one could argue that such cases are sufficiently large in number to suggest that gender as a category is not especially resistant to change, since contact-induced effects are by no means an unusual phenomenon. M cites Swedish in Finland as an example of gender loss, as well as the case of Armenian and Persian. He also mentions the rise of gender in Eastern Nilotic (27). All of this ultimately begs the question of whether gender in Early Proto-IE was affected by language contact or developed through purely language-internal changes, a question that M does not answer. M is probably wise to avoid speculating on whether Early Proto-IE gender reflects active/stative typological alignment. He also leaves open the issue of what evidence from gender typology might eventually reveal about deeper genetic connections between IE and the gen-

derless languages of northeastern Eurasia sometimes held to belong, alongside IE, to a broader Nostratic or Eurasiatic family. The most interesting aspects of the book thus turn out to be the author's educated speculations on these questions.

A brief overview of gender in each of the family's daughter branches is also included (33–77), but the focus is predominantly diachronic, so readers interested in the system of gender distribution in the modern languages will find little of novel interest here. Most of the data appear instead in the form of lexical reconstructions.

M entertains a full range of possible solutions to perennial problems in reconstructing gender-related phenomena, yet remains guarded in his own judgments. He also examines only reliably reconstructible nouns and avoids basing any of his judgments on speculative data.

Another feature that sets this book apart is the author's wide-ranging attention to gender systems outside of IE itself. M's comparisons with noun classes or the lack thereof in other families of Eurasia is typologically illuminating, as they provide a fresh external point of reference from which to assess IE gender. Inclusion of data from the most recent cross-linguistic studies of noun-class phenomena lends more weight to his conclusions.

This book significantly clarifies the probable stages of development of gender in IE and also provides an authoritative basis for comparison with other Eurasian language families, something that is important for future areal as well as genetic investigations. [EDWARD J. VAJDA, *Western Washington University.*]

The phonology of Portuguese. By MARIA HELENA MATEUS and ERNESTO D'ANDRADE. (The phonology of the world's languages.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Pp. x, 162. ISBN 0199256705. $48.

Authored by two Portuguese phonologists, this book presents a detailed description of the phonology of Portuguese, cast mainly in the framework of feature geometry and lexical phonology. The book is organized into seven chapters. Ch. 1 provides a general introduction to Portuguese phonology, including orthography and a brief history of Portuguese (1–9). Chs. 2 (10–37) and 3 (38–64) study the phonological system of the language. The former concerns segmental phonology, providing feature charts for the consonant and vowel systems of Portuguese, while the latter focuses on the structure of the syllable and syllabification in Portuguese. Chs. 4 (65–87) and 5 (88–108) deal with inflection and derivation, respectively, in the morphology of Portuguese. Ch. 6 dis-

cusses word stress and related issues in Portuguese (109–28). Finally, Ch. 7 addresses major phonological processes such as nasalization and reduction of unstressed vowels (129–48).

The book deals with fundamental issues in the phonology of Portuguese, from segmental to suprasegmental, covering the inventory of consonants and vowels, the realization of glides, the formation and structure of the syllable, and the generation of lexical stress. Further, readers are informed of a number of phonological phenomena in Portuguese such as feature dependence of coronal fricatives, vowel harmony in certain verb forms, and centralization as a general process of vowel reduction. Because phonology is a domain sensitive to regional variation, Mateus and d'Andrade's discussion, while concentrating on European Portuguese, has thankfully paid due attention to phonological differences found in Brazilian Portuguese.

In spite of its title, about a third of the content (two out of seven chapters) concerns the morphology of Portuguese. This is justifiable, however, given the interface between phonology and morphology in the language. The authors' description of the inflectional morphology of Portuguese is rather extensive, ranging from gender and number inflection in nouns and adjectives to tense and agreement inflection in verbs. The chapter on derivational morphology, in contrast, only addresses affixes that induce special phonological patterns during the derivational process. Rich in data and examples, the overall description of the phonology and morphology of Portuguese presented in the book is quite adequate.

A main problem with the text, however, lies in some of the analyses. A coda-restriction rule has limited consonants permissible at the coda to /l/, /r/, and /s/. Presumably because of this, the authors hypothesize that consonant clusters such as those in *admirar* 'to admire' and *óbvio* 'obvious' must have resulted from deletion of 'empty nuclei' between two consonants. Nonetheless, there is no independent evidence supporting the place of such empty nuclei in the phonological system of Portuguese. Alternatively, such word-medial consonant clusters can easily be redistributed into different syllables when the coda-restriction rule is modified. [PICUS S. DING, *Macao Polytechnic Institute.*]

The earliest English: An introduction to Old English language. By CHRIS McCULLY and SHARON HILLES. (Learning about language.) Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005. Pp. 328. ISBN 0582404746. $51.

This book is intended as a student-friendly guide to Old English (OE). As such, it covers not only the