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Review Of "Linguistic Perspectives On The Romance Languages" Edited By W. J. Ashby, M. Mithun, G. Perissinotto, And E. Raposo

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Recommended Citation

Donna Jo Napoli. (1994). "Review Of "Linguistic Perspectives On The Romance Languages" Edited By W. J. Ashby, M. Mithun, G. Perissinotto, And E. Raposo". *Language*. Volume 70, Issue 3. 593-594. DOI:

10.2307/416498

<https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-linguistics/140>

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Linguistic Society of America

Review

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Source: *Language*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Sep., 1994), pp. 593-594

Published by: [Linguistic Society of America](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/416498>

Accessed: 22-07-2015 17:35 UTC

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BOOK NOTICES

Yir-Yoront lexicon: Sketch and dictionary of an Australian language.

By BARRY ALPHER. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991. Pp. xi, 795. DM 298.00.

Alpher's Ph.D. dissertation on the phonology and grammar of Yir-Yoront—with the engaging title *Son of ergative* (Cornell, 1973)—is the most thorough and respected description of a language from the Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland. The first hundred pages of the present volume recapitulate the main points of the thesis, as improved and revised during five more field trips between 1974 and 1988.

The phonemic inventory is typical for an Australian language, with six stops and nasals (including two apical and two laminal series), three laterals, two rhotics, and two semivowels. There are six vowels (the standard five plus schwa) and a glottal stop. While other languages of the Cape York Peninsula have undergone initial dropping, Yir-Yoront has truncated the ends of words. What were case endings may have dropped, having left a trace through assimilation and the like. Thus, forms of the noun 'blood' have developed as follows: absolutive *kamu* > *kam*, ergative *kamu-nggu* > *kumu*, and dative *kamu-gu* > *kumu* (11). The morphophonemic rules, which ran to 88 pages in the original thesis, are here condensed into nine pages.

Nouns and interrogatives follow an absolutive-ergative system of inflection, while pronouns show a nominative-accusative pattern. Singular pronouns have distinct accusative and dative forms, but these fall together for nonsingulars. The ablative case also covers 'aversive' function (e.g. 'I was afraid OF THE DOG'), something that is often accorded a separate case form in Australian languages (29). Nonsingular pronouns have a Distributive Plural form, e.g. *ngunnguwl* 'you(pl.) and I, acting separately', created from the regular plural (*ngopol* 'you(pl.) and I') by lenition, ablaut, and reduplication (37). Adjectives function like common nouns in inflection and in syntactic properties, but A is able to put forward five structural and semantic criteria to define a subclass of Adjectives, a most perspicuous and useful analysis. Like other languages of its area, Yir-Yoront has a set of generic nouns which often occur in an NP with a specific noun; A discusses about 20 of

them (72–77). He has a detailed and insightful analysis of the kinship system (189–203) and of the way kin terms are grouped together on the basis of a common sign language correspondent, the latter also referring to a body part—e.g. 'shin' for various sibling terms and father's father; 'arm' for father, father's sister, and male's child. He also gives 45 words (ten of them verbs) in the respect register which is used with, or in speaking about, or in the presence of certain relatives and states the one-to-many correspondences between respect style and ordinary language words (103–7).

All this is a preliminary to the dictionary (125–694), which is certainly the fullest and most informative dictionary produced for any Australian language. A simply provides all of the information anyone could possibly require: form, alternative forms, any irregular inflections, word class, transitivity and conjugation class for verbs, the appropriate generic term for nouns, all the different senses (written in clear English), and a number of well-chosen examples, mostly taken from texts. (One hopes that A will also be publishing a volume of texts.) There are also most useful notes on etymology, and cognates in other Australian languages. The 'index' is an adequate finder list of English words (695–787).

There are always points of analysis with which one disagrees and some etymologies that could be improved (e.g., I'd prefer to relate Yir-Yoront *pirri* 'emu' (451) to Dyirbal *kapiirri* rather than, as Alpher does, to Guugu Yimidhirr *pur-rivvi*). But these are minor matters, and insignificant given the strength of this work. Certain types of words are not generally used in academic reviews, among them 'magnificent'. But this dictionary simply is a magnificent achievement. [R.M.W. DIXON, *Australian National University*.]

Linguistic perspectives on the Romance languages.

Ed. by WILLIAM J. ASHBY, MARIANNE MITHUN, GIORGIO PERISSINOTTO, and EDUARDO RAPOSO. (Current issues in linguistic theory, 103.) Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1993. Pp. xxii, 404.

This book contains twenty-six articles originally presented at the XXI Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages in 1991. LSRL is an annual conference that welcomes papers on all aspects of Romance languages in any theoretical framework, with the goal of providing a forum for quality work in Romance. It is widely accepted as doing just that, and the conference attracts both well-established and new scholars. LSRL XXI was no exception: we have papers here by three keynote speakers, YAKOV MAL'KIEL ('The centers of gravity in nineteenth-century Romance linguistics', 3–18), CARMEN SILVA-CORVALÁN ('On the permeability of grammars: Evidence from Spanish and English contact', 19–44), and OSWALD DUCROT ('Opérateurs argumentatifs et analyse de textes', 45–64), as well as by other renowned scholars, including ANDREA CALABRESE ('Palatalization processes in the history of Romance languages: A theoretical study', 65–84), BERNARD TRANEL ('Moraic theory and French liaison', 97–112), EDWARD TUTTLE ('Closed communities and nasal enhancement in northern Italy', 139–48), JURGEN KLAUSENBURGER ('On the evolution of Latin verbal inflection into Romance: Change in parameter setting?', 165–76), GRANT GOODALL ('Spec of IP and spec of CP in Spanish wh-questions', 199–210), PAOLA BENTIVOGLIO ('Full NPs in spoken Spanish: A discourse profile', 211–24), JULIA HERSCHENSOHN ('A postfunctionalist perspective on French psych unaccusatives', 237–48), and DIETER WANNER ('Multiple clitic linearization principles', 281–302).

While the above list is only partial, it is representative of the papers in the volume, of which fully seventeen concern syntax, semantics, or discourse structure. Nine papers are on French, eight on Spanish, one on a comparison of French and Spanish, and only a few on other Romance languages—a disappointing range for LSRL. There are no general themes running through the book (which we wouldn't expect, given the goals of this conference), yet several papers intersect. First, Calabrese's paper argues that palatalization involves a medial step in which we have double articulation, and he focuses attention on the feature of coronality. PILAR PRIETO ('The PA effect of coronals on vowels in Romance', 85–96) again looks at coronality, but explores how coronals influence the fronting of vowels.

Second, Tranel's paper exposes problems for moraic theory in accounting for liaison. Then MICHAEL MAZZOLA ('French rhythm and

French segments', 113–26) argues that the resolution of underlying stress clashes creates the environment for the operation of deletion rules, including the deletion of liaison segments. And, finally, DAAN DE JONG ('Sociophonological aspects of Montreal French liaison', 127–38) distinguishes four different types of liaison in Montreal French.

Third, HAIKE JACOBS ('The phonology of enclisis and proclisis in Gallo-Romance and Old French', 149–64) gives an analysis of cliticization as being within the prosodic word. Then JULIE AUGER ('More evidence for verbal agreement-marking in colloquial French', 177–98) looks at so-called subject pronominal clitics and argues they are affixal agreement markers. MARIETTE CHAMPAGNE ('From Old French to Modern French: The evolution of the inflectional system', 259–70) deals extensively with clitics in arguing that diachronic changes in clitic placement (including clitic climbing) are the result of changes in the nature of verbal inflection. And, finally, Wanner's paper points out thorny problems for clitic ordering, arguing that descriptive adequacy requires that we admit multiple clitic classes and ad-hoc, learned linearization principles.

Still other areas covered include issues of movement (negative fronting, extraction from NPs, and WH-movement, all three papers being on Spanish) and definiteness (one paper on Spanish and another on Brazilian Portuguese).

This is a rich and interesting volume, if limited in the languages covered and variable in the quality of the papers. [DONNA JO NAPOLI, *Swarthmore College*.]

The English language: A historical introduction. By CHARLES BARBER. (Cambridge approaches to linguistics.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. xii, 299. Cloth \$49.95, paper \$15.95.

This book, though barely larger than pocket size, is a remarkably complete survey of the development and present state of the English language. As the titles of the book and of the series to which it belongs indicate, it is at the elementary level, suitable for British sixth formers and American college freshmen who are interested in learning something about their language without undertaking a course of study in technical linguistics. The style is straightforward and