Review Of "Anaphoric Relations In English And French: A Discourse Perspective" By F. Cornish

Donna Jo Napoli
Swarthmore College, dnapoli1@swarthmore.edu
of new entries in the lexicon. The data, a total of 13,683 different words, come exclusively from dictionaries— *The Barnhart Dictionary of New English since 1963* (1973), *The Second Barnhart Dictionary of New English* (1980), and Merriam’s 1981 ‘Addenda’ Section to *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*. Despite the limitation to dictionaries (which C declares a virtue rather than a shortcoming), an investigation of these data is clearly interesting to linguists. Particularly in an empirically-oriented grammar, distinguishing between productive and fossilized constructions is important. C’s stated central purposes of his extensive study are to describe the data and to elaborate on points that shed some light on word formation and lexical theory.

In spite of these ambitious objectives, however, the analysis does not go beyond a taxonomic classification along with statistical information. After reviewing the development of the English vocabulary and lexicography in Ch. 1, C presents a description of his recent data within twenty-one categories of word formation (Chs. 2–6). Ch. 2, ‘Shifts’, includes ‘semantic shifts’ as well as ‘functional shifts’ (more commonly referred to as ‘Zero-derivation’). Ch. 3 provides statistical information on the sources of borrowings along with some observations on the assimilatory properties of modern English. Ch. 4 includes a treatment of abbreviations, acronyms, shortenings, back-formations and blends. Ch. 5 deals with derivational morphology and Ch. 6 with compounding; the book ends with a ‘Conclusion’ (Ch. 7). All the examples used in the book are listed alphabetically in a word index, which is followed by a topic and name index.

The morphologist hoping to find a well-organized collection of data that could serve as a basis for more theoretically oriented work will find this book rather tedious. The mass of statistical information embedded in the text would have been far more accessible if it had simply been presented in tables.

The lack of theoretical considerations as a guideline for the investigation becomes obvious in the chapter on derivational morphology. The proper way to analyze an affix is to specify the phonological, semantic, or syntactic characteristics of the base it attaches to, together with the category resulting from the affixation. For example, one might try to find out what determines the subcategorization of the adjectival suffixes -ian and -esque in *Hitchcockian* vs. *Pin-

teresque*. A potential generalization can be detected only by looking at all the new formations of both types. Unfortunately, C offers us only the two examples, along with the total number of entries of each type (16 -ian, 5 -esque). C’s claims concerning productivity suffer from the same problem. The occurrence of just seven new entries with the suffix -ness vs. ten with the suffix -ite leads C to conclude that the former is less productive than the latter. It would be far more useful to see all the respective entries, so that the reader could form an independent judgment; forms like *all-at-once-ness* and *within-ness* suggest that -ness is highly productive rather than being in decline.

Another problem with drawing conclusions from statistical data derived from dictionaries becomes particularly obvious in the analysis of compounds. The crucial observation concerning noun-noun compounds in English is that any combination of two nouns will yield a potentially well-formed compound. Counting the new noun-noun compounds in the dictionary is more or less misleading when one is investigating the productivity and properties of noun-noun compounds, because the lexicalized compounds will often show a fixed semantic relation between the two members of a compound, and this is atypical for compounding as a productive process.

Finally, judging from some of the examples, one gets the impression that the statistics are not always reliable. For example, *upquark, hovahferry, hang glider*, etc., are given as examples for exocentric compounds, but all of them are clearly endocentric. Also, certain words might have been misclassified. Hence, one might prefer to see forms like *cheapo* and *wacko* treated within derivational morphology rather than being regarded as ‘respellings’.

The book is of limited value to the morphologist because, in order to study affixes, one still has to refer to the relevant dictionaries. Its merit is that it brings to mind the fact that there are many new patterns in word formation—in particular the productivity of certain affixes in attaching to syntactic phrases—which have not been incorporated into current models, and which might necessitate some radical changes in the overall structure of grammar. [Renate Raffelsiefen, University of Washington.]

Anaphoric relations in English and French: A discourse perspective.

Francis Cornish looks at the phenomena of anaphora in English and French, giving a quick overview of core-linguistic, computational, and psycholinguistic approaches in the literature, and aiming to offer an account of the discourse properties and relations of anaphors. Anaphora is used here as a cover term for phenomena involving identity of a wide range of types, including nominals (NPs, as with referential identity; Ns, as with sense identity) as well as nonnominals (V or VP, in Gapping structures; S, with sentential pro-forms such as so; and predicates, such as those with the French pro-predicative clitic le). In addition to pro-forms, C includes phonetically empty elements in this study, an inclusion that has become the rule today; he also includes lexically full phrases such as NPs (e.g., the NP his new motor car might serve as antecedent for the NP the automobile in a later sentence), which is not at all the rule. In fact, to the linguist who is accustomed to reading formal linguistic approaches to anaphora, the book may at first seem to be a jumble of unrelated or, at best, distantly related data.

One point C is trying to make, however, is that, by looking at many different types of phenomena in which an item in a discourse is understood as identical to some other item in the same discourse, we can see patterns that don’t emerge as easily if we limit our examination to a single type of phenomenon. C looks at the effects of morphology (including category type) and function (e.g., referential vs. predicative) on anaphora.

C discusses three types of ‘strict’ anaphora in Ch. 3. One is English reflexives (distinguishing their properties briefly from those of reciprocals); he discusses them from the Government-Binding (GB) perspective and pulls together numerous problems for Binding Theory from the works of many scholars. C argues, as others have, that reflexives are predicative modifiers which operate to produce a complex predicate. The second type of strict anaphora is control, where a similar analysis is put forth regarding PRO. The third is relatives. Here C argues that restrictive relative clauses take N’ (not N”) as their head and act as complex predicates, whereas in nonrestrictive relative clauses the relationship between the relative pronoun and its antecedent is one of coreference.

Turning to French, C looks at all three of these types of strict anaphora, starting with reflexives and middles. He argues that anaphors in a different clause from their antecedent are constrained not by structural notions such as c-command and governing category, but by grammatico-semantic factors. He also looks at ways in which French and English differ in control phenomena, and he ends with a discussion of French relatives.

Other chapters deal with verbal ellipsis and pro-forms, problems in defining domains of reference, deixis, and agreement. C repeatedly takes pairs of sentences which have been used to show a syntactic constraint on binding and argues that no such constraint is supported.

While I found myself unconvinced and/or confused as I finished many sections of this book, my final impression was that C is right in rejecting syntactic constraints on anaphora—certainly if we consider whole discourses and, I believe, even if we limit ourselves to sentence grammar. This is a significant contribution to linguistic knowledge. But from my perspective there is not as much original material here as I would have liked, given the value of the original material that does appear. However, Cornish performs the useful service of putting together other scholars’ relevant observations and drawing conclusions based on them. [Donna Jo Napol, Swarthmore College.]


The essays in this collection break with established models on the question of what it means to do discourse analysis, in two respects: first, in general, the authors do not look at linguistic types as units of analysis. And second, their interest in discourse is more methodological than theoretical; that is, for the most part, their primary concern is to describe social processes, and they look at discourse as a way of doing this. As Andrew Pithouse and Paul Atkinson put it in ‘Telling the case: Occupational narrative in a social work office’ (183–200), they study discourse because of ‘the centrality accorded to language in constituting social reality and its orderly appearance’ (185).