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A Unique Grammar: The Structure of American English

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deeply the Jansenists were involved. Perhaps it was difficult in a compendium to reflect all these nuances.

The revolution against Spain and especially the Philippine-American War brought great hardships to the Dominicans in the Philippines. Once again they drew upon the reserves of courage and love of the Cross of Christ which has made Pastor speak of them (XXXV, 460) as the "order which... was in the habit of winning the crown of martyrdom." One of their number was killed and nine others died as a result of the treatment they received at the hands of revolutionaries. After the Revolution many of the Dominicans left for other fields. After three hundred and twenty years of fruitful and on the whole disinterested work, it was a bitter recompense.

In general the style of DOMINICOS suffers from excess of laudatory epithets. The events could have been left to speak for themselves. Moreover, many of the biographical notices could have been omitted, either because the subject appears elsewhere in the narrative where his actions testify to his virtues; or because the information is such as might be true of any good religious; or finally because it does not seem wise to perpetuate the pious exaggerations so dear to our forefathers in the faith.

There is hardly a phase of Philippine and Far-East history after the middle of the 16th century which will not profit from Father Fernández' work. The Province emerges truly great; its record is impressive and challenging. At times perhaps one thinks of Newman's lion who felt that the role his family played in human art would have been different had a lion been the artist. But that is only occasionally. The total picture is convincing.

LEO A. CULLUM

A UNIQUE GRAMMAR

THE STRUCTURE OF AMERICAN ENGLISH. By W. Nelson Francis. New York, The Ronald Press, 1958. vii, 614 pp.

This book is one of several excellent textbooks that have appeared recently on American English in which structural linguistics underlies the presentation. Some of the others are PATTERNS OF ENGLISH by Paul Roberts (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH GRAMMAR by James Sledd (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1959) and AMERICAN ENGLISH IN

ITS CULTURAL SETTING by Donald J. Lloyd and Harry R. Warfel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957).

To appreciate the contribution which this text has made to the teaching of English, it is necessary to review a little of the history of the application of linguistics to language teaching in America. As early as 1914, in his book, AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE, Leonard Bloomfield, one of the foremost exponents of the science of linguistics, worked out most of the basic principles that were later to play important roles in the reform of language teaching in many universities. However, it took the emergency circumstances of the second World War and its urgent demands to give his ideas currency. The results of the ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program) especially between the years 1943-1944 were so gratifying that the "new method" became suddenly a great sensation. With its rise to fame, its sponsor and agent, the science of linguistics, likewise rose in prestige.

However, most of the languages that were worked out in the ASTP were foreign languages. A crying need was felt for a grammar of English following the principles of linguistics. In 1951 such a grammar was finally furnished by Charles C. Fries of the University of Michigan. His book, THE STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH, was a milestone in the study of English. There were several features in this book that were revolutionary. First, the approach which Fries used in his analysis was descriptive rather than normative or legislative. As he said in his introduction, "The reader will find here, *not* how certain teachers or textbook writers or 'authorities' think native speakers of English ought to use the language, but how certain native speakers actually do use it in natural, practical conversations carrying on the various activities of a community." The materials which Fries worked on were from "some fifty hours of mechanically recorded conversations in which the participants were entirely unaware that their speech was being recorded."

The second feature of the grammar was that it challenged the conventional use of "meaning" as the basic tool of analysis. Fries insisted rather on the analysis of the language primarily in terms of its system of signaling devices (or its formal aspect) than on its content, which was elusive and unobservable. It might be useful here to give an example of Fries' more penetrating observations: "In the usual approach to grammatical analysis of sentences one must know the total meaning of the utterance before beginning any analysis. The process of analysis consists almost wholly in giving technical names to portions of this total meaning. For example, given the sentence *the man gave the boy the money*, the conventional grammatical analysis would consist in attaching the name 'subject' to the word *man*, the name 'predicate' to the word *gave*, the name 'indirect

object' to the word *boy*, the name 'direct object' to the word *money*, and the name 'declarative sentence' to the whole utterance. If pressed for the basis upon which these names are given to these words, one would, in accord with the traditional method, say that the word *man* is called 'subject' because it 'designates the person about whom an assertion is made'; that the word *gave* is called 'predicate' because it is 'the word that asserts something about the subject'; that the word *boy* is called 'indirect object' because it 'indicates the person to or from whom the action is done'; and that the word *money* is called 'direct object' because it 'indicates the thing that receives the action of the verb.' The sentence is called a 'declarative sentence' because it 'makes a statement.' The whole procedure begins with the total meaning of the sentence and consists solely in ascribing the technical terms 'subject', 'predicate', 'indirect object', and 'declarative sentence' to certain parts of that meaning. 'Knowing grammar' has thus meant primarily the ability to apply and react to a technical terminology consisting of approximately seventy items... It is this kind of grammatical analysis... an analysis that makes no advance beyond the ascribing of certain technical terms to parts of the meaning already known... that modern linguistic science discards... What, then, have we in contrast to substitute for this type of grammatical analysis?... First of all, we need to distinguish sharply at least two kinds of meaning in the total meaning of this utterance. There are, for example, the meanings of the separate words as the dictionary would record them—lexical meanings. The dictionary would tell us something of the kinds of creatures referred to by the words *man* and *boy*. And yet we get from this sentence a whole range of meanings not expressed in the lexical records of the words themselves. We are told, for example, that the 'man' performed the action, not the 'boy'; we are told that only one man and only one boy are involved;... Such meanings constitute what we shall call structural meanings of the sentence. The total linguistic meaning of any utterance consists of the lexical meanings of the separate words plus such structural meanings... Structural meanings are... the devices that signal structural meanings and which constitute the grammar of a language." Thus, with this as a starting point, Fries gives a step-by-step account of his analysis and the result of his analysis.

But Fries did not cover the phonology of English in his grammar. He only addressed himself to the syntax of the language, because, as he himself said, it is the "area of linguistic study in which it (the traditional method) has its strongest hold." The phonology of English was covered in a contemporary and equally important work, AN OUTLINE OF ENGLISH STRUCTURE by George L. Trager and Henry L. Smith. There were many few features in this presentation of English phonology. Among them was the theory that there is an over-all pattern of the English sound system which is eminently symmetrical, and

which applies to all the dialects of English, though no single dialect exhausts all its constituents.

The book of W. Nelson Francis is a summary of these two books. But more than that, it also gives summaries of the basic principles of linguistic science which were involved in the composition of the grammar.

It would, however, be a gross inaccuracy to describe Francis' book as merely a collection of summaries. For he has made a definite contribution to the development of English textbooks by presenting all this material in a neat and eminently readable manner. As he himself declares in the introduction: "This book was written to fill my own need for a suitable text to be used in an introductory course in the structure of English... it does not presume to present completely original material, although some new notions are put forward in the chapters on grammar and graphics. It is, instead, an attempt to bring together in one place a synthesis of current linguistic knowledge, especially as applied to present-day American English."

One of the new notions referred to is Francis' system of diagramming which attempts to represent the various structures encountered in English syntax. By the use of "Chinese boxes", his system differs from the conventional ways of diagramming. Instead of rearranging the word order, he is able to keep the order and graphically show the organization of the sentence in its structural layers, with certain sequential relationships between the constituents.

Other interesting features of the book are a chapter on the dialects of American English by Reven McDavid of the University of Chicago, some dialect maps by Mrs. Virginia McDavid and a final chapter on "Linguistics and the Teacher of English."

Obviously, a book of this nature is of interest more to a class of teachers or would-be teachers of English than to a class of students learning English. This book is the basis on which drills and lessons in English can be built.

There are books which provide the English teacher with a course of lessons and drills in English. To be of maximum efficiency, it is greatly to be desired that they be aimed directly at the specific language background of the learner, as for example, Frederick Agard's *El inglés hablado* for Spanish speakers learning English.

But as a grammar of English, this handbook is unique in that it contains in its pages almost all that a teacher would want to know about the present state of knowledge on the structure of American English.