

Chamonikolasová, Jana

[Breivik, Leiv Egil. Existential there: a synchronic and diachronic study]

Brno studies in English. 1985, vol. 16, iss. 1, pp. 157-158

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/104471>

Access Date: 28. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

relates different negative and interrogative forms to their various pragmatic utilizations. In Chapters 8 and 9, Leech argues that 'a rhetorical view of pragmatics requires us to take a different view of performatives and of illocutionary acts from that which is familiar in the "classical" speech-act formulations of Austin and Searle. The view is put forward that Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts should be reinterpreted as a semantic taxonomy of speech-act verbs.' (P. xi.) The only thing to add is that Leech more than succeeds in his argument.

Chapter 10 (*Retrospect and prospect*) recapitulates the preceding discussion and draws attention to some of the important issues that are frequently dealt with in pragmatics but could not have been included in the book.

'If there is one idea of importance in this investigation, it is the notion that illocutionary force can be translated into the problem-solving paradigm of means-ends analysis, and that pragmatic interpretation can also be formulated as problem-solving within a different paradigm — that of hypothesis formation and testing. Within this same general framework for studying communicative linguistic behaviour, "indirect speech acts" have appeared as problem-solving strategies of the same kind as "direct speech acts", except that the means-ends analysis is more complex and oblique.' (P. 229.) This is what Leech himself says in his concluding remarks. Any reader of the book, however, will undoubtedly find not only one but quite a number of ideas of paramount importance, not to speak of hundreds of excellent examples and incisive linguistic descriptions. Leech's *Principles of Pragmatics* shows convincingly what many linguists all over the world have felt when reading philosophically and logically oriented treatises and essays on language pragmatics: the ideas are basically sound and inspiring, but they lack a true-to-facts linguistic background. The hypotheses seem to work in general, but they gradually stop working when applied to the complex phenomena of everyday language use. There has been a great need for a genuine linguistic approach which would accommodate the thought-provoking non-linguistic stimuli to the specific requirements of linguistics. And this is exactly what Leech's book has done.

Aleš Svoboda

Leiv Egil Breivik, *Existential 'There'*, *Studia Anglistica Norvegica* 2, Bergen, 1983, XIV + 458pp.

L. E. Breivik's book is a large-scale synchronic and diachronic study of English existential clauses containing the non-locative morpheme *there*. It is based on the excerption of 4,031 pages of Old Middle and early Modern English texts and both spoken and written present-day English texts containing a total of 755,000 words. Since all the previous treatments of existential *there*, adhering strictly to a single linguistic theory, had failed to explain its use satisfactorily, the present author adopted an eclectic method of investigation.

The book is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 offers a critical survey of earlier studies of existential clauses (sentences). Chapter 2 refers to the semantic, syntactic and phonological differences between existential *there*, denoted as *there*₁, and locative *there*, denoted as *there*₂. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the conditions of the use and non-use of *there*₁ in present-day and earlier English. In chapter 5, *there*₁ is compared to functionally similar devices used by other languages. Chapter 6 presents a tentative hypothesis about the origin of *there*₁. The conclusions arrived at in chapters 1–6 are summed up in chapter 7. These are the most important points.

In present-day English, *there*₁ and *there*₂ have sharply distinct, syntactic and semantic functions and different phonological realizations. *There*₁ functions as a dummy subject and does not appear to have a referential meaning; it tends to be realized as /ðə(r)/ or /ðe(r)/ and never has a nuclear pitch movement. *There*₂ functions as a locative adverb and usually carries the meaning 'at the particular place'; its realization is /ðeə(r)/ and it is capable of bearing a nucleus. The use and non-use of *there*₁ in present-day English is conditioned by its pragmatic function. It serves as a presentative signal of a subject conveying new information and appearing in post-verbal position; it co-occurs with intransitive verbs of 'appearance on the scene' (most frequently with lexical *be*), which allow the subject to become the communicative core. *There*₁ and *there*₂ are already differentiated in Old English. *There*₁

clauses, however, are far less frequent than today and, unlike at present, also co-occur with transitive verbs in the active voice. The decay of this type of clause and the increase in the use of *there*₁ with verbs of 'appearance on the scene' is due to the typological shift of the Old-English verb-second language to verb-medial Modern English. *There*₁ insertion in pre-verbal position represents a solution of the conflict between the topicalization principle (topic — comment sequence) and the fixed word order principle (SV sequence). Languages do not universally possess media comparable to the English *there*₁. Dummy subjects are present in languages that either have or have had the verb-second constraint.

The subject-matter of L. E. Breivik's study is carefully organized. The author offers clear definitions, a convincing number of examples, and thorough consideration of the results achieved in the field of the existential clause (sentence) theory by other scholars. He brings into relief a number of problems presented by the existential constructions that have not been solved so far. He examines the constructions from the viewpoint of their communicative function and observes them against the background of the whole system of the language. He tries to find the relationship between the synchronic and the diachronic and succeeds in presenting the language as a dynamic structure. L. E. Breivik's book is an exceedingly important contribution to English grammar as well as to general linguistics.

Jana Chamonikolasová

Della Summers (ed.-in-chief), **Longman Active Study Dictionary of English**. Longman Group Limited, London 1983, 710 pp.

The Longman family of English dictionaries for foreign learners has been increased by a new member: Longman Active Study Dictionary of English, prepared by an editorial team headed by Della Summers.

The LASDE is a monolingual dictionary suitable for use by intermediate students of English. Like the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE), it employs the Longman defining vocabulary of 2,000 common words and records both British and American pronunciation. Its special features are exercises intended to increase the learner's vocabulary, and study notes taking up such major language points as conjunctions, countability and uncountability, phrasal verbs and prepositions. A few full-page illustrations with word labels attached to objects and persons depicted present the vocabulary linked with recurring common scenes (e. g., at the airport, in the classroom, in the living room and in the supermarket). Exercises accompany also the introductory explanations of how to use the dictionary. Usage notes concern points of grammar and help to avoid common mistakes in English.

Even a more advanced learner will find the new dictionary useful, especially when looking for further illustrations of the use of a word. He may therefore be disappointed if the examples given by the LASDE happen to be the same as those in the LDOCE (cf., e. g., 'The minister approved the building plans': 'Come off it, tell the truth': 'The little boy cried out with pain when he burnt his fingers'; 'The trapped woman cried out for help'), but appreciate if they differ (cf., e. g., 'He enticed her away from her husband', 'Their beautiful garden is the envy of all the neighbours' and 'You can't equate his poems and/with his plays', adduced by LDOCE, and 'He enticed me away from my work', 'The boy's new toy was the envy of his friends' and 'You can't equate passing examinations with being educated', adduced by LASDE).

The LASDE will undoubtedly establish its place among the learning dictionaries, for it is a welcome book of reference that a learner can use with considerable profit before turning to a more comprehensive dictionary of the LDCOE type.

Jan Firbas