REVIEWS

LINGUISTIC INTERLUDES. By EUGENE A. NIDA. Pp. 162. Glendale, Calif.: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1944.

MORPHOLOGY, THE DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF WORDS. By EUGENE A. NIDA. Vol. I, pp. 126; Vol. II, pp. 165. Glendale, Calif.: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1944.

Our science has been sadly in need of the two types of material which Nida herewith gives us: interesting presentation of the fundamentals of linguistics for the layman, and good teaching material for the most elementary phases of analysis.

Linguistic Interludes is a series of dialogues featuring a descriptive linguist as chief protagonist, and several students, classicists, and rhetoricians to ask the questions. Within this framework Nida succeeds in covering the nuclear facts about language about which we all agree, very wisely staying away from the peripheral problems which are still the subjects of endless discussion. The presentation is all the more clear because, through the attitudes of his supplementary characters, he can show at each stage the contrast between the facts on one hand and the conventional grammar-school theories on the other.

Though no one will dispute the content, I personally find the background and incidental dialogue most annoying. Neither linguists nor college students nor even classicists confine themselves quite as thoroughly to a diet of ginger ale and ice cream as do Nida's characters. A less milk-and-water picture of the people who perform linguistic operations would have been more honest and therefore more effective.

But this is a minor complaint. I have given the Linguistic Interludes to two laymen to read, and in each case the subjects of the experiment have grasped the fundamental scientific orientation more painlessly, and have attained a higher motivation for further investigation into what linguists do, than I have ever seen as the result of any other material, formal or informal. It is this test, not my own reaction to the setting, that counts.

The great merit of the other book, Morphology, is that it does not simply tell; it teaches. Many other books, particularly Bloomfield's Language and more recently Bloch and Trager's Outline of Linguistic Analysis, tell how words are constructed and how one goes about discovering their structure; but anyone actually faced with the task of teaching would-be linguists how to do all this needs more than a statement, however clear, of the process—he needs problems and more problems to assign his students, so that they can learn by doing. A learner with little more background than that achieved by a thorough reading of the Linguistic Interludes, and perhaps the beginning of a course on phonetics and phonemics, can work his way through the two volumes of Nida's Morphology and emerge well prepared to tackle any set of morphological data on any language.

It is well known that finding examples which illustrate this or that point of morphology without being at the same time complicated by a half dozen or so

other points is quite difficult if one confines one's search to actual languages. Yet for the beginning student just such examples are essential. To solve this dilemma, Nida makes up little languages to suit the needs of the moment. When the point is reached in the course at which it is necessary to demonstrate meaningful patterns of vowel quality and position, for example, he presents the student with the following problem (1.28):

PRESENT	PAST	PARTICIPLE (PERSONAL)	NOUN DERIVATIVE
ketil	*kotul*	*aktul*	*kital*
ʔepit	*ʔoput*	*aʔput*	*ʔipat*
lemis	*lomus*	*almus*	*limas*
gesit	*gosut*	*agsut*	*gisat*

Without any particular assignment of meaning to the various stems or affixes, the student readily sees that the stems are *ktl*, *ʔpt*, *lms*, and *gst*, since those are the stable things, the constants, as one goes across from left to right, and that the affixes—constant in each column—may be set up as $C_1eC_2iC_3$, $C_1oC_2uC_3$, $aC_1C_2uC_3$, and $C_1iC_2aC_3$.

These might easily be taken from some Arabic dialect—though a specialist in Arabic assures me they are not from any dialect he knows. By not using actual Arabic forms, all sorts of extraneous complications are avoided—assimilation of consonants when they stand adjacent, vowel umlauts under some conditions, and so forth. The specific problem of the moment therefore stands out clearly and the student is just that much better equipped for tackling an actual language with its complications and intersections of pattern.

Nida is of course very careful in using this device to see that the TYPE of problem demonstrated is a type which actually occurs in one or more languages. He calls these 'Papawapam' problems, and they are as realistic as his term for them—Papawapam could be identified as a language spoken in central Brazil and most of us would believe it.

Examples from actual languages are included also; through most of the two volumes they come from English, which, being familiar to the learner, seems less difficult; at the very end of Volume II there are some interesting paradigms from other languages included for the student to tackle, since by this time he is well enough equipped to face real complexities without being frightened into specializing in chemistry or home missions instead of linguistics.

In the Morphology, as in the Linguistic Interludes, Nida wisely sticks close to what we know, avoiding areas which are still in dispute. Even so, it seems to me, with my particular background, that there are three points not handled with best effect, or not handled at all.

The first of these is the use of the 'selection' terminology. Linguists know perfectly well what 'selection' means; we know perfectly well that a 'form-class' is a list of forms which the analyst puts down because of some common feature of behavior. But unless the 'selection' and 'form-class' terminology is handled with care, a newcomer to the field is all too apt to decide that a certain word acts in a certain way BECAUSE it belongs to a certain form-class, which is certainly putting the causality in the wrong place. Only once does Nida dwell on this in

a way that might obviate the possible tendency; the warning should be made more pointed.

The second concerns Nida's description of how one defines the meaning of a morpheme or other segment. He makes two contradictory statements on the subject. One suggests that a morpheme must be defined as having all the meanings it has in any occurrence—the meaning of the morpheme is the logical sum of its meanings in specific contexts; the other and, I think, more accurate suggestion is that a morpheme must be defined as having that meaning which is common to all its occurrences—the logical PRODUCT of the meanings of all the larger expressions which contain it.

Consider a set of forms such as the following from Chinese:

ˌ*dă*-ˈ*rén* 'strike a person'
ˌ*dă-dyàn*-ˈ*hwà* 'make a phone call'
ˌ*dă-dyàn*-ˈ*bàw* 'send a telegram'
ˌ*dă*-ˈ*ywú* 'catch fish'
ˌ*dă*-ˈ*yéw* 'buy oil'
ˌ*dă*-ˈ*jyĕw* 'buy wine'
ˌ*dă*-ˈ*shwĕy* 'fetch water (from a well)'

The second parts of all of these expressions have relatively constant meanings: 'person', 'phone (call)', 'telegram', 'fish', 'oil', 'wine', 'water'. The first part, defined by the 'logical sum' method, would have to be defined as meaning 'strike; make; send; catch; buy; fetch from a well'. If this is a bit too naive, one would at least still have to say that it meant 'strike; send out (as a telephone call or telegram); obtain by conventional means'.

The difficulties in this procedure are twofold: first, it assumes (what one certainly cannot assume) that all the *dă*'s are the same morpheme, without bringing up the problem of how one goes about making identifications of similar or identical elements in different utterances with varying meaning; second, it fails to indicate that in the meaning 'obtain by conventional means' the element *dă* can be used ONLY with a very restricted set of goals after it. That is, each of the expressions given above is actually a UNIT for lexical or learning purposes, and no process whatsoever of thoroughly defining the constituent elements of each expression, or of considering different *dă*'s to be homophones, can get around this.

The 'logical product' method would define *dă* as follows: 'empty active verb used in many conventional combinations, the meaning of the combination stemming mainly from the goal which is added'. This is the only 'meaning' which *dă* has in all its occurrences; the task of presenting each combination as an individual lexical item is still not obviated.

One can perhaps recognize the following principles—not as a magic way to answer all such problems, but at least as a guide:

(1) A morpheme is to be defined as having that meaning which is constant in all the meanings of all the expressions which contain the morpheme in question. If this logical product of meanings is zero, then one is not dealing with a single morpheme, but with two or more homophones.

(2) At every level of putting elements together into larger units, there are apt to be some combinations whose meaning is more than the sum of the meanings

of the constituent elements and the meaning of the pattern by which they are joined. Such combinations are themselves lexical units. One should avoid thinking that every part of the meaning of an expression must be assigned, in the process of analysis, to one or another of the constituent elements or to the structural pattern.

The third point which Nida does not make to my satisfaction is that the student who goes through his text and emerges with all the skills it can give him may some day face a language in which none of these skills is of any assistance.

It has been taken more or less for granted that every language has 'words', in the sense of some relatively short segment with a degree of independent existence; our definition of morphology, as over against syntax, is based on that assumption. Nida recognizes that the problem of determining the word-like unit in a particular language may be difficult, and devotes a chapter to the criteria by which words may be recognized. None of these criteria, nor any combination of them, gives any fruitful results with Chinese. There is a juncturally indicated segmentation of the stream of speech in Chinese; segments flanked by a particular type of juncture are not necessarily free forms; segments joined together are not necessarily bound forms; in no case are the segments found necessarily lexical units. The patterns by which morphemes are joined together into phonologically marked segments are precisely the same as the patterns by which such segments are joined together into entire utterances. Any dichotomy of one's total analysis of the language into two major parts—call them morphology and syntax if you will—is inefficient; and the single total analysis which one must make is essentially syntactical, not morphological. This does not mean that every morpheme should be taken to be a word in its own right; the real implication is that THERE ARE NO WORDS IN CHINESE. The whole tradition of 'words' as worked out with western languages is useless in Chinese. Nor is Chinese alone in this: the same statement could apply almost as well (but not quite) to Thai or Burmese, and probably to other languages of the so-called monosyllabic type.

It is much easier to talk about points one does not like than to give praise. The fairly lengthy criticism above should not be interpreted as general disapproval. Anyone who is going to carry on linguistic analysis for any purpose should be taught with this book. Would-be linguists who plan to stay in the field of Indo-European studies would find this type of training excellent as a background for courses or private study in Celtic or other languages of the family. I hope that in the not too distant future the Summer Institute group will bring out an equally successful textbook for syntax and, if possible, one for phonetics and phonemics. No more practical work has ever been done.

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THE ATHETIZED LINES OF THE ILIAD. By GEORGE MELVILLE BOLLING. (Special Publications of the Linguistic Society of America.) Pp. 200. Baltimore; Linguistic Society of America, 1944.

The search for the historical Homer has preoccupied scholarship for a century and a half, and while we are, perhaps, no nearer certainty than ever, certain results have been achieved. The problem has been narrowed and precised.