Book Reviews

Sonia Cristofaro and Paolo Ramat (eds.), *Introduzione alla tipologia linguistica*. Roma: Carocci, 1999, 306 pages, ISBN 88-430-1291-6, EUR 27.80.

Teresa Moure, *Universales del lenguaje y lingua-diversidad*. Barcelona: Ariel, 2001, 222 pages, ISBN 84-344-8241-X, EUR 14.

Reviewed by FRANS PLANK, Universität Konstanz

For those who prefer to teach, or learn, typology from textbooks, the selection of contemporary titles to choose from is growing. The better known ones, by now about a handful, are in English, but the Romance languages are catching up. Lest the anglocentric world of typology continues to overlook them, for Italian there is Sonia Cristofaro & Paolo Ramat's *Introduzione alla tipologia linguistica*, superseding a similar anthology of Ramat's of 1976, and for Spanish there is Teresa Moure's *Universales del lenguaje y lingua-diversida*, complementing Juan Carlos Moreno Cabrera's *La lingüística teórico-tipológica* (Madrid: Gredos, 1995). For French, after Claude Hagège's slim *La structure des langues* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), there is now Jack Feuillet's bulkier *Introduction à la typologie linguistique* (Paris: Champion, 2006), to be reviewed in one of *LT*'s next issues.

Cristofaro & Ramat's *Introduzione* introduces by way of collecting, translating into Italian (from, well, English), and commenting on eight previously published articles and passages from other textbooks considered representative of the state of the art. What the editors have included is a sampling of typological work from two decades, mid-1970's to mid-90's, that any graduate student of linguistics ought to have read, Italian or other. Their earliest piece is a classic, Edward Keenan & Bernard Comrie's "Noun Phrase Accessibility and Universal Grammar"; it was to take almost thirty years for the journal where it was first published to re-establish its typological credentials, sort of, and for typologists typically publishing in other journals to take notice of how abstract analyses, even *LI*-style, may seriously bear on questions of diversity and unity.

This paper and those by Hansjakob Seiler ("Possessivity, Subject and Object", 1983), Johanna Nichols ("Head-marking and Dependent-marking Grammar", 1986), Vladimir P. Nedjalkov ("Some Typological Parameters of Converbs", 1995, expanded from an earlier Russian version), and John W. Du Bois ("Competing Motivations", 1985) are devoted to particular issues in syntax and inflectional morphology. Grammatical relations, their alignment patterns, and their encoding are the (almost too exclusive) centre of interest here. The other half of the anthology – with William Croft's "Implicational Universals" (1990, excerpted from his textbook), Jan Rijkhoff, Dik Bakker, Kees Hengeveld, & Peter Kahrel's "A Method in Language Sampling" (1993), and Joseph Greenberg's "Diachrony, Synchrony, and Language Universals" (1978) – is given over to general methodological and epistemological questions of typology. While the editors and commentators link Greenberg's dynamic or diachronic typology to functionalism, emergentism, and frequentism, they miss the opportunity to point out its implication for the subject matter of the preceding chapter, sampling: on the assumption that languages are what they could become, that they are as different and as uniform as they could develop – in other words, that the constraints on crosslinguistic diversity follow from constraints on historical innovations –, the universe that needs to be sampled is not languages but individual innovations. (Greenberg made this point himself, though perhaps not in print.)

The anthology is a well-chosen hit parade, as far as it goes. What has been included figures on just about any typologist's list of highly recommended reading. However, next to nothing is included on phonetics and phonology, other than exemplification of basic general points in Croft's and Greenberg's chapters. And there is nothing at all on semantics and on the lexicon and word formation either. It is as if the phonetics/phonology worlds and the semantics and lexicon/word formation worlds have remained invisible to typology as represented by this introduction, and perhaps vice versa. It might help (re-)establishing communication, and benefit future anthologists, if someone active in these fields drew up lists of essential contemporary reading in typological phonetics/phonology and in typological semantics and lexicology/word formation. There's lots to choose from, really, and no good reason for typological ignorance, even at the introductory level.

The editors have done a good job in their general introduction as well as their prefaces to individual chapters, in the way of providing general background to the typological programme as they see it and teach it at Pavia, and of contextualising the representative pieces chosen. Students might have found it helpful, so as to be able to gauge the level of their own understanding, also to be given specific questions (with answers) and problems (with solutions) relating to each selection, and also little research projects they could take on on their own on the basis of their reading. Though I cannot speak here on behalf of

their students but only for myself, I would also have preferred it if the editors' emphasis on typology being perforce "functional", as opposed to "formal", had not been quite so emphatic. A real issue – one of substance rather than slogans – seems to me to be that of "abstract", as opposed to "concrete", representations of grammars and lexicons (structural order different from overt order, null forms of various types, underspecification, etc.), and how less concrete representations are implicated in limiting crosslinguistic diversity. Students being introduced to typology through Cristofaro & Ramat's annotated anthology will be ill prepared to deal with abstract mental representations and to connect typology with cognitive science.

Though authored rather than edited and annotated, and correspondingly of a more personal flair, Moure's *Universales del lenguaje y linguo-diversidad* is similar in scope and orientation. Moure clearly has read Cristofaro & Ramat's recommended reading. Her introduction is more basic than Cristofaro & Ramat's *Introduzione* insofar as its aim is, not to confront students with current work in typology and help them to make sense of research papers, but to outline what this field is about that they might, later, perhaps delve into. This is perhaps surprising given that the book has grown from a doctoral programme in universals and typology taught at Santiago de Compostela; its subject matter is the sort of thing that students, Spanish and other, ought to be introduced to at undergraduate level – and increasingly are, notwithstanding popular English-language introductions to Language/linguistics bent on forever excluding languages (plural) from linguistics.

Overall, Moure is somewhat more catholic and inclusive. She acknowledges the generative contribution to the search for universals of Language (*lenguaje*), as opposed to those of languages (*lenguas*), re-inspired by Greenberg (Chapter 1). What I seem to miss here (also in her section on acquisition, 5.2) is an emphasis on the poverty of stimulus argument in that search for constraints on diversity: considering the influence of this argument vis-à-vis its poor empirical performance, there would definitely have been a lesson to teach to and to learn for newcomers, whatever their theoretical leanings ("functionalist" vs. "formalist", here too). The "typological" approach, namely to inductively search for universals through comparing languages, and the attendant problems receive more attention in Chapter 2; and in Chapters 3 and 4, the illustration of universals and the sketches of their explanations (markedness, iconicity, dicourse) are again more of a typological than a generative flavour. In the final Chapter 5, entitled "Consequences of Universals Research for Other Linguistic Disciplines", uniformity and also diversity are related to the origin of Language and the history and prehistory of languages, to first language acquisition (though second language acquisition and borrowing would have been equally relevant), and to applied linguistics, in particular foreign language teaching, translation, computational linguistics, clinical linguistics, and language planning. The applied

connections would deserve strengthening, beyond what is alluded to here. As to the historical issues, it remains to be seen whether it is indeed typology that has consequences for the historical study of mankind, rather than the other way round, or both ways. It is good for a textbook, however, at least to adumbrate such questions.

If you prefer to learn typology by doing typology (in Spanish), you are not the intended reader of Moure's textbook: it entirely lacks analytic problems for students to tackle on their own, and then to be told how others, more experienced, might have solved them. One wonders where and how novices are to acquire skills such as to analyse data from unfamiliar languages and to transparently set out one's analyses (including glossing); to extract generalisations from given crosslinguistic data, or from samples to be constructed by themselves; to get implications right, given a gap in co-occurrences; or in fact how to set oneself a viable typological problem in the first place.

On a more positive note, while equally reticent about phonetics and phonology as most competitors in the introduction to typology market, Moure does not neglect lexical typology and touches on the obvious topics of lexical primitives and of basic colour vocabularies.

Although book reviews are perhaps not the most appropriate place for personal confessions, I would like to end with one: I have always avoided teaching typology from a textbook. I think I have read all the texts that are available in the languages I can read, and I do not blame them for my reluctance to adopt them in introductory classes. More likely, the fault lies with the subject matter.

As I see it – and it is perhaps worth the while of a journal such as *LT* to elicit other views (you sometimes wish the *LT* stylesheet would permit **boldface**) – the problem is that it is difficult to identify the SPECIAL knowledge and the SPECIAL skills that are needed for doing typology. In my view, what you need to be a reasonably good typologist, first and foremost, is a sound grounding in state-of-the-art theoretical linguistics – in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicology, semantics, and pragmatics (all of them, ideally), and not in non-investigative, frivolous theoretical linguistics but in responsible theoretical linguistics informed by a wide and deep factual knowledge about languages and their histories (all of them, ideally). Needless to add, theoretical linguistics (distinguished from applied) is concerned with both description and explanation, and should not overemphasise one at the expense of the other. Now, being a typologist I do not see how I am not a theoretical linguist, or how I could afford not to be one. I do not see what special expertise I am supposed to have, and to have acquired in my professional training, other than that of a theoretical linguist. My only special contribution would seem to be to prevent the theorising from being divorced from crosslinguistic factual knowledge; and this I would naturally want to be seen to in any textbook in general linguistics

or its individual branches, phonetics to pragmatics. But then, does responsible theory need such special controls to begin with?

What is conceivably special in typologists – though again I am not sure this is not shared with all theoretical linguists (ideally) – are (i) an in-depth knowledge of the body of established laws constraining crosslinguistic diversity and (ii) the methodological skills to establish further universals. If you bank on inductive generalisation, these skills will include an expertise in sampling and in statistics. If you are convinced at least by the logic of the poverty of stimulus argument (and are hopeful that it can be applied more successfully in future), you will need professional skills in conducting research in acquisition.

In sum, if you (that is, I) do want a textbook that does justice to typology, it will either be very very comprehensive or very very selective. I am not aware of any, at either extreme.

To use repetition in lieu of boldface, and now to also speak on behalf of the editorial board (above I solely spoke for myself): *LT* solicits the views of writers as well as users and non-users of textbooks on what it is precisely that prospective typologists need to be taught.

Correspondence address: Sprachwissenschaft, Universität Konstanz, 78457 Konstanz, Germany; e-mail: frans.plank@uni-konstanz.de