REVIEW


This textbook is aimed at students on their first course in linguistic morphology. The book consists of eight chapters, together with a glossary, index, and a list of references, and is a perfect length for a one-semester introductory class. The topics of the chapters are structured to provide good coverage of the subject and constitute a basic foundation upon which to build a deeper understanding of morphology. At the same time, the strategy of employing a previously little-studied language, Kujamaat Joola (also known as Diola-Fogny), as the language of exemplification throughout, makes the book a good introduction to this language. The consistent use of a single, little-known language is, in this writer’s opinion, a far more gentle and meaningful introduction to unfamiliar language data than the more commonly encountered method of peppering a text with smatterings of dozens of languages, inevitably overwhelming the student.

With regard to content, there is a somewhat detailed discussion of two early approaches to morphology, Item-and-Arrangement and Item-and-Process (pp. 46–52), but, curiously, there is no discussion of more recent models, such as Lexical Morphology, Prosodic Morphology, or Optimality Theory, although Lexical Phonology is mentioned briefly in Section 8.3.5. Similarly, reference is made to root-and-pattern morphology, but there is no presentation of previous treatments of this phenomenon, such as the McCarthy templatic morphology approach (John J. McCarthy, ‘A Prosodic Theory of Nonconcatenative Morphology’, *Linguistic Inquiry*, 12 (1981), 373–418). The same scarcity of references to the literature applies to the treatment of reduplication and other processes. This is all in keeping with the authors’ stated objective that the book is not intended to be an exposition of, or enquiry into, morphological theories. Their approach is eclectic, as they indicate on page 11: ‘We take a no-holds-barred approach to linguistics. We’ll use any tool or method that will tell us how language works. This attitude stems in part from our scepticism about particular theories.’ As such, this is not the book to employ for a course in morphological theory, but it would serve as a good general introduction to descriptive morphology for language or linguistics undergraduate students, perhaps prior to a course of a more theoretical nature.

In addition to numerous original exercises from Kujamaat Joola, there are many exercises drawn from Eugene A. Nida’s textbook of morphology (*Morphology: The Descriptive Analysis of Words*, 2nd edn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949)), as well as other sources, and these are well chosen to reinforce the points in each chapter. The glossary contains some definitions that are perhaps a bit loose: for example, the definition of ‘infix’ is ‘an affix that surfaces within a word’ when surely it would be better put as ‘an affix that surfaces within a morpheme’. This may reflect the authors’ views on the notion of the morpheme, but would then call into question their claims to an eclectic a-theoretic approach. The index is perhaps a bit less detailed than might be desired, but covers the main areas of discussion in the book and is definitely an asset for students unfamiliar with the subject-matter.

I should mention one small, personal quibble concerning the Nuu-chah-nulth example (aka ‘Nootka’ pp. 171–72). In addition to the antiquated phonetic representation (drawn directly from Edward Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1921)), the example is somewhat off the mark in that it more clearly highlights the category neutrality of roots rather than the complexities of polysynthesis (John T. Stonham, *Linguistic Theory and Complex Words* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), discusses this class of cases in more detail).

This book constitutes an excellent introduction to the basic ideas of morphology, presented in an easily accessible format, suitable for linguistics students or those in
related areas, such as the various language degrees, who wish to have some idea of the basics of word-structure.

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