

K I V U N G

Journal of the Linguistic Society of Papua and New Guinea

Edited by ANDRAS BALINT

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Kivung publishes original articles and space is made available for brief notes and comments on points arising out of recent publications.

KIVUNG also intends to publish reviews of current books.

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EDITORIAL

I am confident that readers of KIVUNG will agree with me that the delay in the release of the present issue is more than compensated for by the inclusion of three articles by American linguists, two of them long prominent, the third on his way to prominence, judged by his excellent article.

Adam Makkai is an able and enthusiastic advocate of stratificational grammar. He turns the tables on the well-known contention of the "trafo"-s (as he affectionately (?) calls transformational grammarians in private correspondence) that all structural grammars are included in the phrase-structure component of generative transformational grammar. Makkai claims that "TG grammar has been operating all this time with an explicitly stratified system..." and that "most TG grammarians recognise at least four strata, though they religiously refuse to admit it ..."

While stratificational grammar does offer some valuable insights into language structure, especially in the much neglected semantic aspect of language, I cannot go along with Makkai's stated belief that stratificational grammar is the grammar of the future, if only because I still maintain that Robert Allen's sector analysis - in a suitably modified form - has proved to be, in my experience, a highly satisfactory tool in reducing the linguistic complexity of English writers least amenable to syntactic analysis, including James Joyce and George Orwell, to relatively simple yet significant statements on the formal characteristics of their style. I have also found sector analysis eminently teachable as a comprehensive system describing the structure of English to teacher trainees in TENL and TESL. Yet I do not intend to follow Makkai's example and declare that sector analysis is going to be the dominant syntactic approach of the future. It is the very diversity of the contemporary linguistic scene that seems to me the most encouraging sign for overall progress in linguistic analysis, and I fully agree with Archibald Hill that it is no longer valid to talk about rigidly compartmentalized schools. Within each major approach there exist individual variations.

Makkai's contextual-adjustability principle seems highly significant to me. It affirms my belief that language is an open-ended system, ergo, the less flexible the analytical approach, the more pitfalls open up to trip the blinkered analyst. I recall one of the first critical reviews of TG grammar by Hill, based on a test he had conducted with graduate students at the University of Texas who, on being presented with Chomsky's 'ungrammatical'