

HAGÉGE, Claude. **The Language Builder: An Essay on the Human Signature in Linguistic Morphogenesis.** Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company. 1993. Pp. 283.

Hagége's study of the role human beings play in language building emphasizes the importance of the social dimension of language. For that reason, he stresses the point that, apart from being a cognitive science, linguistics should also be considered a social science. Contrary to the traditional approach of modern linguistics which considers language to be a system, Hagége's premise is that language is a dynamic activity (speech). That is why theories such as those of Hjelmslev or Chomsky, who view languages as autonomous systems, take into account neither its dynamic nature nor its social dimension. Understanding and explaining the human presence in language building would help to reveal some basic traits of the speakers which are reflected in languages and the way they are used in speech. That is why humans are defined here as language builders who, consciously or not, contribute to both modifying and enriching the language.

Hagége also makes an interesting reference to the problem of formalization in linguistics. He asserts that linguistics cannot be an axiomatic science as it deals with languages, which are historical, cultural and social objects. Thus, real phenomena are examined here as opposed to abstract entities. It is suggested that linguists should approach the study of language not only in a deductive, but also in an inductive way. The study of a wide variety of languages would allow linguists to understand the nature of speech activity, and therefore, to characterize human beings as language builders. The deductive method is important too in that some theoretical issues have provided the basis for the study

of less well known linguistic phenomena as in the case of Generative Grammar. Typology is also very important in linguistic research as languages which are typologically different may share some common structures apparently unrelated in most other systems. In this way, these 'revealing languages', as Hagége calls them, can shed light on some fundamental properties of human language.

The author also emphasizes the fact that most contemporary schools of theoretical linguistics with their complex representations do not seem to be interested in frameworks different from their own when, in fact, all of them pursue the same goal, namely the study of language. That is the reason why the author tries to characterize languages in an accessible way basing his study on data taken from a wide variety of geographical areas and providing a diversity of typological features. Hagége's assumption is that the human presence in language exists at all levels of consciousness. He, therefore, claims that there is a need to study the relationship between the human presence in language and the levels of consciousness. His purpose in this book is to draw attention to the capacity that language builders have to verbalize reality through interpersonal communication.

The book is divided into three parts. The first one deals with the different levels of linguistic consciousness and the effects of human intervention in language. In part two, Hagége examines a very interesting and revealing aspect of the social dimension of language: the place of humans in the *origin and development of linguistic forms* or, as he calls it, 'morphogenesis'. In the final part, he examines lexicalization and grammaticalization, two aspects of language morphogenesis.

Each part comprises different chapters. Part I consists of chapters 1 and 2, which deal with the problem of consciousness in language building and with how speakers adapt linguistic systems to meet

their communicative needs. Here Hagège introduces the concept of Language Builder to make reference to human beings as creators of language in that they express the world through the word and, in doing so, build and reshape languages. He claims that the process of language building, unlike modern linguists, is conscious. For example, from a synchronic point of view, there are different degrees of consciousness reflected mainly in the lexical selection the speakers make in their language. This process would not be possible without the conscious knowledge of the way words are organised and related to each other in the vocabulary. The different degrees of consciousness in the creation of words (lexicon), phonology and morphosyntax are studied since they underline the specific features of speakers as language builders.

In Part II (chapters 3, 4 and 5) Hagège illustrates the powerful human presence in the language. In chapter 3 an attempt is made to depict the antropocentric character of languages by the use of a variety of examples. He claims that there is a "universal tendency in languages to place human beings at the highest level on the animacy scale". In chapter 4 he deals with the phenomenon of 'creologenesi' as another instance of the presence of language builders in the construction of languages. He explains the concept of 'creole language' as a linguistic phenomenon in which a pidgin language becomes the native language of a speech community. He examines the framework of creologenesi, such as for example, 'borrowing', the most illustrative cases of which are pidgins and creoles, considered by Hagège to be the most spectacular cases of linguistic borrowing. He deals with two types: 'sequential borrowing', or the borrowing of a particular syntactic structure (word order) from one language into another; and 'grammatical borrowing', exemplified by verbants and nominants. In chapter 5, Hagège claims that the evolution of language does not follow a linear path as was traditionally believed, but

it has a cyclical nature; in other words, in the process of linguistic change, there are some phenomena that happen regularly. According to Hagège, the search for expressiveness leads to this cyclical process or to the revival of outdated structures.

In the last part of this book (chapters 6 and 7) the author deals with lexicalization and grammaticalization as two cases of language morphogenesis. The lexical creativity is presented as an example of conscious language building, while morphology and syntax are given as instances of unconscious language building activity. In chapter 6, he focuses on lexicalization, mainly on complex word formation, and explains it in terms of the aim of language builders to express the maximum amount of information through the minimum amount of linguistic structures. They build, in most cases unconsciously, complex lexical units such as derivatives and compounds which establish a relationship between morphology and syntax. Chapter 7 deals with grammaticalization defined as the phenomenon in which language builders convert lexical units into grammatical instruments. This enriches the paradigmatic axis (relators, auxiliaries, etc) of the morphosyntactic system of a given language. The author classifies the units produced by grammaticalization into three groups: 1) verbants (tense, aspect, mood markers, negation markers), 2) nominants (articles, quantifiers), and 3) relators (prepositions, circumpositions, case markers, conjunctions of subordination and coordination).

In general, this book is an interesting and, to a great extent, illuminating study of the role human beings play in the creation and development of languages. Despite the complexity of some of the issues dealt with, this work provides an absorbing and original addition to the study of linguistics. [Dolores TORRES MEDINA, *Universidad de La Laguna*]

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