BOOK REVIEWS

Karin Aijmer. 2013. *Understanding pragmatic markers: A variational pragmatic approach*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp. 162. ISBN 978-0-7486-3550-4.

Reviewed by Tine Defour, Ghent University

As an expert in the field of pragmatics, Karin Aijmer wants to explore a new perspective in her book *Understanding pragmatic markers* by advocating a theory of “meaning potentials”, which takes into account social roles, situational types and text types as factors that help determine the meanings and functions of individual pragmatic markers. Aijmer illustrates her theoretical point of view by discussing the functional diversity and “rich meaning potential” of three selected cases: the pragmatic marker *well*, the related forms *actually* and *in fact* and so-called general extenders such as *or something* and *and all that* (*sort of thing*).

In the introductory chapter, Aijmer situates her approach within existing theories in pragmatics and sociolinguistics. She aims to maximise the study of discourse variation by combining a pragmatic level of language analysis with a variationist approach that is traditionally more oriented towards sociolinguistic factors. Going beyond traditional macro-social variables such as region, gender and age, Aijmer attributes more importance to text types, social situations (e.g. discussions, interviews) and regional varieties of English. In Section 1.4 she gives an insightful overview of comparable linguistic theories which also take into account contextual factors, but which may explain the issue of multifunctionality and the relationship between pragmatic markers and context in different ways. Integrative theories (Section 1.4.1) share Aijmer’s view that pragmatic markers are polysemous indexical signs providing information on various contextual parameters (e.g. relationship to prior or upcoming text, participation framework), which can be foregrounded or backgrounded depending on the communicative situation. Relevance theory (Section 1.4.2) equally views pragmatic markers as multifunctional signs with dynamically changing purposes. While they signal necessary clues to the hearer, allowing him or her to infer a correct interpretation that is “consistent with
the guarantee of optimal relevance” (p. 11), Aijmer finds that relevance theory does not give enough attention to linguistic and contextual factors. Her solution is provided in a theory of “meaning potentials” (Section 1.4.3), which is based on the idea that an individual pragmatic marker can have several core meanings (i.e. conventionalised meanings or “sub-senses”), complemented by less conventionalised ad hoc meanings that are created in new interactional contexts. Rather than having one fixed meaning, pragmatic markers are seen as having a meaning potential which can be shaped by situational factors. This theory fully supports the polysemy and changeability of pragmatic markers as well as the view that they can index a large variety of socio-cultural parameters such as activity type (debate, interview), participation framework (speaker and hearer), social identities (e.g. doctor or teacher roles) or stance. Aijmer offers a perceptive discussion of various theoretical frames with different views on contextuality and hereby creates a focused overview that always remains connected to her own perspective. As such, this introduction offers useful information for students and (young) researchers who are exploring the interface between pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

Chapter 2, on the use of well, opens with an overview of studies that have discussed the form’s multifunctionality in relation to contextual factors. Norrick’s (2001) study on the use of well in oral narratives, for instance, has shown that a correct interpretation can depend on culturally shared conventions with regard to story-telling and narrative organisation. Hale’s (1999) study on courtroom discourse equally points out the value of aspects such as text type or speaker role, by demonstrating that omissions (or mistranslations) of well in translations may prevent an accurate representation of the speaker’s intentions or the construction of professional identity.

Aijmer establishes three core meanings (or “sub-senses”) in terms of which well can be categorised, namely coherence, involvement and politeness (Sections 2.7–2.10). Each of these is subdivided into different “micro-functions”: “Coherence” (Section 2.8), for instance, is subdivided into the categories “word-search and self-repair”, “well as a turn-taking device”, “transition according to an agenda” and “transition to a quotation”. “Involvement” (Section 2.9) is subdivided into “agreement”, “disagreement” and “feedback to a preceding question”. Each of these subcategories is exemplified with concrete contexts from Aijmer’s corpus material.

Absolute and normalised frequencies per text type are listed in Section 2.3,
but the richness of Aijmer’s functional categorisation only becomes clear in Sections 2.11 to 2.14, in which the previously outlined functional diversity is connected to specific text types. These include private dialogue (face-to-face conversation, telephone conversation), public dialogue (broadcast discussion, cross-examination) and spontaneous commentary. All analyses are based on data from ICE-GB, the British component of the International Corpus of English. This discussion of the multifunctionality of well in distinct text types offers an interesting and varied insight into what the marker can actually do – or become – in specific contexts. Aijmer finds that in private dialogue (Section 2.11), and specifically in face-to-face interaction, that is, in a text type where the interactants are usually friends or relatives, well is mainly used to establish agreement and sustain a harmonious relationship between speaker and hearer. The more frequent use of coherence functions (e.g. word-search, self-repair) in telephone conversations is attributed to the fact that interactants are not able to see each other and can therefore not resort to additional non-verbal signals. Here, well serves as a floor-holding device “making it possible for the speaker to signal that he or she is still present on the line” (p. 55). The use of well in public dialogue (Section 2.12) proves to be closely related to the participants’ social identities and to common background knowledge on the structure of the discourse activity in question. In broadcast discussions, well is often used to introduce new discussants, topics or responses to the moderator. In cross-examinations, well emphasises who is in control (i.e. the prosecutor) and helps to build up the prosecutor’s professional identity by issuing an authoritative stance. In witness answers, well is associated with correcting misunderstandings rather than with creating agreement. Finally, in spontaneous commentaries (e.g. in sports games), where the central role is taken up by a commentator who is expected to present an accurate evaluation of what is going on in the game, well often has a “punctuating function”, used to draw attention to prominent game events (e.g. the introduction of a new player on the field).

Aijmer’s discussion of the multifunctionality of well and its interaction with various contextual aspects and text types offers an innovative and elaborate view on the contextual richness and possibilities that are created by adopting this theoretical perspective of “meaning potentials”. The potential role of formal properties (e.g. syntactic position, prosody, collocations) is touched upon a number of times in this chapter, but while the actual discussion does mention a number of concrete correlations with formal factors, these remain fairly general in my opinion. It would have
been interesting to see Aijmer make some stronger claims regarding formal–functional correspondences, or to see them supported by more quantitative evidence.

Chapter 3 on the etymologically related forms *in fact* and *actually* largely follows the structure of the chapter on *well*, but initially pays more attention to the forms’ quantitative distribution in spoken and written discourse. Aijmer confirms that *in fact* and *actually* occur in the same text types, but with different frequencies. *In fact* turns out to be more frequent in formal text types and in argumentative contexts (e.g. legal cross-examinations, parliamentary debates), while *actually* occurs more often in highly interactive text types (e.g. face-to-face conversation, telephone calls, classroom discourse). Both forms are described as polysemous markers with subfunctions of adversativity (specifically *actually*) and elaboration (specifically *in fact*), complemented by a number of contextual functions that mainly have to do with stance, social roles and politeness (e.g. hedging or softening).

For *in fact*, Aijmer presents results from public dialogue (legal cross-examination and broadcast discussion), monologues (demonstrations, unscripted speeches) and writing. Her illustrations show that the functional variety of *in fact* often co-occurs with the structure and goal of the text type in question, and often correlates with formal factors. Legal cross-examinations, for instance, are commonly recognised as consisting of a structured series of questions and answers. In this text type, *in fact* is often used “assertively” in conducive questions, to underline “what the facts are” and to build up an argumentation that leads to an envisioned conclusion. As such, its use supports a professional strategy, helps the defence counsel to maintain control over the examination and helps to construct a professional role of authority.

Aijmer frequently mentions collocations as factors that influence the eventual functional classification. *But, I mean* and *I think (in fact)* are, for instance, listed as collocations that support and enhance an adverasive meaning, an elaborative meaning (indicating precision) or a context in which the speaker takes up position against possibly divergent opinions, respectively. The idea that collocations may contribute to the functional interpretation of a specific marker fits into Aijmer’s approach of “meaning potentials”, but I also believe it may be worthwhile to examine to what extent each collocate contributes to the overall meaning of the collocation. In *I think (in fact)*, the function of emphasising the speaker’s position may
be established to a greater extent by *I think* than by the collocation as a whole or by the collocate *in fact*. Similarly, the brief section on written text types (Section 3.8) lists a number of formal features with which *in fact* co-occurs, such as the use of the passive, subordinate clauses, abstract vocabulary or complex constructions. Due to the brevity of this section, however, it is not quite clear to what extent there is a strong formal–functional correlation, or to what extent these factors may actually form a characteristic of written speech in general.

The functional diversity of *actually* is discussed in the second part of this chapter. A general functional overview is again followed by a more detailed look at the form’s actual behaviour in distinct text types, occasionally also in relation to relevant formal factors such as prosody or collocations. As is the case for *in fact*, specialised functions of *actually* often have to do with social roles, specifically with the establishment of authority or knowledgeability associated with teacher or tutor roles (classroom discourse) or lecturer roles (e.g. demonstrations). While *actually* is highly frequent in face-to-face conversation, Aijmer does not discuss the use of *actually* in this text type as elaborately as she did with *in fact*. Rather, Section 3.12 sums up these uses, mainly referring to a functional overview in Table 3.21. The functions of *actually* are discussed in public dialogue (Section 3.13), including classroom discourse and business transactions, and in monologues (Section 3.14), specifically in demonstrations. It was not entirely clear to me why these text types, in which *actually* is less frequent, are discussed in greater detail than the interactive text types in which *actually* is actually the most frequent.

*Actually* and *in fact* are compared in the closing section of Chapter 3. It is pointed out that syntactic position is one of the most influential factors in their interpretation; initial position, for instance, is connected to the possibility of creating coherence or showing speaker involvement. These formal influences are not surprising; it is, in any case, interesting to see them being mentioned within the context of this new theoretical approach. If anything, I would have liked to have seen these correlations being discussed in even greater detail.

The final case study (Chapter 4) is on general extenders; it is the first study in which regional variation is actually taken into account. Because general extenders can be categorised on the basis of their structure, Aijmer’s discussion sets out from a basic set of collocational frames (e.g. containing *and* or *or*, followed by a generic noun or indefinite pronoun,
with or without a connective) creating a very differentiated but manageable starting point for analysis. Aijmer presents a structured overview of different types of extenders per regional variety, supported by quantitative figures (Tables/Figures 4.1–4.7). Regional varieties include the national components of ICE, that is, Australian, British, Canadian, New Zealand, spoken American and Singaporean English. For this topic, Aijmer also brings in the influence of grammaticalisation theory as an explanation for formal variation, including a shortening of (longer) forms, central nouns (e.g. things, stuff) losing their syntactic properties and the development of interpersonal functions.

Aijmer’s results suggest that and-extenders, which are more frequent in New Zealand and Singaporean English, are mainly used to establish in-group membership, social similarity and positive politeness, while or-extenders, frequently used in Australian English, generally convey vagueness and therefore often display hedging functions. In Sections 4.6.3 to 4.6.6, Aijmer presents four main functions for and- and or-extenders. The general extenders and things or and stuff, for instance, can be used to invoke (a sense of) shared knowledge and solidarity between speakers. A second, intensifying subfunction (e.g. and everything) can create involvement and positive politeness. In this subcategory, and all that is described as typical of Singaporean use, indicating positive politeness and rapport. A third, hedging or face-threat mitigating subfunction (e.g. or something) is said to co-occur frequently with other mitigators such as the auxiliary could. Finally, Aijmer states that general extenders are often used as a device to “buy” the speaker – the non-native speaker of English in particular – some time to find the right words while at the same time upholding an impression of fluency. This closing chapter offers new insights into the (formal and regional) variability of general extenders, taking into account possible cultural influences and regional (politeness) preferences.

Overall, Aijmer’s book presents a clearly written, focused and elaborately illustrated demonstration of a new perspective in pragmatics. A few general critical comments include the following. First, the individual chapters are not structured in a similar fashion; at times, this creates some confusion with regard to how the functional categorisation – for each individual case study – is organised and presented, as well as causing different emphases to be placed within each distinct case study (which is not a bad thing in itself as it may support the markers’ functional individuality). Secondly, a downside of the broad variety in (sub)functions is that the
reader may easily lose track of the forms’ central functions. The fact that the influence of collocations and formal correlations is not always strictly delineated, in turn, seems to increase the possibility of functional overlap. Still, the added value of Aijmer’s approach is convincingly established by her numerous detailed descriptions of each functional categorisation and by the use of concrete example contexts illustrating each functional (sub)category. The book offers a varied discussion of a specific theoretical approach, exemplified by means of three distinct case studies and their dynamic use in different text types.

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Jürgen Meisel, Martin Elsig & Esther Rinke. 2013. *Language acquisition and change: A morphosyntactic perspective*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp. xiii + 202. ISBN 978-0-7486-4225-0.

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The book *Language acquisition and change* seeks to come to grips with the widely accepted assumption in the diachronic generative syntax literature that changes over time which alter core structural properties of grammar emerge through language acquisition – the volume’s first author is primarily a researcher in this field – and are indeed dependent on it. Hence, the results of recent research on L1, L2, monolingual and bilingual language acquisition are thoroughly reviewed and its implications for a theory of diachronic change are cleverly discussed.

The main thesis in the book is that parametric morphosyntactic change can only arise as a consequence of L2 acquisition in particular sociohistorical environments, a claim that undermines the role generally attributed to L1 acquisition as a potential trigger for language change. Important consequences follow from this thesis. As the authors put it,

> Ascribing to L2 learners the role of agents of innovation in situations of language change, or more precisely of parametric change, implies that change should be restricted to those situations where the sociolinguistic context provides a favourable basis for an influential role of L2 speakers. In a reverse conclusion, parametric changes should occur much less often than is commonly assumed, since not every change which has been claimed to be parametric in nature can be related to the involvement of an important number of L2 learners. (p. 176)

The view that only L2 acquisition matters in accounting for parametric change may seem too radical, but actually forms a basis for a detailed reappraisal of well-known cases of morphosyntactic change that have long been of central interest to historical linguists. The discussion throughout the book is thought-provoking, supported by elegant logical arguments and presented in a clear readable style, which makes the book accessible and interesting to a wide audience.

While the book deals extensively with the statement that parametric change depends on L2 acquisition, limited attention is paid to clarifying the sociolinguistic conditions under which L2 acquisition may drive grammatical change. What I also missed in the book is a technical definition of
“parametric change” as well as an empirical test of the authors’ main thesis. Indeed, there is no consensus in the generative literature about what counts as a parameter, how parameters should be defined and identified or even whether parameters should be part of the theory of grammar and thus guide language acquisition (Boeckx 2011, Obata, Baptista & Epstein 2013). Given the current theoretical uncertainty over the concept of parameter, it is unclear what exactly the authors are leaving outside the scope of their thesis on morphosyntactic change. Further, to provide novel empirical evidence supporting the proposed central role of L2 acquisition in morphosyntactic change, it would have been desirable to include an experimental study specifically developed to that end. The authors identify the Basque linguistic community in Spain as a typical context prompting an impact of L2 speakers in language variation (because “the majority of today’s speakers of Euskera learned it as an L2”, p. 163), but they remain vague as to how the expectation that morphosyntactic change may arise in this context is actually fulfilled. The Basque environment, or other appropriate contemporary sociolinguistic environments, could have been used to test the authors’ thesis by putting the current research tools of theory-oriented diachronic linguistics and language acquisition to use in a creative interconnected manner.

In sum, the book opens avenues for future innovative research which may bring the experimental know-how of language acquisition research into the study of syntactic change; this, in itself, is a remarkable contribution.

The book consists of seven chapters, including the introduction and conclusion, plus references and a thematic index. Chapter 1 offers a review of the literature starting with the neogrammarians, and lays out the main assumptions underlying the development and architecture of the book. The chapter focuses on the different theoretical approaches found in the literature to the relation between language variation and language change, on the one hand, and between language change and language acquisition, on the other.

1 The authors refer to a study by Almgren & Barreña (2005) on the development of the morphology of future tense, which does not seem to be the type of change that qualifies as morphosyntactic parametric change. In their words, “[s]tudies of ongoing grammatical changes in Euskera are still scarce, but the available research of this type, e.g. Almgren and Barreña (2005), supports the prediction that colloquial speech is influenced by these so-called ‘new’ speakers of Basque” (p. 163).
Chapter 2 reviews the central tenets of variationist sociolinguistics and generative syntax with the aim of demonstrating that, even though there are important differences between these models of linguistic analysis, the two frameworks can be thought of as compatible and actually complementary. The variationist model is then used to quantify and describe the data illustrating the syntactic strategies in Canadian French to express polar questions. It is shown that Verb–Subject (VS) questions (displaying pronominal inversion) consistently decrease in frequency over time (dropping steeply in the last century), while the frequency of Subject–Verb (SV) questions increases. This is attributed to a change in language use, with the “underlying grammar” remaining unchanged. The hypothesis that parametric change resulting in the loss of verb movement to C might be at play is accordingly rejected. A question comes to mind here: when a certain syntactic structure ceases to occur in a given language, can this be anything else but grammatical change (be it parametric or not, depending on the concept of “parameter”)? The change discussed in Chapter 2 features a steady drop in the rate of VS polar questions between the fifteenth and the twentieth centuries in Canadian French. More importantly, the decline in frequency is precipitous throughout the twentieth century, which indicates that the VS syntactic construction is on the way to becoming marginal in the language – an investigation of dialectal and idiolectal variation in spoken language might bring out significant results here. So, let us suppose that, as a consequence of the progressive change in usage that the authors describe, the occurrence of VS polar questions in the input for language acquisition drops beyond a certain critical threshold and the VS structures cease to be acquired. At that point, a change in grammar arises, even if until then it implied only a change in usage rates of alternative grammatical options. This is the type of syntactic change where L1 acquisition matters. Should a theory of language change leave it outside its concerns?

In Chapter 3, the authors resort to insights from research on L1 acquisition to argue against theories of language change relying on the hypothesis of intergenerational transmission failure, which they seek to demonstrate is not actually attested in L1 development. The authors specifically refute

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2 In Chapter 3, the authors dispute the importance of changes in the frequency of use of particular structures for language acquisition and change (pp. 61–67), but they appear to endorse a different view in Chapter 6: “As for the question of what counts as sufficient input, it is currently not possible to quantify the lower limit, but that some threshold exists is more than plausible” (p. 148).
the hypothesis that the structural ambiguity of the input data, the changes in the frequency of use of particular constructions and the exposure to conflicting evidence in contact situations might constitute a sufficient explanation for parametric morphosyntactic change, “for only what is possible in contemporary acquisition processes can reasonably be invoked as an explanation of processes which happened in the past” (p. 70).

Chapter 4 first points to the theoretical weaknesses of the concept of “parametric ambiguity” (Clark & Roberts 1993, Roberts 2007), and then discusses the loss of V2 in Old French, which has been taken by different authors to illustrate the effects of parametric ambiguity on language acquisition and change. A theoretically driven detailed analysis of the Old French data supports the authors’ conclusion that Old French was in fact not a V2 language and that, in consequence, there was no parametric change from a V2 to a non-V2 grammar. The different constituent orders found in Old French texts are shown to be compatible with an SVO grammar without (general) verb movement to C. The account provided for word-order variation in the diachrony of French is consistent with the view that only unambiguous triggers/cues guide language acquisition (Fodor 1998, Dresher 1999, Lightfoot 1999, 2006).

Chapter 5 offers a thorough review of the literature on contact-induced change and concludes that language contact by itself is not a trigger for morphosyntactic change. Contrary to lexical borrowing, borrowing of morphosyntactic structures is much less common and, on closer inspection, controversial indeed. The authors claim that “rather than transferring structural properties from one language to another, speakers perceive relations of structural equivalence in the contact languages and modify the semantic-pragmatic functions of the respective constructions to a limited degree” (p. 133). What changes is the way in which the constructions are used, while the grammars generating them are preserved unchanged. The authors then consider two phenomena of structural change in medieval French, namely the loss of null subjects and the loss of the so-called V2 property, which have been explained in the literature by resorting to (direct or indirect) Germanic influence. After discussing the arguments that have been advanced in the literature to support the hypothesis of contact-induced change in medieval French, and reevaluating the relevant available empirical data for Old/Middle French and Middle High German comparatively, the authors conclude that there is insufficient evidence for this hypothesis. They suggest, on the other hand, that word-order changes
in Old/Middle English (the V2 property and the change from OV to VO) might be due to contact with Old Norse because in this case the innovators would be L2 speakers (Weerman 1993, Kroch & Taylor 1997).

In Chapter 6, the authors pay attention to acquisition in multilingual settings in an attempt to gather further support for their claim that L1 development is not affected by intergenerational transmission failure as regards core grammatical properties, no matter whether monolingual or bilingual acquisition is at stake. In contrast, L2 acquisition is likely to result in partial acquisition failure under drastically reduced exposure to the target language during the critical period for language acquisition. The authors then briefly consider the historical and social conditions under which L2 learners may have enough weight in a linguistic community to be the source of parametric changes that become historically visible.

Chapter 7 is a clearly written, informative overview of the book, which highlights its principal theoretical points, lines of reasoning and conclusions.

To sum up, in this book Jürgen Meisel, Martin Elsig and Esther Rinke make a case for the view that historical linguists, especially those in the field of diachronic generative syntax, should turn their attention from L1 acquisition to L2 acquisition, which is where, as they contend, the motivation for central morphosyntactic changes in particular grammars truly lies. Moreover, and just as importantly, historical linguists are challenged to be more attentive to the current trends and research results in the field of language acquisition so as to extract from them the right consequences for theories of language change. For both the sympathetic and the skeptical reader, the book offers stimulating judicious argumentation and enough novel explanations to become an inescapable reference for all those enthralled by the intriguing ways in which languages vary and change over time.

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3 Only on p. 158 do the authors somehow admit exceptions to their claim, but they do not develop this: “transmission of knowledge about grammatical core properties rarely fails across generations, even under less than optimal conditions” (my italics).
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Brian Nolan. 2012. The structure of Modern Irish: A functional account. Sheffield: Equinox. Pp. 304. ISBN 978-1-84553-421-9.

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This text is a functional account of Modern Irish. Modern Irish is the indigenous language of the Irish spoken on the island of Ireland. It is a VSO language, belonging to the Celtic subgroup of the Indo-European languages. Irish is examined here within the framework of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), a model noteworthy for its emphasis on the communicative and semantic functions of language as well as on its syntactic structure.

The book is intended to be of use for a wide and diverse scholarly audience, and it certainly meets this expectation. Linguistically minded scholars of Irish will gain much insight in reading this volume, and undoubtedly will benefit from the examinations of some hitherto unobserved features of the language. Researchers within RRG will profit from seeing the model applied to Irish, a language not previously captured in a functional model. The many suggested expansions of the theory are favourable and worthy of attention from within the RRG community. The book will certainly be of interest to readers outside the intended audience. In fact, one of the strongest attributes of the book is the lead-in accompanying each chapter that introduces the forthcoming topic, which will be of use to anyone seeking the syntactic analysis of a particular construction. Besides, the volume is well-grounded with numerous references to established texts on the chosen topic. This means that each analysis of an Irish construction is founded on a firm and informed theoretical basis.

As already pointed out, the analysis of the Irish constructions is undertaken within the framework of RRG developed by Robert Van Valin Jr (2005). RRG is a functional grammatical model (see Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 13 for an explanation of how RRG differs from other grammatical models) whose principal distinctive feature is that “grammatical structure can only be understood with reference to its semantic and communicative functions” (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 13). RRG was designed with the objective that it would accurately capture a language without imposing features that do not occur. Irish is within the Celtic fringe of Indo-European languages and is understudied syntactically. It has many characteristics that have not been adequately described and that ought to be of great interest to linguists and Irish scholars. Therefore, RRG is an appropriate and well-considered theoretical framework within which to conduct an analysis of
Irish. The RRG theoretical framework is itself buttressed by the application of the model to Irish examples. The book deserves to serve as a benchmark for functional accounts of a language.

Nolan’s use of independent authentic Irish data is an asset to the book. The book is an undoubted boost to Irish, a struggling minority language. Taking a broader view, it is also a welcome contribution to the advancement of the often understudied Celtic languages. Hopefully, it will encourage further analysis of Irish and its fellow Celtic languages, such as Scots Gaelic, Manx and Welsh. Some of the more anomalous features of Irish would benefit from a comparative examination with other Celtic languages.

Chapter 1 includes a thorough and concise explanation of RRG that lays the groundwork for the coming chapters. This chapter is especially user-friendly and, indeed, could serve as a good introductory grounding for recent students of the framework. Also included is an overview of previous studies of Irish, many of which have been couched in the generative tradition. We learn that there are few contemporary studies of Irish, so it is apparent that a book such as this is quite timely.

Chapter 2 focuses on causation in Irish. Lexical, analytical and the less common morphological causation in Irish are discussed at length. With examples from Irish, it is shown that there is very good reason not to treat all types of causation in a uniform manner, not least because differences can account for possible verbal alternations. RRG is successfully applied in an examination of causative alternation in Irish lexical causatives. The verbal classes and the logical structure representation of the framework are proved satisfactory. This chapter also deals with one of the most intriguing features of Modern Irish, namely that there is no dative alternation in Modern Irish. Causative ditransitive constructions do not present a double object frame, the sole option being the prepositional object frame. A nominal theme occurs flanked by the actor and the recipient; however, if the theme is pronominal, it will be realized clause-finally. More precisely, a pronominal theme will always be clause-final, even occurring after a pronominal recipient or an oblique. Previous literature on the ordering of the recipient and theme is considered (see Hawkins 1990, Dik 1997a, 1997b, Tallerman 1998). Nolan then proposes a rationale for the recipient-theme pronominal ordering of Irish. In his approach, referential hierarchies, such as person and nominal hierarchies, are presented as the primary motivation for the unusual pronominal ordering.
Reflexives in Modern Irish are examined in Chapter 3. Nolan provides an approachable and concise explanation of the three conditions that govern reflexivity according to RRG. A full account of the reflexive–emphatic continuum in Irish is given here. Happily, both transitive and ditransitive constructions are discussed. RRG has not dealt with possessive reflexives in great detail, yet a strong account of Irish possessive reflexives is provided within the framework.

Chapter 4 deals with personal passive constructions in Irish. The chapter recapitulates that Irish has two verbs for “to be”: a copular form and an auxiliary form. The copular verb “to be” takes the form is and the “to be” auxiliary verb is tá. The impersonal passive occurs only with the auxiliary verb, and an agent may be optionally included and marked with a preposition. There are three strands to the personal passive and what distinguishes them is their aspectual sense. The three personal passives, each with a distinct syntactic realization, are the perfective, the prospective and the progressive passive. Depending on the passive type being used, the matrix verb may occur as a verbal noun or as an adjective. The preposition indicating the agent will also depend on the passive type and its aspect. This shows off the productive Irish prepositional inventory. The passive also showcases the particularly Irish conflation between a preposition and a pronominal agent. RRG is put to good use explaining the linking that takes place in the different passive forms. This includes a particularly interesting discussion on the mediopassive construction, which involves the auxiliary and the possession of a verbal noun, and has commonality with both the middle and passive voices. As a final point, Nolan poses an open question as to whether the mediopassive is unique to Irish. A study providing a response would be an intriguing read.

The impersonal passive is the area under discussion in Chapter 5. Two forms of the impersonal passive are dealt with, namely the lexical verb impersonal passive and the auxiliary verb impersonal passive. Nolan makes use of Attribute Value Matrices (AVMs) to provide a more fine-grained representation of the workings of the Irish impersonal passive. Specifically, Nolan puts forward that the AVMs hold information about the binary features of nominals within the impersonal passive. This, along with other characteristics, is stored in the AVMs of arguments within the lexicon. A logical structure of a construction will also carry information about compatibility with the AVM features. The linking process then determines if an argument and a logical structure are reconcilable. Nolan cogently
explains that the agent of an impersonal passive is semantically existent but not quite in the syntactic foreground. For this to occur, the agent of an impersonal must be specific and indefinite. Irish impersonal passives manifest the agent unobtrusively either lexically as a verbal suffix or on the auxiliary. The AVMs constitute a welcome contribution to RRG logical structure representation. In this book, the AVMs are used pertaining to the impersonal passive; yet, they could be applied to any construction, in any language, where more explicit representation would be required.

The get-passive is explored in Chapter 6. The Irish verb faigh ‘get’ is availed of to form the get-passive. Faigh is also employed in an archetypal get-recipient construction. Of interest here is that there is no overt morphosyntactic marker for either of the differing senses of each verb. This chapter examines how either sense is deduced by the speaker. The cross-linguistic link between possession and location is found to be highly significant, along with the characteristics of the non-subject argument. This chapter provides a very good example of how the linking system in RRG may be used to good effect to unravel seemingly arbitrary polysemy.

Chapter 7 discusses the expression of modality in Irish. It begins with a general discussion on various approaches to modality. Deontic, epistemic and dynamic modality are explained. The distinct modal operators belonging to each type of modality are also listed. By way of illustration, dynamic modality subsumes the operators volition, ability and desire. The modal operators together with the logical notation mean that modality can be made explicit in the logical structure of a construction.

Complex predicates and Irish light verb constructions are examined in Chapter 8. Nolan makes a strong case for contradistinguishing light verb constructions (LVCs) and auxiliary verb constructions (AVCs) in Modern Irish. The nexus and juncture theories provided by RRG are deployed to good effect in the analysis. LVCs are shown to depict the inner temporal structure of an event. The RRG logical structure is used to capture the complexity of the sub-events and the argument sharing between the matrix verb and the light verb. At the same time, the constituent representation effectively demonstrates the scopal range of operators over the light and the matrix verbs. In opposition to LVCs, the auxiliary verbs in AVCs are found to be conveyors of grammatical information, not related to temporal structure.

Chapter 9 investigates information structure in Modern Irish. The discussion is well-anchored in a clear explanation of information-structure
theory and terminology. RRG incorporates a comprehensive focus structure projection. It allows a potential focus domain and an actual focus domain to be demarcated within a speech act. Completive and contrastive focus, too, can be distinguished. The theory is then well applied to Irish. Prosodic focus is dealt with, followed by a comprehensive discussion of the copula. It was most interesting to read that Irish uses distinct constructions to perform the four functions of a copula. This chapter demonstrates that RRG can be successfully applied, concurrently combining syntactic, semantic and pragmatic means, to adequately capture what is taking place within a language.

Chapter 10 opens with the order of constituents in an Irish noun phrase. Since adjectives are commonly found within noun phrases, the noun phrase is cleverly explored via the adjective. Referencing Dixon & Aikhenvald’s (2004) seminal work on adjectives, Nolan lists the semantic properties of adjectives. They include core properties, which are described by archetypal attributes. Less typical but nonetheless common properties described by adjectives are listed amongst peripheral properties and additional properties. The semantic approach taken by Dixon & Aikhenvald is compared with that of Pustejovsky’s (1995) Qualia Theory. Both RRG and Rijkhoff (2004) claim that the general order of constituents in a noun phrase is predictable. RRG actually treats adjectives as peripheral modifiers of the nuclear noun within the noun phrase. The prediction that the nuclear adjectival modifier will appear closer to the noun than a core or a noun-phrase operator is consistent with Rijkhoff.

Nolan notes that adjectives may be used attributively or predicatively. Using examples from Irish, the RRG logical structures are shown to distinguish in effect between the underlying meanings of attributive and predicative uses of adjectives. Yet again, the differing syntactic realization of the copula verb and the auxiliary verb comes to the fore. The copula indicates a predicative use, whilst an auxiliary marks an attributive use.

Chapter 11 is concerned with the layered structure of the Irish word. The description is couched within RRG morphology and its application to Irish. Nolan puts forward the layered structure of the word as a welcome addition to the RRG machinery. The reader is referred to the text for references on further works on a RRG account of morphology, which is dealt with at the level of meaning and syntax. In a practical sense, this entails that inflections and lexemes have a qualia-type structure to represent their meaning. At the same time, the form of both inflections may be shown in constituent and
operator projections. The projections treat the word in a somewhat analogous manner to both the clause and the noun in RRG. Both derivational and inflectional morphological processes are addressed here.

This chapter includes a brief but elucidatory explanation of gender in Irish, discussing eclipsis and lenition in Irish. Nolan notes that Ó’Siadhail (1991: 264) defines eclipsis as “the grammatically conditioned initial mutations of consonants in Irish”. This is a topic that can prove difficult for young learners of Irish. It is linked with agreement between adjectives and nouns, and would make for an interesting read for all former and current students of Irish.

Chapter 12 concludes the book. The purpose of the study is again stated: to provide a functional account of the syntactic structures of Irish in RRG in a balance between description and technical characterization. Without belabouring the initial comments made in this review, the book undoubtedly meets those terms.

In conclusion, the book ought to be well received. Throughout the volume, the differing uses of the copula and the auxiliary verbs frequently materialize in many areas of Irish grammar. An additional exploration of the copula and the auxiliary would be a compelling addition to any further extension of this book. On that note, negation is not extensively covered in this text. An analysis of negation would also be a pleasing addition to any further studies. An account of the case system and grammatical relations of Irish would be most welcome as well. Undertaken within an RRG framework, it would likely be compelling reading to see where Irish falls as regards the constituency of the subject, the privileged syntactic argument in RRG. Irish has an extensive and productive prepositional inventory, so it is hoped that such an account would include an analysis of Irish case-marking.

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Morphological productivity is often associated with type and token frequency, and the focus in the field has been predominantly on word-formation rules. Although several morphologists have highlighted the limits and shortcomings of this way of conceiving of productivity (see, for example, Bauer 2001, 2005), corpus-based studies on morphological productivity have abounded in the past few years. In particular, quantitative investigations now dominate the field of diachronic changes or historical developments of morphological patterns.

In *Dynamics of morphological productivity* – a thoroughly revised version of his doctoral dissertation defended at the University of Vienna in 2009 – Francesco Gardani presents an innovative and cogent analysis of the morphological productivity of inflectional classes. Drawing on previous work on productivity within the framework of Natural Morphology (see e.g. Wurzel 1984 and Dressler 2003), Gardani further develops a set of criteria to measure productivity of inflectional classes with respect to three phenomena and their respective integration into an existing inflectional system: (i) loanwords, (ii) conversion and (iii) class shift. Although these criteria are sufficiently general to be applicable to nominal and verbal inflection systems, this study focuses on nominal inflection (except adjectives and proper names). Its empirical basis is a large and meticulously built corpus of data which are taken both from the existing literature and from corpora of Latin and Old Italian. Gardani’s diachronic analysis of productivity in the inflectional system covers a time span of over 2000 years, and results from comparing synchronic corpus sections across this period. Given the length of the book, I will first summarize each of the eight chapters individually, with the intent of providing useful signposts for the reader. I will then make general comments on the volume as a whole.

In Chapter 1 (“The evolution of morphology”) Gardani sets out the goals and aims of his monograph, providing the motivations for the chronological and geographical choices underlying his investigation. Chapter 2 (“Productivity”) introduces the framework of Natural Morphology and defines how the notion of productivity is conceived of by its scholars and, in particular, by Dressler (1997, 2003). Within this morphological model,
productivity is viewed as a core property of grammatical rules located in the system of the grammar, and must be distinguished from other notions such as regularity, default status, surface analogy and frequency, which are derived properties that belong to the levels of norms or performance. Productivity is a property of the morphological rules that constitute the core of a dynamic morphology, as opposed to static morphology. Inflection is one of the morphological domains that may or may not be identified as dynamic according to its productivity patterns, although, even for productive inflectional morphological rules, a margin of overlap or competition with unproductive patterns, as well as some graduality must be acknowledged.

In Chapter 3 (“Measuring productivity”) the author undertakes a survey of the main proposals on how to measure productivity from different theoretical frameworks. The principles and the criteria within Natural Morphology are elaborated and refined in order to create an accurate and original productivity scale, essential in measuring the degrees of productivity of the integration of loanwords, deverbal conversions and inflectional class shifts, that is, to assess “the force of attraction that inflectional patterns exert on new lexemes (both foreign and native in origin) and on extant paradigms of native lexemes” (p. 39). Principles with binary values pertaining to the relationship between input and outcome (e.g. similarity, foreignness, newness, bilingualism, typological distance or influence of a derivational affix in the recipient language) are attributed numerical values, resulting in a hierarchical ranking of the criteria for the inflectional productivity scale. This scale covers high productivity (A), mid–high productivity (B), mid–low productivity (C) and low productivity (D₁, D₂), and looks as follows:

(A) inflection class assignment to loanwords with incompatible properties
(B) inflection class assignment to conversions
(C) inflection class shift
(D₁) inflection class assignment to loanwords with incompatible properties under the influence of a productive derivational affix of the recipient language
(D₂) inflection class assignment to loanwords with compatible properties

In this chapter, Gardani also tackles the problem of the role of the morphological features of gender in morphological integration, and concludes
that they participate in morphological generalizations only when they are signalled univocally by the inflectional formatives of a class. The author returns to the role of gender in Chapter 8.

Chapter 4 (“Predicting productivity changes”) is devoted to formulating a series of theoretically motivated predictions, whose validity will be checked against the data. These predictions focus on the relationship between productivity and naturalness, which is defined in reference to the theories of universal tendencies and to the parameters of semiotic transparency developed by the most prominent exponents of Natural Morphology. Here, the author pays special attention to the formatives of the nominal inflectional system of the languages under examination. Further predictions are formulated on the dynamics of the emergence, increase, decrease and loss of productivity (based on the assumption that productivity is a gradual phenomenon), and on the nature and scope of productivity as a force driving morphological change.

In the following two chapters, Gardani applies the productivity criteria elaborated in Chapter 3 to Latin and Old Italian, respectively. As can be seen from the number of pages (more than half of the total number), Chapters 5 and 6 constitute the empirical core of this monograph and are witness to the enormous work behind it. The two chapters have a parallel structure: after illustrating the taxonomy of the nominal inflectional system through the different stages of the language, the author proceeds with the application of the relevant productivity criteria, first, to loanwords (criteria A, D₁, D₂) depending on the contact language, and then to the other two morphological processes, namely, conversion (criterion B) and class shift (criterion C). The Latin corpus in Chapter 5 is based on the lexicological literature on loans, as well as on philological dictionaries and text corpora. Latin nominal inflection is described for four stages of the language – Early Latin, Classical Latin, post-Classical Latin and Late Latin – as well as for the informal register of spoken Latin commonly known as Vulgar Latin. Loanwords from three different source languages that have come into contact with Latin throughout its history are taken into consideration, namely Etruscan, Greek and Germanic. For each source language, loanwords are filtered on the basis of specific philological and etymological considerations. As a result, it is seen that only a few lexical items entered the Etruscan corpus, while a great number of loanwords from Ancient Greek and, to a lesser extent, from Germanic languages are attested. An example of full integration within an inflectional class with incompatible
properties (criterion A for high productivity) is the Greek noun *crocotós*, which is “attracted” to the Latin class *rosa rosae*, yielding *crocota* *crocotae* ‘a saffron-coloured dress’, despite the degree of incompatibility between the source and the recipient paradigms. If assignment to the same class with incompatible properties takes place under the influence of a productive derivational affix, criterion D₁ (low productivity) is at work, as is the case with suffixes of Greek origin like *-eta* or *-ista*, which became productive in Latin only from the post-Classical period onwards (e.g. *acheta* ‘chirper’). On the other hand, criterion D₂ is assigned to loanwords with a high degree of compatibility between the source and the loan noun, such as *latro latronis*, from *lātron*, which is assigned to the class *carbo carbonis*. Criterion B (mid–high productivity) is applied to nouns derived from deverbal conversion; they are classified according to the declension class to which they are assigned, the conjugation class of the verb prior to conversion and the chronological order of attestation (e.g. *pugna* ‘battle’ from *pugnare*, *ulula* ‘creech owl’ from *ululare* in pre-Classical Latin). Similarly, the corpus for class shift was established by compliance with the requirements of lexical, philological, chronological and morphological adequacy. A mid–low degree of productivity (criterion C) is shown by lexemes that have shifted from one class to another (e.g. *diadema* ‘diadem’ from the class *schema*-atis to the class *rosa rosae*).

In Chapter 6 (“Productivity of noun inflection in Old Italian”), the same productivity criteria and methodology are applied to loanwords, conversion and class shift in Old Italian. The languages taken into account as sources of loanwords are Germanic, Byzantine Greek, Arabic and Gallo-Romance. A high degree of productivity (A) is shown by inflectional class assignment to loanwords with incompatible properties (e.g. the Longobardism *anca* ‘hip’ from *hanca* and the Gallicism *bisogno* ‘need’ from *besoign/besoing*, which are integrated into the classes *casa case* and *libro libri*, respectively); then again, inflection class assignment to loanwords with incompatible properties under the influence of a productive derivational affix (e.g. Arabic loanwords such as *assassino* ‘assassin’, *facchino* ‘porter’ and *magazzino* ‘warehouse’ under the influence of the suffix *-ino/-inus*) and inflection class assignment to loanwords with compatible properties (e.g. the Byzantinism *prezzemolo* ‘parsley’ from *petrosélínon*) show the low productivity degrees associated with the criteria D₁ and D₂. In Old Italian, a nominal class that exhibits a mid–high productivity degree (B) is, for instance, *dito dita* (e.g. *strido strida* ‘shriek(s)’), a conversion from
stridere), whereas a class displaying a mid–low degree of productivity (C) is, for example, nome nomora ‘name(s)’, which emerged in Old Italian through the shift of nome nomi from the class cane canis to a new class.

The results of the application of the productivity criteria to the Latin and Old Italian data are presented and summarized in Chapter 7. From Archaic Latin to Late Latin, four classes show high productivity: rosa rosae, hortus horti and donum doni, and, from pre-Classical to Late Latin, liber libri. Other classes show high productivity only with respect to a specific stage of the history of the Latin language. In Old Italian, the only two classes that exhibit high productivity throughout the period of time covered in the book are casa case and libro libri, which directly continue the Latin classes rosa rosae and hortus horti. In addition, several declension mergers have led to a considerable reduction of the number of classes from Latin to Italian. In Chapter 8, the predictions formulated in Chapter 4 are verified against the data and the results discussed in the previous empirical chapters. It must be underlined here that all the predictions concerning the relationship between naturalness and the dynamics of productivity are borne out by the data. An overview of the analysis and results, accompanied by a discussion of the relationship between the morphological changes affecting inflection classes and gender, on the one hand, and morphological richness, on the other, conclude the volume.

From a structural viewpoint, the monograph presents a clear division between chapters with theoretical import and chapters dealing with data and empirical issues. Although the latter are specifically organized according to the criteria and parameters elaborated in the preceding theoretical chapters, the empirical sections of the book are not immediately accessible if not read in a strict sequence and are, to a great extent, dependent on the definitions given in the first part. Chapters 5 and 6, in particular, deal with an impressive range of data, and the reader may at times find it difficult to disentangle the thread of the arguments among the many tables, convergent parameters and criteria, which are repeated for each of the three morphological processes investigated and, in the case of loanwords, for each of the contact languages. In this light, some anticipatory comments on the concluding generalizations (possibly, in statistical terms) and/or on the results would have been desirable. Chapters 7 and 8 prove very helpful in this respect because they provide both concise summaries of the results and an outline of the diachronic development of the inflectional productivity. The detailed indices at the end of the volume are also very useful for the
reader. The empirical dimension therefore emerges in all its importance, yielding a novel taxonomy of Old Italian with data hitherto unknown.

From a theoretical perspective, Gardani’s analysis relies on a fundamental notion in Natural Morphology, namely, predictiveness, with respect to which he adopts a deductive method. In the context of the phenomena he investigates, predictions are formulated as *a priori* statements on the relationship between naturalness and productivity, both in terms of universal and system-adequate tendencies. Consequently, the author first needs to establish the degrees of naturalness of the morphological processes under consideration independently of the relevant data. The predictions can then be formulated and, finally, verified on the basis of a close examination of the data. The desirability of such an approach involving inferences from general principles depends on one’s theoretical preferences, but the accurate methodology adopted is unquestionably one of the merits of the volume.

On the whole, *Dynamics of morphological productivity* is a groundbreaking volume of exceptional empirical and methodological rigour, constituting the very first systematic and detailed analysis of the productivity of nominal inflection. The author not only proposes a line of inquiry that is decisively worth pursuing, but also opens up avenues for future research on productivity in other inflectional systems and morphological domains. Moreover, this book is a great source of useful data and valuable analytic tools, and will certainly appeal to all those scholars interested in the fields of morphological change, morphological typology, borrowing and language contact, and Latin and Italian nominal inflection, as well as to those who appreciate a cogent and judicious application of the functionalist framework of Natural Morphology to a vast corpus of data.

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