Review article

A typology of copular sentences*

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R. Declerck: *Studies on Copular Sentences, Clefts and Pseudo-clefts*. Leuven: Leuven University Press/Foris, 1988. vii + 263 pp.

Declerck's book consists basically of two parts. The first part presents a typology of copular sentences and lays the foundations for the second part, which deals with a variety of points, including the use of *It is ...* versus *He/she is ...* in sentences like *It is the postman* and *He is my neighbor*, (syntactic) restrictions on the use of '*it* clefts', a typology of different types of '*it* clefts' and 'WH clefts', and the (pragmatic) differences between these different types. As Declerck himself emphasises, the book is not written within a particular theoretical framework; its aim is rather to present a large quantity of data concerning the linguistic phenomena in question, and thus to contribute to any theory aiming at descriptive and explanatory adequacy.[1]

The book does not really form a unified whole. The first chapter, taking up the first half of the book, is in a way the most important in that it provides the necessary background for each of the following chapters (in particular for chapters 2 and 3). It is, however, in no way itself dependent on what is to follow and can be seen, and used, as an independent and complete study of copular sentences of the form NP_1-*be*-NP_2. The remaining five chapters, though drawing on the first chapter, are independent of, and sometimes hardly related to, one another. It is partly for this reason that, after having given a short overview of the contents, I will concentrate on certain parts of the book only (in particular the first two chapters).

The book is divided into six chapters. The first deals with the different types of copular sentences that exist in English (to be discussed below): specificational sentences, predicational sentences, descriptionally identifying sentences, identity statements, and definitions. This classification forms the basis of the explanation given by Declerck in chapter 2 of the difference between the use of *it* versus *he/she/they* in sentences like *It is*

John and *She is my friend.* His conclusion there is that whereas *he/she/ they* sentences are predicational, descriptively identifying or identity sentences, *it* sentences are specificational. That *it* is used in specificational sentences, even where the predicate NP has a human referent, can be explained from the fact that these sentences are reduced *it* clefts. This is in keeping with the claim, made by a large number of linguists (for example, Halliday 1967; Clark and Haviland 1977; Gundel 1977; Akmajian 1979; Dik 1980), that *it* clefts are always specificational. In chapter 3, however, Declerck shows that not all *it* clefts are specificational, but that they may also be predicational. There are, however, only very few cases in which the entire clefted NP is predicational. In most cases Declerck discerns a mixed type, that is, a combination of a predicational meaning and a specificational structure. This accounts for the fact that these sentences have some characteristics in common with predicational sentences (chapter 3, section 3), and some with specificational sentences (chapter 3, section 4).

The last three chapters deal with certain aspects of *it* clefts and WH clefts. In the first of these (chapter 4), which investigates the restrictions on *it* clefts whose clefted constituent functions as a predicate nominal, the specificational/predicational distinction again plays an important role. The last two chapters, on the use of *it* clefts and WH clefts in discourse and on specificational interpretation and word order, are less dependent on the distinctions made in chapter 1 in that they deal with specificational clefts only.

In what follows I will first give a somewhat more detailed summary of the first two chapters of the book. Having done this, I will make some critical comments concerning some of the points made in these two chapters.

In chapter 1 Declerck distinguishes the following types of copular sentences of the form NP_1-*be*-NP_2: specificational sentences, predicational sentences, descriptionally identifying sentences, and identity statements.[2] This distinction is largely based on that made by Higgins (1976) but is more detailed and complete.

The first sentence type is defined as follows: a sentence of the form 'NP_1-*be*-NP_2' is specificational if the term that is the subject of *be* in underlying structure represents a variable for which the predicate nominal specifies a value. Such sentences are identifying in that the specification of a value makes it possible to identify the variable, that is, to pick out the person represented by the variable from a set (p. 5). The following are examples of specificational sentences:

(1)   The bank robber is Bill Sikes.

(2)   The only people that can help you are the Prime Minister and the
      Queen herself.

Declerck provides a long list of characteristics of specificational sentences.
The most important of these are the following:

a. They can be paraphrased as 'NP$_1$ is the following: NP$_2$'.

b. They have an 'exhaustiveness reading': they imply that the list of
values satisfying the variable is exhaustive.

c. They will typically be used in answer to either explicit or implicit
WH questions of the underlying form '*Who/which one is (NP)?*

d. They are always paraphrasable by means of an *it* cleft.

e. They consist of a presupposed constituent (variable) and a focal
constituent (value). The focal information always receives contrasti-
ve accent: the fact that a particular value is assigned to the variable automati-
cally creates a contrast with all the other potential values that have not
been selected.

f. They provide identifying information: their purpose is to make it
possible for the hearer to pick out the person(s) represented by the
variable from a set. Thus the variable term is 'referring' only in a weak
sense: although the term has a specific referent, the description given in
that term does not by itself enable the speaker to identify this referent
(that is, to pick her/him out from a set). It is only by linking up the
description with a strongly referring (value) term that identification of
the referent becomes possible.[3]

g. The variable and the value terms are reversible.

The second group of copular sentences is that of the predicational
sentences. These sentences derive their name from the fact that 'instead
of specifying a value for a variable (i.e. identifying a referent) they merely
predicate something of the referent of the subject term' (p. 55). In most
cases this 'something' is a characteristic, a role, or an indication of class
membership. Declerck gives the following examples of predicational sen-
tences (p. 55):

(3)   John is a teacher. (= John teaches)
(4)   John is the cleverest student of them all.

Predicational sentences have the following characteristics:

a. They are not felt to answer a question asking for identifying informa-
tion; they answer no question at all.

b. They cannot take the form of an *it* cleft.

c. The predicate term of a predicational sentence denotes a property;
as such it has no referent in the universe of discourse and is not even
'weakly referring'. The subject term, on the other hand, must be at least

weakly referring, that is, 'it must be capable of referring to an entity independently of what is predicated of that entity in the rest of the sentence' (p. 60).

    d. They are not reversible.

The third copular-sentency type distinguished by Declerck is that of the descriptionally identifying sentence. Again these sentences are not meant to specify a value for a variable. Rather, this specification has already happened, so that the subject term is now fully referential, that is to say, sufficient to pick out a person from a group. In this sense, identification has already taken place. It may, however, not suffice for the hearer to be able to pick out a person from a group; in addition s/he may want to be able to associate the description given in the term with a particular person, that is, to recognize the description in question as typical of a particular person s/he knows. Descriptionally identifying sentences provide this additional information and thus lead to full identification of the referent:

(5)   A: Who won the first prize?
       B: That man over there. (specificational)
       A: Who is he?
       B: He is the son of Judge Harris. (descriptionally identifying)

The following are characteristics of descriptionally identifying sentences:

    a. They are not paraphrasable as 'The following person is $(NP)_1$: $(NP)_2$'.

    b. They cannot be replaced by *it* clefts.

    c. They are not contrastive, nor exhaustive.

    d. They are not reversible.

    e. They answer questions of the underlying form '(term) is who?'

    f. The subject of a descriptionally identifying sentence is strongly referring (the hearer can pick out the referent[s] from a set); it can take the form of a deictic expression (an indicater [sic]), a proper name, or a description (p. 103).

The fourth (minor) type of copular sentence is the identity statement. The following sentences illustrate this type:

(6)   Dr. Jekyll is Mr. Hyde.
(7)   The morning star is the evening star.

Identity statements can be paraphrased as 'NP_1 is the same person/object as NP_2'. Their only other distinctive feature is that the nuclear accent is on the copula.

    Chapter 2 is an attempt to find the mechanism underlying the selection of *it* versus *he/she/it* as the subject in sentences like the following:

(8)   There's a policeman at the door. Who is it/he?
(9)   I know the man in the photograph. It/*he is John!
(10)   Who is Mr Aronov? He/*It is a Russian.

After proving the solutions offered thus far to be unsatisfactory (section 2.1), Declerck proposes his own solution (section 2.2), which starts from the assumption that at least part of the solution is to be found in the quadripartition of copular sentences proposed in chapter 1 (see Declerck 1983). This assumption is based on two observations: in the first place that the use of *it* in statements about persons can only be found as subject of *be*; and second that the *it* sentence invariably contains a NP or pronoun as predicate nominal (p. 124). The rest of the chapter is then devoted to testing the following hypotheses: (1) *it* sentences are specificational, whereas *he/she/they* sentences are either descriptionally identifying or predicational; (2) such *it* sentences are reduced *it* clefts. The following examples support these hypotheses:

(11)   Who (which one) is your friend? — It is the son of the Prime Minister.
(12)   Who is your friend? — He is the son of the Prime Minister.

The answer in example (11) is a specificational sentence: it specifies a value for a variable, thus enabling the hearer to pick out the person in question from a set. In (12), which is descriptionally identifying, this specification has already taken place. What the hearer asks for is additional information that will enable her/him to identify the person in question as someone s/he knows. Thus the question is to be interpreted as 'Tell me more about your friend'. Note also that in (11) but not in (12) the answer can be replaced by an *it* cleft.

As Declerck goes on to show, however, hypothesis 1 is an oversimplification. It is true that *he/she/they* must be used in predicational sentences, but *it* can, occasionally, be used in descriptionally identifying sentences (pp. 140ff):

(13)   (Who's that?) — It/*He is the son of the Prime Minister.
(14)   (Who can this be?) — It/*He is Colonel Brandon (Poutsma 1916: 734).

These sentences are clearly descriptionally identifying since the use of *that* and *this* in the questions implies that specification has already taken place.[4] Nevertheless the answers take *it* as their subject, a characteristic of specificational sentences. Declerck's solution to this problem is that we are here not dealing with a reduced *it* cleft, but that in this kind of sentence *it* must be seen as the stress-reduced anaphoric form of deictic

this and *that*. And since the subject of a descriptionally identifying sentence, but not of a specificational sentence, is always strongly referring, sentences (13) and (14) must be descriptionally identifying.

However, not only can *it* occur as the subject of descriptionally identifying sentences, but *he/she/they* can also occur in specificational sentences, as in

(15)   (Who's the murderer?) — HE/*It is the murderer.

which, according to Declerck is equivalent to

(16)   It is HIM (that is the murderer).

Thus *he/she/they* can be used as the subject in a specificational sentence, but only if the subject NP is the identifier (value NP) (and then only with demonstrative force).

The second hypothesis, Declerck observes, also needs some modification, since not all *it* sentences are reduced *it* clefts. Thus there are also *it* sentences where *it* refers anaphorically or deictically to an object of sensory perception or to the referent of a noun like *problem*, *thing*, *reason*, *cause*, *question*, etc., as in

(17)   (What's that noise?) — Oh, it's only the children (playing at Red Indians).
(18)   (What's the problem?) — It's that damned neighbor of yours (who refuses to accept my offer).

In an earlier article (Declerck 1981), Declerck pointed out that these sentences are not reduced *it* clefts. Neither, however, do the relative or participial clauses in these sentences (which Declerck calls 'pseudomodifiers') really modify their heads, that is, they differ from normal restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses both semantically and syntactically. Nevertheless the sentences are clearly specificational. Therefore, the second hypothesis needs to be modified in the sense that *it* sentences can be of two types: they are either reduced *it* clefts or reduced pseudomodifier constructions.

In what follows I will show that Declerck's typology of copular sentences is not fully consistent and contains as it stands a number of rather serious flaws. Naturally, it will be interesting to see in what ways these shortcomings may influence Declerck's explanation of the *it*-versus-*he/she/they* distribution.

My first point of criticism concerns the definition of descriptionally identifying sentences. We may recall that these sentences are supposed not to specify a value for a variable, but to provide information that will lead to full identification of the person or object referred to (p. 95). This

identifying information always comes in the form of a description which the hearer can recognize as typical of a particular entity he knows, and which distinguishes it from all other entities (pp. 96–97). The following are among the examples Declerck gives of descriptionally identifying sentences (labeling for specificational/descriptionally identifying is Declerck's; question marks indicate my own disagreement with his judgment):

(19)   A.   Who won the first prize?
     B.   That man over there. (specificational)
     A.   Who's that man?
     B.   Why, don't you recognize him? It's John! (specificational???)
     A.   John? Who is John?
     B.   Don't tell me you don't know who John is. He's the fellow who sat beside you at the annual dinner party of the club. (descr.ident.)
(20)   A.   Who won the first prize?
     B.   That man over there. (specificational)
     A.   Who is he?
     B.   He is the son of Judge Harris. (descr.ident.)
(21)   A.   Mike? Who's Mike?
     B.   Mike is my brother. (descr.ident.)
(22)   A.   Who's that fellow?
     B.   He's a friend of mine. (descr.ident.)
(23)   A.   Bill? Who's Bill?
     B.   He's that man over there. (descr.ident??)

To these we may add the following:

(24)   A.   Laurence Olivier? Who's he?
     B.   Don't you know who Laurence Olivier is? He's one of the best actors of all time! (descr.ident.)

As we can see from these examples, the descriptions used in descriptionally identifying sentences can take various forms: NPs with the definite article, demonstratives, possessives, genitives, partitives, and NPs with the indefinite article. However, only some of these answer the description given by Declerck. Actually, it is only in examples (19) and (20) that the descriptionally identifying answers lead to full identification: only here can the hearer be expected to be able to recognize the description as typical of a particular person; only here does the description distinguish this person from all other persons s/he knows. In examples (20) and (21) the descriptionally identifying answer may, but need not, lead to full identification: I may have more than one brother and Judge Harris may

have more than one son.[5] Moreover, the hearer may not even know I have a brother or that Judge Harris has a son — and still these sentences would be acceptable, even if the hearer could not be expected to recognize the description as typical of a particular person s/he knew, and even if the description did not distinguish this person from all others. The same is true, but this time less ambiguously, of examples (22) and (24). Here the indefinite descriptions can clearly apply to more than one person the hearer knows (in the case of the partitive expression, even necessarily so). Clearly then, descriptionally identifying sentences need not lead to full identification but may have the same function as predicational sentences: to assign a property to a referent.

Example (19) points to another inconsistency in Declerck's theory. According to Declerck (p. 97), B's second answer is specificational in (19), but descriptionally identifying in (20), the reason being that 'a sentence can only be descriptionally identifying if the identifying NP is a description, not if it is an indicater or a proper name', whereas all three can occur as identifier NP in specificational sentences (pp. 96–97). In the next chapter, however, Declerck (p. 140ff) explains that sentences like B's second answer in (19), as well as in examples (13) and (14), are clearly descriptionally identifying, since the use of *this* and *that* indicates that elementary identification has already taken place, and that the *it* should be interpreted as a stress-reduced anaphoric form of deictic *this* or *that*. All of these sentences, however, have a proper name as identifying NP.

Neither is Declerck consistent where the occurrence of deictic expressions ('indicaters [sic]') as identifying NP in descriptionally identifying sentences is concerned. Thus Declerck (p. 107) uses example (23) to show that 'although the description given in the predicate nominal of a descriptionally identifying sentence...can mostly be used as the predicate nominal of a predicational sentence, there are occasional instances where this is not the case'. It is on the basis of this observation that Declerck (p. 109) concludes that 'it would be incorrect to treat descriptionally identifying sentences as a subclass of the larger class of predicational sentences', since 'descriptionally identifying sentences with a deictic NP or proper name as predicate nominal are not predicational'. However, as we have seen, Declerck, in the very same chapter, maintains that, like predicational sentences, the identifying NP in descriptionally identifying sentences cannot be a deictic expression or a proper name (p. 97).

One may solve this problem by saying that rather than forming a subclass of the class of predicational sentences, descriptionally identifying sentences can, but need not, be predicational. Thus if the identifying NP of a descriptionally identifying NP is strongly referring (as, for instance, in the case of a proper name) the identifying NP is not predicational, but

truly identifying: the description provided leads to full identification. Where the identifying NP is nonreferring and merely provides a description, the sentence is predicational. Looking at the definition and characteristics of predicational sentences, there is, in fact, no reason to assume that they cannot be at the same time descriptionally identifying (indeed, as Declerck himself observes, the two sentence types have a great number of characteristics in common). This does not mean, however, that all predicational sentences are also descriptionally identifying, but only those that answer questions for additional information. One may object that, according to Declerck (p. 55), a predicational sentence is not felt to answer any question, not even a quesiton asking for characterizing information: all answers to WH questions are specificational, although the information given may be predicational. However, when comparing descriptionally identifying and predicational sentences on the one hand with specificational sentences on the other (pp. 106–107), Declerck observes that whereas descriptionally identifying sentences answer questions of the underlying form 'NP is who?', and predicational sentences of the form 'NP is what?', specificational sentences answer questions of the form 'Who/What is NP?' In other words, predicational sentences can after all be used to answer questions. The obvious solution is that predicational sentences that are used to answer questions are at the same time descriptionally identifying, or even, as we will see, specificational.

The view that predicational sentences can be used to answer questions is further supported by the fact that, in spite of the numerous differences between specificational and predicational sentences (see chapter 1, sections 3 and 4), there are many instances where a sentence is both specificational and predicational. Thus in chapter 1 (pp. 38–39, pp. 55–56) Declerck explains that although WH questions always ask for specificational information, there also seem to be WH questions (with *what*) that ask for predicational information, as, for instance,

(25)   What is he? — He's a teacher.
(26)   What is John like? — He's a nice fellow.

Declerck maintains that such sentences are basically specificational, since they specify a value for a variable. At the same time they behave in many ways as predicational sentences: they are not reversible and the predicate NP is nonreferring. Moreover, these sentences may, but need not, be contrastive and exhaustive. Thus, Declerck concludes, sentences like 'What is NP (like)?' ask for predicational information, but this information is given in the form of a specificational reply.
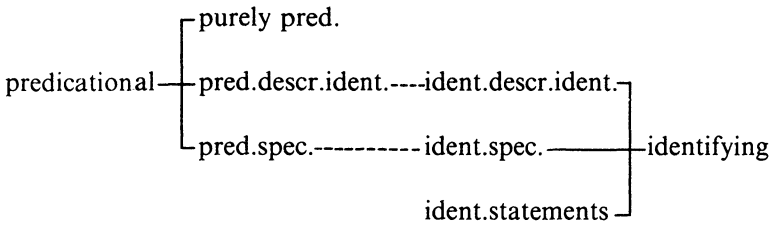
A similar combination of predicational and specificational sentences is treated in chapter 3, where Declerck defends the claim that *it* clefts (which

are by nature specificational) may convey predicational information. Thus sentences like the following (p. 158),

(27) Was it an interesting meeting you went to last night?
(28) Assuredly it was a daring thing which she meant to do (Poutsma 1916: 990).
(29) What a glorious bonfire it was you made! (Quirk et al. 1972: 954).

combine a predicational meaning with a specificational structure. As a result, these *it* clefts have characteristics in common with both predicational sentences (see section 3) and specificational sentences (see section 4), but also differ from both of these in several ways. Clearly, then, such sentences cannot be interpreted as either predicational or specificational, but only as sentences that are predicational and specificational at the same time.

It thus turns out that both descriptionally identifying and specificational sentences can be at the same time predicational. This is not to say that all predicational sentences are either descriptionally identifying or specificational: only those that answer WH questions are; all the others are what one may call 'purely' predicational. Similarly, there are also instances of descriptionally identifying and specificational sentences that are not predicational (p. 107). In that case the identifying NP is strongly referring — as in identity statements — and the sentence is identifying. Moreover, it will be clear that whereas both descriptionally identifying sentences and specificational sentences can be predicational or identifying, they are mutually exclusive. This is due to the fact that they provide a different kind of (predicational or identifying) information and start from different presuppositions: specificational sentences enable a hearer to pick the referent of an expression from a set; descriptionally identifying sentences answer questions of the form 'Tell me more about NP'. Likewise, predicational sentences and identity statements are mutually exclusive: in the former the predicate NP is always nonreferring; in the latter both subject and predicate NP are always strongly referring. In other words, the four sentence types distinguished by Declerck belong to two different levels. At the first level we can distinguish between sentences that are predicational and sentences that are identifying. At the second level the class of predicational sentences can be further divided into purely predicational sentences, predicational descriptionally identifying sentences, and predicational specificational sentences; the class of identifying sentences can be further divided into identity statements, identifying descriptionally identifying sentences, and identifying specificational sentences. The picture that emerges is the following:

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          ┌─purely pred.
          │
predicational─┼─pred.descr.ident.─────ident.descr.ident.─┐
          │                                          │
          └─pred.spec.──────────ident.spec.─────────┼─identifying
                                                     │
                               ident.statements ─────┘
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Summarizing, we can say that although Declerck's taxonomy of copular sentences is basically correct, it is wrong to assume that the four types distinguished are totally separate and mutually exclusive. If, on the other hand, we accept that Declerck's taxonomy is a further subclassification of two more fundamental (mutually exclusive) sentence types, the apparent exceptions and overlaps can be accounted for. Such a bipartition has the additional advantage of enabling us to fit Declerck's nontheoretical taxonomy into existing theories (both formal and functional) of copular-sentence types (for example, Halliday 1967, 1970, 1985; Lyons 1977; Gundel 1977; Akmajian 1979; Dik 1980; Mackenzie and Hannay 1982).

The next question to answer is, of course, how the revised classification affects the proposal made by Declerck in chapter 2. Fortunately, it need hardly affect this proposal at all; that is, as long as we accept that the explanation of the distribution of *it* sentences versus *he/she/they* sentences is given in terms of the distinction between copular-sentence types at the second level, that is, after classification into predicational and identifying sentences has taken place. This means that not all predicational sentences are *he/she/they* sentences, but only the 'purely' predicational ones and those that are both predicational and descriptionally identifying. Most importantly, however, the crucial distinction between descriptionally identifying and specificational sentences remains unchanged. Thus *he/she/they* sentences are still descriptionally identifying (either predicational or identifying), whereas *it* sentences can only be specificational (either predicational or identifying). And, to complete the picture, only *he/she/they* sentences can be identity statements.

Example (23), however, still poses a problem. According to Declerck (p. 107), this sentence is descriptionally identifying and cannot be predicational because the identifying NP is strongly referring. On closer inspection, however, it turns out that example (23) shares many features with specificational sentences. Thus the sentence specifies a value (*that man over there*) for a (presupposed) variable (*he/Bill*), and the identifying NP enables the hearer to pick out a particular person from a set. Moreover the sentence has an exhaustiveness understanding and is contrastive: there may be other men, but only the one over there is Bill. Also, the identifying

NP is strongly referring, and, if it were not for the use of the pronoun, the sentence would be reversible. Finally, the form of the answer indicates that the question is interpreted as *Which one is Bill?*, which is a question asking for specificational information. If the question is to be interpreted as *NP is who?*, which is a question asking for descriptionally identifying information, the answer seems inappropriate, as becomes clear from the following examples:

(30)   A: Jean asked me who (which one) was Bill.
      B: I told her that he was that man over there. (spec.)
(31)   A: Jean asked me who Bill was.
      B: ??I told her that he was that man over there. (descr.ident.)

However, only in the second but not in the first case would an answer like *He is the son of Judge Harris* (descriptionally identifying) have been appropriate. Thus it appears that the answer in example (23) is a specificational sentence. Nevertheless, the subject is not *it* but *he*, which somehow suggests that some elementary identification has already taken place. But this can easily be accounted for if we assume that some kind of specification has already taken place, as in

(32)   A: Who's the murderer?
      B: Bill is the murderer. (specificational)
      A: Bill? Who/which one's Bill?
      B: He's that man over there. (specificational)
      A: Do you know him?
      B: Yes, he's my brother. (descriptionally identifying)

Thus it would seem that *he* sentences can be specificational if some kind of identification has already taken place, leaving the hearer unable, however, to pick out the referent from a set.

On the whole, however, we may conclude that the flaws of the first chapter, despite the fact that they affect Declerck's typology of copular sentences in some important respects, do not seriously undermine the proposals Declerck makes in the rest of the book. As far as chapters 2 and 3 are concerned a few minor adjustments suffice; the remaining chapters, being less dependent on the taxonomy presented in the first chapter, are hardly affected at all. Thus the book remains an interesting, well-organized study of clefts, copular sentences, and the relations between them, presenting a wealth of semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic information concerning these sentence types.

Notes

1. Although Declerck claims that his book is atheoretical, he uses a number of terms (for example, 'value', 'variable', 'underlying form', 'underlying structure') which normally derive their meaning from the particular theory in which they are used. In the absence of any particular framework (or any explicit definition of the terms in question), I take it that these terms are to be interpreted in the most general sense possible. (NB: For an attempt to describe Declerck's analysis within the framework of systemic grammar, see Simon-Vandenbergen 1989.)

2. In addition, Declerck distinguishes a fifth type, definitions. As this type does not play any role in the rest of the book, I will not treat them here.

3. Thus, unlike 'weakly referring' terms, 'strongly referring' terms do enable the hearer to 'pick out' the intended referent from a set. The following example may serve to further clarify the difference. Imagine that you are at a party, having a conversation with a friend. At a given moment your friend says to you, 'You should ask John', whereby it is clear that John is among the guests. As you do not know which of the guests is John, the term *John* in this sentence is weakly referring: it has a specific referent, but it does not in itself enable you (the hearer) to pick out this referent from the available set (the guests). Naturally, you will ask 'Who (which one) is John?', to which your friend may answer, 'John's the tall guy over there'. The term *John* in the latter sentence is still weakly referring. The term *the tall guy over there*, on the other hand, is strongly referring: it enables you to to pick out (identify) the intended referent. The sentence, therefore, is specificational.

4. In examples (13) and (14), *this* and *that* are used deictically. As such their value is specified by the given situation, that is, their intended referents are identifiable for the hearer in the sense that s/he can pick out these referents within the situation (for example through a gesture of the speaker).

5. In Declerck (1986) the difference between definite and indefinite predicate nominals in predicational sentences is explained in terms of the notion 'uniquely determining property'. Thus, according to Declerck, definite predicate nominals are uniquely determining: they denote the complete set of objects that have the property in question. Indefinite predicate nominals are not uniquely determining: it is possible (and even suggested) that the property can be ascribed to other objects apart from the object(s) referred to by the subject NP. However, Declerck (1986: 35ff.) also observes that not all formally definite predicate nominals are uniquely determining. Thus, as the following examples show, NPs with possessives and genitives (and sometimes even NPs with the definite article) do not necessarily denote the complete set of objects:

   (i)   John is my friend, and so is Bill.
   (ii) Not only John but also Bill is Mary's sister's friend.
   (iii) The accident was not the fault of the organizers.

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Review article[1]

ROGER LASS

John Kelly and John Local: *Doing Phonology. Observing, Recording, Interpreting*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989. vii–286 pp.

This is either the most radical or the most reactionary recent book on phonology, or both; it is also one of the most important, though it's unlikely that its message will be well received in the quarters most in need of it. I read it with mounting (if often critical) enthusiasm — not least because it makes a rational case for what, in a rather more naive way, I have always tried to do as a phonologist (see Lass 1984) and have tried to teach my students.

Despite its title, this is neither a textbook nor a 'problem book'; it is rather a high-level and sophisticated account, if with pedagogical intent, of the somewhat maverick practice of two extremely able and acute British phoneticians/phonologists (the implications of this double-barreled appelation will be clear shortly). The material treated — unusually but very much in keeping with the tenor of this work — is virtually entirely restricted to transcription and analysis of languages the authors have worked with and know at first hand.

The assumed audience is fairly advanced: K & L suggest (p. 8) that the book will be usable by a 'reader who knows both in the head and in the ear the values of the full IPA system'. And, one might add, a reader with a reasonable grasp of linguistic theory and characteristic modes of argument. This is not, despite what the title might suggest, a book for beginners; I would think the earliest stage it could be used at with students would be in the third year of a British or British-type university linguistics course, with a strong traditional phonetics component.

Doing Phonology consists of four long general chapters ('Preliminaries', 'Observing', 'Recording', 'Interpreting'), and a set of five detailed case studies, involving aberrant speech, dialect and accent, creolization, child language, and the pragmatics of intonation; but all the chapters are rich in exquisitely observed and perceptively analyzed material. There is nei-

ther index nor bibliography; I will comment on this at the end of the review.

K & L's basic point is that impressionistic phonetics — of what to some might seem a monstrously detailed and hypersubtle kind — is the indispensable foundation for serious phonology. Indeed, that much of what passes for phonology nowadays is a somewhat self-indulgent manipulation of prematurely arrived-at and improperly interpreted orthographic symbols. Another unfashionable (but I think largely correct and timely) claim they make, though they don't pursue it, is that instrumental phonetics has been overvalued: 'instrumental findings, though crucial to our understanding, in quantitative terms, of phonetic exponency, do not in themselves contribute to the elaboration of phonological entities' (p. 8). Their approach is unashamedly impressionistic, auditory, and nonquantitative, which makes them triply unfashionable: they insist on a degree of detail and precision in transcription that is virtually unheard of in orthodox phonological work; they are suspicious of premature 'abstract' theory and elaborate theoretical systems; and their approach is totally qualitative and impressionistic (if in a very sophisticated way), which excludes from what we might call 'core' phonology both instrumental and quantitative methodology. They advocate a 'return to the ear', in fact to the great phonetically based British tradition of Ellis, Sweet, Jones, Firth (though they don't put it this chauvinistically). A tradition, that is, in which phonology grows out of sharp and detailed observation, itself not unduly constrained by the dictates of prior theory, but still open to experience. (That is, they would never allow an auditory prime to be ruled out of existence on 'phonological' grounds; they would never be guilty of the kind of silliness that was common a decade ago, where, for example, central vowels could not be a distinctive category because the only backness features were [±back], and there were no four-height vowel systems because the 'phonetic capabilities of man' were controlled by [±high] and [±low], as in Chomsky and Halle 1968.)

K & L suggest a radical kind of back-stepping, which makes their approach very different from now conventional ones. They have no quarrel 'with those who see the ultimate goals' of phonology as the development of 'perceptual primes or universal feature sets'; but, they say, 'in the task as we undertake it it is too early to talk seriously of such things' (p. 6). They do not believe (p. 5) 'that phonology has now all been done, even for languages like English'; it is not the case that all that's left to do is 'to sort out the "phonological representations"'. In their view 'remarkably little is known about the phonetics and phonology of English especially in its many varieties and in the conversational mode' (and they make some striking contributions in this area). 'Progress' in phonology

is to some extent an illusion; we are in many ways less far forward than we think. There's still room, as part of the basic task, for refining fundamentals, going back to the serious exploitation of craft skills, asking naive questions (an approach I have advocated in similar terms for the task of typology: see Lass 1984).

They claim in essence that 'it is not possible to have too much phonetic detail'. We cannot 'know beforehand what is going to be important', and we must therefore 'attend to and reflect everything that we can discriminate' (p. 26). This leads to transcriptions of a degree of detail rarely met with nowadays; not only in the recording of 'ordinary' segmental material, itself finely notated, but also notation of tempo, loudness (as distinct from stress), relative syllable length, resonance features (clear vs. central vs. dark, but in more detail), intrasegmental onsets and offsets of glottal and labial activity, phasing of various gestures. Thus they distinguish different degrees of vowel advancement by double diacritics (for example [u] vs. advanced [ʉ] vs. more advanced [ᶙ], distinct both from centralized [ü] and central [ʉ]); they distinguish, by placement of the voicelessness diacritic [₀] between late voicing ([₀d]) and devoicing ([d₀]). Perhaps the flavor of their transcription can best be given by some actual illustrations (pp. 68, 71):

(1)   a.

   'that's a mushroom' (Ewe)

   b.

   'my brother kicked it' (Igbo)

   c.

   'it's yellow' (Sinhalese)

d.

rall   accel   to end

'that's grass' (Korean)

(In passing, it's either an enraging or charming feature of the book that all transcriptions are, like those shown here, reproduced versions of hand-written material — even the citation of symbols in the text; while this may give an impression of freshness and immediacy, of 'hot news' from the field, and must have saved a fortune on printing, it is distractingly ugly, and gives the book a tatty, home-made, and cheap look entirely out of keeping with the sophistication of its content. I may be old-fashioned, but I think a good book deserves good packaging; this is wretchedly produced, with poor page layout and sloppy design.)

Observation in the kind of detail suggested above — especially if divorced from many of the usual 'phonological' preconceptions of what's important — can actually yield insight even into phenomena of considerable 'depth' and 'abstractness'. Two of their examples from English may illustrate the fruitfulness of their approach, and the kind of demythologizing of firmly held or supposedly even self-evident beliefs about a language that good observation can lead to.

The first concerns a case of apparent neutralization, where 'the same' segment may be either lexical or the product of an assimilation. In some varieties of English both *this shop* and *fish shop* have a medial sequence that would normally be transcribed as [-ɪʃʃ-]. But even if the tongue-body shapes (as implied by the symbol [ʃ]) are the same, the phasing of lip-rounding with respect to intraoral articulation is not, and this is of linguistic interest. In *this shop*, rounding begins late, well into the period of friction; in *fish shop*, rounding is present during the whole period of friction. In K & L's analysis (p. 38), this 'reflects the difference between the ("assimilatory") palatality at the end of *this* and the lexically relevant palatality' in *fish*. Note that an analysis of the segmental/allophonic type, which pays no attention to the phasing of gestures, and allows for 'neutralization', misses the point; in such an analysis, rounding (of whatever degree and wherever placed in the sequence) is simply a 'low-level', redundant property of 'the phoneme /ʃ/'. Here the 'neutralization' is an artifact of a transcription (itself controlled by a theoretical constraint on observation) that does not pay attention to the temporal relation between articulatory gestures.

Another concerns a commonly held belief about certain varieties of

English, that turns out, at least in this case, to be unfounded. This is the phenomenon of 'yod dropping' or '/j/ deletion' in dialects where say *do/dew* are said to be homophonous, or the more extreme cases where this is said to occur after /h/ and labials as well, for example in East Anglian vernaculars for *Hugh/who, beauty/booty*. K & L's close study of a Norfolk vernacular speaker reveals the pattern shown in (2) below (p. 139).

(2)   1   2

'do'   *ɔ̃ ə tc*   'dew'   *ɔ̃ ɜ tc*

'food' *f ə tc ɔ̃*   'feud' *ʃ ɔ tc ɔ̃*

'boot' *b ə tc t*   'Bute' *b ɵ tc t*

The very fine (but clearly audible, to any decent phonetician who takes the trouble) differences show that rather than '/j/ being deleted', the words in these two classes are distinct not segment-by-segment, but as wholes. Neutral resonance with velarized syllable-final consonants in the *do* class, and overall palatality (including an advanced nucleus) in the *dew* class. In the latter, the /j/ is not 'deleted', but in fact· the opposite: it is now everywhere, if (strictly) 'unplaced'. *Do* and *dew* are not homophones, and their distinctness is not segmental; it is, in Firthian terms, 'prosodic', or could if you wish be taken as 'micro-autosegmental'. Once again, what appears to be a neutralization of contrast is in fact maintenance, but with different exponence. (This is not a surprising or unique case, limited to Norfolk; *do/dew* and the like are distinguished in much the same way in my own supposedly /j/-dropping New York dialect — neutral-to-dark resonance in *do*, overall palatality in *dew*.) There is also (though K & L do not deal with this) some nice insight into history here: since *do* descends from the type [du:], and *dew* from [diu], what we have is not deletion of the palatal element, but its unseating from nuclear position and spread over all the potential palatality-bearing elements in the word. (Whether they say so or not, the analysis is autosegmental.)

This example, like many others in the book from different languages, illustrates K & L's essentially neo-Firthian approach to phonological description; they are unsurprisingly also strong advocates of polysystemic analysis and a 'declarative' phonology that eschews synchronic 'process'. They are willing to see lexical items in terms of what they call 'stretches', rather than segmentally, or even in terms of segmental 'skeleta' of the autosegmental type with tiered articulatory gestures, and the (often distracting) theoretical machinery that goes along with this — or any other — formal approach. The moral of these two English cases, as of

many others they discuss, is that freedom of phonetic observation to note (even unexpected and nearly inconceivable) superfine detail, rather than being self-indulgence or cleverness, is more solidly empirical and potentially theoretically enlightening than the cruder approaches that are usual in the field.

So for instance the distinction between central [ʉ] and advanced central [ʉ̟], which most observers — if they even noticed it — would write off as 'mere detail', unlikely to be of phonological interest, proves to be as legitimate a datum as the distinction between [j] and zero or [u] and [ʉ] or [t] and [d] or whatever. And this even if no available feature system allows this fine a distinction. K & L ask us to escape from a 'phonetics' based on previously elaborated feature systems, and to work with a notational armory contaminated as little as possible by nonphonetic, nonperceptual presuppositions, segmental prejudices, considerations of 'distinctiveness', and the like. The suggestion that emerges from these examples, incidentally, as well as others, is that many cases of supposed 'neutralization' now famous in the literature may be nothing more than artifacts of sloppy listening, institutionalized now as 'ghost processes' in our tradition. We should at least be forced to record in the kind of detail K & L advocate before we ever claim neutralization or merger.

I do not want to give the impression that this book is just a collection of elaborate transcriptions and small, local analyses; it is loaded with insights into modes of observation and the properties of notational systems, and there are many elaborate and lengthy analyses, which show clearly what kind of phonological description their observations and preoccupations lead to (the long case studies are supplemented by extended treatments of other material throughout the book, especially from West African languages, Welsh, Malayalam, and Tongan, in addition to a number of varieties of English.) The style of these longer analyses is likely to be unfamiliar to many readers; the mode of discourse ('setting up an element X', etc.) is quite Firthian, but overall it is rather more accessible than much of the 'London School' literature. Still, a reading of some of the papers in Palmer (1970) would be a useful preparation for the uninitiated.

In a certain sense this book appears to be 'unscholarly': there is little mention except in passing of any approach to phonology other than the authors', and no bibliography. 'We do not discuss other approaches', they say, 'preferring to DO phonology rather than comment on the ways others pursue the enterprise' (p. 5). This is in keeping with their overall aim, which is to write not a text or a handbook, but an account of how they, 'as two professional academic phoneticians and phonologists, have gone about doing phonology' (p. 1). Given this aim, it is on the face of

it, I suppose, reasonable to have only what one might call an implicit or tacitly allusive scholarly apparatus. The serious and trained reader is likely to recognize allusions and to see what the background is in places where matters of theory are discussed. And the authors' credentials are good enough so that one isn't tempted to question their knowledge of this material.

But this 'virginal' approach is not enough; work of this kind must really be set properly in the scholarly context, especially so that one can see which analyses are of a traditional kind, which are similar to types of work now being done in more 'orthodox' frameworks, and so on. This is especially important for younger readers, who are not likely to have the requisite background; the only one who can really get what he should out of this book without bibliographic aid is one who is old enough and experienced enough to know the major phonological literature (American structuralist, Praguian, Firthian, generative) from the late 1930s to the present. The authors indeed know this material, as many of their rather allusive discussions indicate; but pointers need to be provided for the less experienced to the issues that often lurk behind particular discussions.

This would also — to be fair — let the reader see when K & L are reinventing the wheel, or using other people's wheels, or very similar ones; or at least reassure the reader that they know they're doing it. It is in fact a point of some theoretical interest and importance if analyses of certain types of data arrived at from wildly different starting points converge on similar solutions.

This problem is perhaps clearest (as their Firthian orientation might have made us expect) in areas where contemporary autosegmental accounts look very much like the sort of thing they come up with. If the results of a formal approach like autosegmental phonology and K & L's rather 'informal' one look similar, this could count as a potential corroboration of each of the approaches, or of what they have in common. Such convergences should be noted and given at least some discussion. Even if, as K & L say (p. 1), the book is 'on the whole ... written for ourselves, to put our work in perspective, take stock, and see where we have got to', by publishing it they have incurred certain public scholarly responsibilities, and I think these are being shirked.

More important, however, and not from the point of view of scholarly responsibility but usability, the book lacks an index. This makes it exceedingly difficult to access related areas, to zero in on information about particular languages one may be interested in, or to find important discussions of given issues. For instance, material from Malayalam is cited or discussed in detail on pp. 70, 73, 78, 84, 141–146, 168–173, and Welsh on pp. 21–22, 36–38, 85, 90, 162–165 (a particular good discussion

of consonant mutation). The inacessibility of such material, as well as discussion of phenomena like harmony, etc., is quite irritating; one has to waste a lot of time flipping back and forth to find things.

Still, K & L have not produced a curate's egg, but a very fine and important book, with a number of problems, most of which could be easily remedied in a second edition. *Doing Phonology*, despite some faults, is a significant contribution, maybe even 'epochal' in its own way. No phonologist really interested in languages — as opposed to the manipulation of letter shapes and exercises in notation or reductionism — can afford to neglect this book and its lessons, and every phonetician and teacher of phonetics or phonology can learn something that he would be the poorer for not having learned.

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