



BROWSE



 ***Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* Ed. by Walter R. Bodine**
(review)

Brian M. Sietsema

Language

Linguistic Society of America

Volume 70, Number 3, September 1994

pp. 597-598

10.1353/lan.1994.0016

REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

BOOKNOTICES 597 headlines as distinctive, highly-structured discourse genres, and explains certain specific news language practices: how news sources are identified, how news is attributed to them, implications in the use of embedded speech verbs like say or claim and in the choice of direct and indirect discourse in a given context. The last two chapters look at how news language can fail to communicate accurately. In Ch. 10, 'Telling it like it is n't' (212-29), B discusses misrepresentation of the news by the media, concluding that inaccuracies in rewriting and editing almost always result from pressure to enhance the news value of the story. Criticizing the methodologies used to study bias in the media, he finds that content analysis, critical linguistics, and semiotics have as their common problem a 'lack of sound basic linguistic

analysis' (215), although he comments favorably on the work of Teun A. van Dijk as 'the most able and enlightening linguistic analysis of news stories' (note, 252). Ch. 11, '(Mis)understanding the news' (230-47), reports on studies of how professional practices in news writing aid or hinder the audience in its efforts to process and recall information, drawing on Roger Shank & Robert Ableson's 1977 concept of scripts (Scripts, plans, goals and understanding, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum) to show how readers and listeners organize and remember information. B's research on New Zealand public understanding of ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect shows how media consumers can exaggerate and confuse two related issues. Media linguistics is probably still too young to lend itself to any broad synthesis or sweeping conclusions, but any linguist interested in exploring the field will appreciate the book's fourteen pages of references (254-68). [Clyde Thogmartin, Iowa State University of Science and Technology.]

Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew. Ed. by Walter R. Bodine. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992. Pp. 323. Cloth \$47.95, paper \$19.95. Nineteenth-century philology has much to offer twentieth-century linguistics: well-organized data, exhaustive and usually sound lexicography, and workable critical apparatuses, among other accomplishments. It is time for modern linguistics to repay the debt, and this anthology is a down payment on the Biblical Hebrew (BH) account. Previous work on BH by linguists has largely been written for other linguists and not for philologists, who tend to think through data differently. Bodine, hoping to show philologists 'the difference that linguistic sophistication can make' (2), has brought together several linguistic analyses of BH, drawn mostly from papers delivered before the Society of Biblical Literature. In his introduction, 'The study of linguistics and Biblical Hebrew' (1-5), B sets forth the plan of the book. Sixteen articles are paired under eight subfields of linguistics. The first article in each pair gives a general overview of modern theory, and the second works out a specific application of current ideas to the BH data. The table of contents lists the following subfields and contributors: structural phonology (Monica S. Devens, E. J. Revell), generative phonology (Edward L. Greenstein, Gregory Enos), morphology (W. Randall Garr, Gary A. Rendsburg), syntax (Walter R. Bodine, Barry L. Bandstra), semantics (Harold P. Scanlin, James Barr), discourse analysis (Peter J. MacDonald, R. E. Longacre), historical and comparative linguistics (Alice Faber, John Huehnergard), and graphemics (M. O'Connor, Stephen J. Lieberman). The eight overview articles attempt the impossible —to bring a novice up to speed on modern theory in twenty pages. As it is, the applicational articles present the theoretical notions clearly enough without the overviews, and they are sufficient in themselves to whet the philologist's appetite for modern linguistics. In fact, this book is probably a harder read for a linguist unfamiliar with the welter of BH data than for a philologist unacquainted with recent theories. A case in point is Huehnergard's artful argument in 'Historical phonology and the Hebrew Piel' (209-29), which sorts through vocalization patterns in the entire Semitic family, with observations about verb forms in the Afro-Asiatic phylum thrown in for good measure. Other standouts in the collection are Rendsburg's 'Morphological evidence for regional dialects in Ancient Hebrew' (65-88) and Lieberman's 'Towards a graphemics of the Tiberian Bible' (255-78). Anyone who has cursed his...

headlines as distinctive. Lightly-structured discourse genres, and explains certain specific news linguistic practices: how news sources are identified, how news is distributed to them, implications in the use of embedded speech versus like *say* or *claim* and in the choice of direct and indirect discourse in a given context.

The last two chapters look at how news language can fail to communicate accurately. In Ch. 10, 'Telling it like it isn't' (212–29), B discusses misrepresentation of the news by the media, concluding that inaccuracies in rewriting and editing almost always result from pressure to enhance the news value of the story. Criticizing the methodologies used to study bias in the media, he finds that content analysis, critical linguistics, and semiotics have as their common problem a 'lack of sound basic linguistic analysis' (213), although he comments favorably on the work of Teun A. van Dijk as 'the most able and enlightening linguistic analysis of news stories' (note, 222). Ch. 11, 'Misunderstanding the news' (230–47), reports on studies of how professional practices in news writing aid in furthering, and also in its effects to prevent and recall information, drawing on Roger Shulz & Robert Abelson's 1977 concept of scripts (*Scripts, plans, goals and understanding*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum) to show how readers and listeners organize and remember information. B's research on New Zealand public misunderstanding of ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect shows how media commentators can exaggerate and confuse two related issues.

Media linguistics is probably still too young to lend itself to any broad syntheses or sweeping conclusions, but any linguist interested in exploring the field will appreciate the book's fourteen pages of references (284–68). [C. VAN THORNHAGEN, *In a State University of Science and Technology.*]

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Other handouts in the collection are Bodine's 'Morphological evidence for regional dialects in Ancient Hebrew' (65–88) and Lieberman's 'Towards a graphemics of the Tiberian Bible' (255–78). Anyone who has cursed his or her BH lexicon (or any lexicon) should read Horn's 'Hebrew lexicography: Informal thoughts' (136–51) to gain an appreciation for the challenges of dictionary-making. And Laguerre's 'Discourse perspectives on the Hebrew verb: Affirmation and resistance' (177–89)





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