

РЕЦЕНЗИИ И ОТЗИВИ

REVIEWS

ON THE SCIENCE OF LANGUAGE

(A Handbook in General Linguistics) by Ellie Boyadzhieva

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The issue of language may be viewed from a variety of perspectives: as an indisputable fact, a mystery, a tool to survive, a challenge for the human thought, the basis of the development of mankind, an inseparable part of the core of humanity, the basic means of communication, the most valuable heritage of the human race, the basic characteristic feature of Homo sapiens, etc. Whatever the perspective is, it is an undeniable fact that language is a multifaceted phenomenon of humankind and it has never ceased to intrigue, inspire and instigate the human scientific thought.

Living in the time of globalization, of the easy and fast communication with every corner of the globe, of English as lingua franca, of the necessity to learn foreign languages and the need to preserve indigenous and/or ‘small’ languages and the specific information they contain regarding linguistic features, sociolinguistic traits, etc. LANGUAGE deserves our attention most than ever, it is power and knowledge, it is the history and the future of us: the people who are responsible for its existence .

Several months ago the South-West University “Neofit Rilski” Publishing House released a new book entitled *The Science of Language (A Handbook in General Linguistics)* with author Ellie Boyadzhieva. The Preface reveals the author’s aim ‘to provide those interested in general linguistics with basic knowledge about the nature of human language and the theories concerning its description as a species-specific phenomenon’ (p. 8). She states that the book is a result of her more than 25 years of teaching, but I would say that it results from her positive and motivating experience from her work with students and colleagues which was her inspiration to embark on such a laborious task. Its completion ensued into a long-needed and expected handbook which will highly facilitate the students of Philology and Applied Linguistics who are considered as the main targeted readership. However, anybody who looks for knowledge and a wide range of information collected in one book can benefit from it.

The book consists of 17 sections which are further divided into subsections in an ambitious attempt if not to cover, to at least point out the basic outlines of what General Linguistics is and to define and explain not only the science, but the sciences of language and their scope of investigation.

Boyadzhieva has structured her book in a traditional manner starting with a definition of what Philology is and providing the distinction between Philology and Linguistics from a detailed historical view point and focusing on Linguistics and its branches.

The issue of the nature of the human language and its uniqueness are well-argued and opposed to the so called animal language and the artificial languages.

Diverging from the traditional approach, Boyadzhieva presents a section devoted to Language Acquisition quoting a number of prominent scientists who work in the field and discusses the topics of Language Acquisition Device and Poverty of Stimulus, the role of the environment as well as the Critical Period Hypothesis. She also focuses the reader’s attention on the problem whether there is or not a relation between Language, Intelligence and Cognitive Development. The last two subsections here tackle the issues of First and Second Language Acquisition. One more novelty in her approach to dealing with

the science of language is seen in the subsections concerned with the outlines of two sciences that are closely connected to language, namely, Neurolinguistics and Psycholinguistics.

What follows is the classical line of dealing with the study of language, i.e., Language Origin – theories and hypotheses; Genealogical Classification of Languages which is based on some of the hypotheses of the last twenty years; when presenting the Levels of Linguistic Analysis two approaches have been implemented: the traditional and the structural ones. The levels are duly described and analyzed from the perspective of the English language basically. A morphological classification of languages is provided and exemplified. The last section of the book reveals the author's interest and opinion concerning Body Language and its role in human communication on a worldwide scale and its local and cultural peculiarities.

As mentioned above, the targeted readership of the book are Philology and Linguistics students at the South-West University, though, whoever reads this book can find an answer to their questions or will further continue looking for them. While talking about ancient libraries the author provides a quotation from Murrey (2009) according to whom there was a notice along the shelves in the libraries stating: *a place for healing the soul*. For Boyadzhieva 'the elevation of the spirit is only possible if it is cultivated by knowledge'. Hence, she has provided the facts, the opinion of scholars, her own point of view and leaves the readers to decide for themselves and to enjoy the process of reading, learning and discovering.