Review of Oniga, Renato (2014), Latin: a Linguistic Introduction (Edited and Translated by Norma Schifano). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Renato Oniga's *Latin: a Linguistic Introduction* is a (slightly updated) translation of an Italian original, which was published in 2007 (Milano: FrancoAngeli). Perhaps the most striking feature of the reviewed volume is that it incorporates into the discussion of Latin grammar insights from modern linguistic theory, and more particularly generative grammar, i.e. the research programme initiated by Noam Chomsky in the 1950s. As such, the enterprise is certainly commendable: with the odd exception, classicists have not often taken full advantage of progress that has been made over the last decades in various subfields of general linguistics (not only in the area of (formal) syntax and semantics, but also for instance with respect to corpus linguistics). The result is a dearth of theoretically informed research on both Latin and Ancient Greek linguistics (cf. also Devine & Stephens 2013: 3 for similar remarks). However, writing an introductory text raises the problem of balancing out empirical coverage and theoretical sophistication, which is never going to be an easy matter. Although in the book under review the chapters on phonology and especially word formation (morphology and morphosyntax) are certainly relatively successful and at times even interesting, the part about syntax is much less felicitous, for reasons that I will discuss below.

The book is organized in 28 chapters: Part I comprising five chapters deals with phonology and meter; Part II (chapters 6 to 16) covers morphology (word formation, morphosyntax), and Part III consisting of chapters 17 to 28 is concerned with syntax. The author does not aim at exhaustivity: issues at the interface between syntax and semantics (such as argument structure, quantification and adverbial modification) are only touched upon very briefly. Pragmatic phenomena such as discourse organization (as signalled by for instance discourse particles) and information structure are not discussed at all.

Overall Part I ('Phonology') is often insightful and useful. Some debatable issues of presentation concern the choice of terminology. For instance, it might have been preferable if a terminological distinction had been made between vowel quantity (short vs. long) and syllable weight (light vs. heavy), as is common in most work on phonology. Although the correct conceptual distinction between the two phenomena is made, talking about 'syllable quantity' (pp. 26-7) might be confusing. Similarly, the author correctly points out that the concept of *ictus* is irrelevant for the structural description of Latin meter, but then rather pointlessly adheres to the notational convention of adding *ictus* marks on scanned lines of poetry.

The most interesting part of the book is the second one ('Morphology'). The systematic synchronic analysis of Latin inflection, derivation and compounding offered here is a welcome contribution. The description of the facts is not exhaustive though: for instance, no mention is made of the third declension accusative plural ending -*īs* (despite this being ubiquitous in classical texts). There also are some issues that may lead to confusion. In the introduction (p. 6), Saussure's distinction between linguistic signs (*signifiants*) and the things they refer to (*signifiés*) is briefly discussed. With respect to the synchronic position taken in this book, it is perhaps a pity that no mention is made of another of Saussure's major contributions to modern linguistics, namely the strict separation of the synchronic and the diachronic dimension in linguistic analysis. Especially in the realm of morphology the purely synchronic stance adopted here might be puzzling for many readers with a classical background, as in this field a(n exclusively) diachronic perspective is still quite customary. Slightly more worrying is the fact that the crucial concept of 'morpheme' is never properly defined, although constant reference is made to 'morpheme boundaries' in the formulation of

the various phonological adjustment rules formulated in chapter 8, which are in turn frequently invoked in the next handful of chapters, in which the (pro)nominal and verbal inflectional paradigms are analysed.

For the intended student readership, things will become (much) more problematic when we consider the discussion of Latin syntax, which constitutes the third part of the book. Here the choice of the theoretical framework becomes very important, as generative approaches to syntax tend to differ quite strongly from those in most other frameworks. Crucial to most work in the generative tradition is the assumption that syntactic structures are hierarchically organized into constituents of various types and sizes (noun phrases, verb phrases, clauses etc), which are typically represented by means of tree diagrams (phrase markers). Such a constituency grammar has not often been applied to Latin in any consistent way, plausibly because of the language's remarkable degree of word order flexibility (among the few earlier generative approaches to Latin syntax, one can mention Devine & Stephens 2006, Ledgeway 2012 and Danckaert 2012).

My main concern with the way in which the formal approach is applied here is that most of the analyses of the Latin data are proposed without much (if any) supporting evidence or argumentation. In many cases, the analysis for Latin patterns is simply based on what has been proposed for comparable data in English or Italian. However, it should go without saying that the machinery of a formal grammar can only be used to good effect if it is coupled with rigorous argumentation and detailed analysis of the empirical data. Unfortunately, all of this is often completely absent in the book under review. For a reader not already fully familiar with the theoretical framework, the analyses risk being perceived as *ad hoc*, stipulatory and unnecessarily complex.

Let me illustrate this with a couple of examples. For instance, on p. 208 it is proposed that Latin subject noun phrases originate inside the verb phrase (VP), and that they are canonically 'displaced' (to use the movement metaphor which is common to most work in generative syntax) to a position in the functional superstructure above the VP, the so-called Inflection Phrase (IP). This is an analysis that has been shown to work for (most) subject noun phrases in English, as well as for preverbal subjects in Italian. However, as argued on the basis of corpus evidence in Danckaert (2014, In progress), there is actually no evidence that Classical Latin subjects canonically surface in the IP domain. Rather, they often seem to remain inside the verb phrase. Evidence for the latter claim comes from, among other things, the observation that in both active and passive clauses, subject NPs can appear in between the lexical verb (which itself can be taken to be located inside the VP) and an inflected auxiliary (i.e. the head of the IP), as in *posteaquam paulum provecta classis est* (= Cic. *Verr. act. sec.* 5.87).

Similarly, it is claimed that "[t]he OSV order is the result of topicalization of the object" (p. 221), whereby 'topicalization' is understood as an operation that puts the object in the left periphery of the clause (along the lines of Rizzi 1997). Again, for English and Italian this may well be a plausible derivation for the OSV order, but for Latin, more needs to be said. Consider for instance an example like *cum alternis haec consules diu iactassent* (Liv. 27.9.13), in which the linear order OSV appears in an embedded clause. Note that the object *haec* appears to the right of the conjunction *cum* and of the adverb *alternis*, an order which, as argued at length in Danckaert (2012), unambiguously shows that the direct object cannot be left-peripheral, and by this token, cannot be topicalized. Rather, to the extent that they are available in embedded contexts at all, topicalized objects precede the subordinating conjunctions, as illustrated in a clause like *eas arcas cum ex amicorum sententia dominus aperuisset* (Liv. 40.29.13). As a result, in the absence of an element like *cum*, which demarcates the lower boundary of the left periphery, many OSV clauses are structurally

ambiguous (i.e. compatible with more than one structural representation), a possibility which is not considered by Oniga.

Similarly unsatisfactory is the discussion of base positions of (finite) verbs and direct objects. Finite verbs are usually represented inside the verb phrase (see for instance the tree in (30) on p. 217), but elsewhere, it is suggested that the verbal inflection is generated in the I-node (p. 204). The claim on p. 205 that V-raising to I is equivalent to lowering of I to V is potentially confusing, and the assertion that a structure involving V-to-I movement is the "most common analysis" for English is in fact incorrect: one of the hallmarks of English grammar is taken to be the fact that V does not raise to I (Pollock 1989). Direct objects on the other hand are claimed to move to an object agreement phrase (AgrOP, cf. p. 218), but here too, no (convincing) arguments are offered.

Bearing in mind that the reviewed volume is intended as an introductory textbook, one has the impression that the author sometimes attempts too much. For instance, the discussion of head-final word order patterns (like 'object - verb') in chapters 18 and 19 keeps going back and forth between on the one hand base generated right headedness (pp. 206-7), and on the other hand 'anti-symmetric' (in the sense of Kayne 1994) derivations involving leftward movement of complement XPs (cf. the "current hypothesis" alluded to on p. 188). Although both approaches have advantages and drawbacks, the relevant theoretical debate clearly is a very complex one, and one can wonder whether such a thorny issue needs to be touched upon in an introductory textbook. Note however that the fully symmetric 'small clauses' which are frequently invoked for all sorts of predicative constructions are in any event entirely incompatible with anti-symmetric assumptions made elsewhere. Again for the novice to the generative approach this lack of internal consistency may well be off-putting.

(Relatively) minor issues that arise include the following. First, the organisation of some of the material is not always well motivated. For instance, the discussion of *oratio obliqua* (pp. 320-1) is rather out of place in chapter 28, which deals with adverbial clauses. Since the rules governing the use of moods and tenses in indirect speech discussed here are not specific to adverbial clauses only, but are also relevant for e.g. (restrictive) relative clauses, it might have been preferable to discuss them separately in a chapter dedicated to indirect speech. Similarly, the syntactic structure for unaccusative predicates (p. 309) is introduced in chapter 27, which deals with participial clauses. It would have been more logical if unaccusatives were dealt with in one of the chapters (18 or 19) devoted to the structure of the VP.

Second, the actual presentation of the material is sometimes disappointing. For instance, to illustrate various word order phenomena examples are used from both prose and poetry (e.g. (32) on p. 219 and (37) on p. 221). This is to be avoided, as word order in poetry is partly determined by metrical considerations, which are to a large extent independent of syntax. Moreover, there are repeated references to statistical tendencies which are not backed up with quantitative data (cf. p. 197 VP-internal word order; p. 204 on the alternation between the orders '*esse* + past participle' and 'past participle + *esse*'; p. 212 on null objects in Early Latin).

Finally, there also remain a number of inaccuracies which more careful editing might have eliminated, such as the assertion that *mos* 'custom' belongs to the class of "neuter noun[s] or adjective[s]" (p. 272, *mos* is of course masculine), as well as a number of rather unfortunate typos, such as *nomen adiectivus* (p. 49) and *multas per aequora vectus* (p. 202, from "Catullus' famous line").

To conclude, though in principle one can only applaud attempts to present the reader with an introduction to Latin grammar based on formal systems, such endeavours will always be a balancing act between empirical description and theoretical consistency. My fear is that compared to other formal treatments of Latin, such as Devine & Stephens (2006) and

Ledgeway (2012), the present book is not very successful, and that confronted with this introduction the novice reader might - unfortunately in my own view - not be convinced that applying formal syntax to Latin is a worthwhile enterprise.

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