

## HUNGARIAN BOOKS ON LINGUISTICS

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**László Kálmán–Viktor Trón: Bevezetés a nyelvtudományba [An introduction to linguistics].** Tinta Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2005. 155 pp.

This volume summarizes the material covered by introductory linguistics courses as held by the authors for several years. Therefore, it can be used as a companion to such courses in higher education, but also as an introductory reading for the interested layman. It is certainly a practical aid for teaching linguistics courses although it does not contain exercises.

It is true that books with this title abound in many languages; this particular one, however, has a couple of exceptional features. First, it is the first one in Hungarian in the last 30 years or so. Since many concepts and terms used in current linguistics have been introduced or redefined in the past few decades, the book will be indispensable in teaching introductory linguistics courses in higher education. Second, it keeps a distance from contemporary linguistic theories. It presents most concepts used in mainstream theories as problematic rather than self-evident, but it does not take a stance on their status as a rule. The authors' sceptic view on most common distinctions (such as the distinction between arguments and adjuncts or inflection and derivation) gives the book a more critical flavour than usual with introductory coursebooks.

The somewhat unusual structure of the book may also originate in the authors' basic stance. The introductory chapter (on the concept of language and linguistics) is followed by one about the cognitive abilities of humans and their relationship to language, a topic that is usually deferred in such manuals. The next chapter is about varieties of language, i.e., the sociological aspects of language use, which is also among the last ones in standard textbooks. The traditional sub-disciplines of linguistics are also treated in a somewhat unexpected way. The chapter on 'the use of language', which covers both semantics and pragmatics, without any clear-cut boundary between the two, precedes rather than follows those on phonetics and phonology (again, without a clear-cut borderline), morphology and syntax. The central role that syntax plays in

many contemporary theories is missing in terms of both the position of the chapter within the book and its length. Finally, a chapter on historical linguistics and a lengthy study on the history of linguistics follow.

The book is well-organized on the whole, although it is rather compact in its style and sometimes parsimonious in terms of examples. The readers can also benefit from the extra material at the end of the book: an up-to-date collection of background readings, a glossary of all important concepts mentioned in the book as well as a detailed index.