graduate students. As an American-educated linguistic anthropologist in Britain, however, I find Blommaert’s book an exciting and timely publication taking vital arguments to Europe, where all too often I encounter colleagues who dismiss my attention to language use as “linguistics,” that is, not relevant to social anthropology. I can only hope that this addition to Cambridge’s catalogue will convince social scientists everywhere that sociolinguistics is more than the correlation of accent with social class and ethnicity. Understanding language use in the round is critical to understanding any and all meaningful human activity.

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Understanding language as a social practice of constructing meanings in context has been the main concern of sociocultural and anthropological approaches to language studies. Such approaches continue to act as “an intellectual shelter and a cultural amplifier for the richness of human communication in social life” (“Preface,” Alessandro Duranti, in A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology, Duranti, ed., Blackewll, 2004:xiii). Along this broad line of inquiry, The Language of Pain illustrates explorations of the linguistic dimension of pain “as a domain of human experience, lying at the intersection of the physical and psychological aspect of our selves” (p. 1). The nine chapters of the volume present a sequel to Chryssoula Lascaratou’s previously published accounts of a large-scale project that investigated the linguistic manifestations of pain in Modern Greek.

On the one hand, the author’s point of departure is a view of language as a social practice of construing human experiences (including the experience of pain) rather than objectively reflecting reality. On the other hand, she also assumes that the involvement in the painful experience influences the linguistic framing of expressions of pain. The illustration of such a dialectic relationship between language and human experience is, in our view, perhaps the most prominent message of the book. Lascaratou sets as her major goal in this book “to answer in an empirically verifiable way the question concerning the function of language in the experience of pain” (p. 3). In analyzing the role of metaphor in conceptualizing and representing pain, the study is theoretically founded on Halliday’s functional linguistics (An Introduction to Functional Grammar, 2nd ed., Edward Arnold, 1994) and cognitive semantic perspective (see also Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling, Zoltan Kövecses, Cambridge University Press, 2000). Cognitive semantic interpretations of the corpus under investigation are relied on to provide clues as to its functional accounts.

After the introductory chapter, in chapter 2, titled “Pain and Language,” the author introduces the linguistic aspects of pain and highlights the scarcity of systematic studies on the language of pain. Elaborating on the relation of language to pain in light of Wittgenstein’s arguments, and critiquing the view that treats language as merely the mirror of emotions, she argues for an understanding of language as a practice of active construction and reconstruction of emotions (see also “Emotion and the body in Russian and English,” Aneta Pavlenko, Pragmatics and Cognition, 2002: 207–241). On the basis of these background illustrations and the presented conceptualizations of physical pain, this chapter lays the theoretical foundation of the discussions in later chapters on three major questions: the nature of pain, aspects of the language for pain, and aspects of pain for language. As for the conceptions of pain as a personal and at the same time universal human experience, a rather simple and practical working definition is presented: the “unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage” (p. 15). The comprehensive exploration of the related
literature presented in this chapter successfully situates the discussions in the rest of the book in a clear theoretical context.

Chapter 3 raises the issues of subjectivity, complexity, and diversity of the experience of pain and argues for a need for systematic and multidimensional investigations of pain-related utterances. The chapter also details the corpus design and data collection. The extensive corpus of 131 cases of spontaneous conversations between patients and health care professionals (mounting to a bulk of nearly 70,000 words) recorded in 22 months promises a thorough examination of the issue under investigation in the later chapters of the book. To explicate the methodological treatment of this relatively large data corpus, Chapter 4 deals more specifically with Halliday’s experiential function of utterances as the basis of “the functional analysis of the lexico-grammatical construal of pain in Greek” (p. 44). A characterization of the lexico-grammatical construal of pain is presented in chapter 5, on the basis of frequency counts applied on the findings of the study.

Lascaratou relies on the methodological details presented in these three chapters to foreground her major arguments in the next two chapters, titled “The Construal of Pain as Process” and “The Construal of Pain as Thing-Participant.” In chapter 6 the processual construal of pain is reflected in the various patterns of the Greek verb ponao (“I hurt”) is explored and interpreted in detail in terms of different figures such as doing, happening, sensing, and being. The mainly intransitive verbal framing of pain is interpreted as a mechanism of explicit expression of pain as an inner activity or a self-induced processual event. Lascaratou also discusses that in a majority of its processual construals the locus of pain is configured as existing in the sufferer’s self as a whole rather than in a particular body organ. This perspective is chiefly shaped through ponao or the impersonal third-person ponai (“it hurts”). Chapter 7 presents a lexico-grammatical analysis of pain as thing. The crucial conception in these analyses is that pain does not bear any transitive function of Actor or Agent.

In chapter 8, titled “Pain and Metaphor,” the role of metaphor in everyday conceptualizations of pain is dealt with. The doctor-patient data examined in this book illustrate the difficulty of describing the metaphorical language of pain. In light of Kövecses (2000), the author argues that the pain metaphors observed in the Greek data are instantiations of the personification of pain as a force that may be realized as an enemy, aggressor, or torturer. Lascaratou argues that when pain is communicated by means of objectifying constructions, the role of pain utterances is clearly that of description and these metaphorical structures should be viewed as featuring the descriptive function in the schematic continuum of pain manifestations. As discussed in the next chapter, however, the descriptive–expressive dichotomy cannot always be strictly adhered to.

In the final chapter the author presents the overall findings of the study as a whole. She discusses that speakers of Greek construe pain primarily as a process reflected in verbs, secondarily a participant reflected in nominalizations, and marginally a quality reflected in adjectives. From a contrastive perspective, these features of communicating pain in Greek are similar to those of Russian and dissimilar to English. In her attempt to interpret these findings, Lascaratou suggests that “it is precisely because verb constructions offer a more direct and social processual framing of pain that they are typically preferred in Greek against the more neutral and passive adjectival frames” (p. 184). She maintains that intransitive pain constructions are predominant—compared with multi-argument configurations of pain—because of their ability to function as a more direct form of voicing a reaction.

Lascaratou’s book has several strengths as well as some pitfalls. Perhaps the most important shortcoming of the book, in our view, is that the author stops her arguments short of a discussion of how the language of pain, as reflected in this study, resonates with the wider context of the social life of Greek speakers. Although some hints are given as to the social interpretations of the findings of this research, more socially contextualized discussions could have been presented beyond a pure linguistic analysis. For instance, how does such an understanding of the language of pain help us understand the broader social behavior of Greek speakers? Less importantly, the book contains extremely complex and involved analytical expositions, coupled with sometimes taxing descriptions of the Greek data. These are obviously not weaknesses of the book as such, but they do lead to some very demanding discussions that may confuse the reader.

This last concern may also be viewed as a strength of the book, that is, its exploration of a language, Modern Greek, which is not very widely represented in the literature. Another major contribution of the book, as we briefly referred to at the beginning of this review, is highlighting and empirically supporting the argument that language is shaped by and at the same time shapes social lives. Moreover, the book may act as an illustration of the fact that almost no
concept in human languages can be taken for granted as obvious and even the most intimately felt conceptions (including personal emotions) may be subject to in-depth discursive investigations. Overall, *The Language of Pain* is an important contribution that may be of interest to graduate students and researchers in a wide range of academic fields including different branches of linguistics, discourse studies, anthropology, sociology, and social psychology.

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What is news and how shall we come to understand it?

When Robert Park first drew the attention of the social sciences to news as an object of study, he advised us to treat it as “a form of knowledge,” and several generations of scholars did just that. More recently there has been a lot of excitement over news as a form of myth. In this book, Jean Aitchison offers us another trope, that of news as a form of literature.

Aitchison begins with a literary and linguistic history of news, devoting four chapters to a chronology that stretches back to early oral literature, considers the invention(s) of writing, then follows what she sees as news’ historical trajectory from ballad mongering to newsbooks to pamphlets to daily newspapers.

The next four chapters explore journalism as a form of writing. Chapter 6 explicates the proposition that “modern newspapers continue a long-standing tradition of storytelling, handed down from one era to another” (p. 96) by looking at the relations between topic and narrative structure. Chapter 7 examines the style of newswriting in news stories, headlines, and advertisements. Chapter 8 explores creativity and poetics in newswriting, and the argument that lexical selection and employment of tropes are essential to journalism is furthered in chapter 9 by an examination of the role(s) of metaphor in news.

She concludes with a chapter asking about journalism’s role in society: if it is literature, but not of the same type as poetry, novels, and short stories, what is it? The answer, she finds, is rooted in the word *news* itself: news is a place where a society represents itself to itself day after day, in ways that are always changing, but fundamentally the same.

But which society? From an anthropological perspective, the book is deeply ethnocentric, its examples and literary allusions drawn not merely from broadly “Western” journalism but specifically from that of England. The text suffers from the common problem of making universalistic arguments (about “news” in this case) with examples drawn exclusively from a single language and cultural milieu.

There is little in this book that is innovative. Although many of the analytical examples she offers are her own, neither the substance of her arguments nor the types of analysis she offers will come as a surprise to anyone with any prior background in linguistics or mass communication. Much of what Aitchison has to say linguistically about news has already been said, with more attention to the technical registers of linguistics and sociolinguistics, by Allen Bell, Colleen Cotter, Teun van Dijk, and others.

What Aitchison offers, however, is a marvellously good read, which strongly recommends it as a text for undergraduates. The simplicity with which she lays out her structural and metaphor analyses, without a technical word that is not defined in the text, ought to encourage students to try their own hands at breaking down news stories to see how they work.

For the more advanced reader, she offers an astonishingly eclectic work whose citations range from Ogden Nash to Jacques Derrida (and takes them equally seriously). Her knowledge of allusions to news and journalism in poetry and novels is remarkable, and she has an uncanny sense of aptness in her selections.