Title
Langacker: Review of Non-Distinctive Arguments in Uto-Aztecan

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/52r1b8n6

Journal
Journal of California Anthropology, The, 3(2)

Author
Miller, Wick R

Publication Date
1976-12-01

Peer reviewed
California Indian population, published in 1976 and reviewed in this issue, has more than doubled this figure.

Despite subsequent elaboration on certain of the ideas set forth in the original six essays, taken together they will almost certainly remain as one of the towering landmarks in studies pertaining to California Indians in the Historic Period.


Reviewed by WICK R. MILLER
University of Utah

This is an important contribution to both linguistic theory and Uto-Aztecan linguistics. Langacker is concerned with the historical development of four kinds of sentences: passives, impersonals, reflexives (including reciprocals), and unspecified arguments. These sentence types are semantically related, and in many languages, including most of the Uto-Aztecan languages, they are also syntactically related. Using the theoretical framework of generative semantics, along with insight, imagination, and lots of data, he offers suggestions for their source and historical development. One can always quibble with some of the details, but I find myself in agreement with his basic arguments and proposals.

Langacker combed the literature, both published and unpublished, for this study. Twenty Uto-Aztecan languages are treated. This was a herculean task, particularly when one considers the varied nature and quality of the source material. After having pulled all this material together, Langacker is in an excellent position to do historical grammar in a number of areas, and he promises us that this work is just the first in a series. If the following contributions are of this high quality, Uto-Aztecan studies will indeed be in a fortunate and enviable position.

An extremely valuable byproduct of this study is an extensive bibliography. If any published items of linguistic importance are missing, I have not found them. Additionally, many unpublished items and published works that are of secondary linguistic importance are listed. The bibliography is not limited to items cited in this monograph, nor to the twenty languages used in this study. The bibliography is especially useful because it is arranged by language and language branch. It will be valued by all of us who work in the Uto-Aztecan field.


Reviewed by A.B. ELSASSER
Lowie Museum of Anthropology
University of California, Berkeley

Attempts to account for the popularity of books or exhibits about Ishi may lead anyone into the region of deep psychological speculation. Surely there is something extraordinarily compelling about Theodora Kroeber's elegant prose concerning this apparently simple-living