

The Twitter Machine: Reflections on Language

By Neil Smith

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This unique book provides an introductory overview of modern theoretical linguistics which manages to be both accessible and humorous without sacrificing either scholarship of insight.

In a series of magisterial vignettes Smith emphasizes the perennial necessity of appealing to linguistic theory if we are to gain any real understanding of the phenomena of language.

However profound or however trivial the questions we raise and try answer - What exactly does one have to know to count as a speaker of a language? What would it mean for a language to have no vowels? Why do little children call lorries 'lollies'? Precisely what with this sentence is wrong? - we need to recourse to a theory even to make them coherent. In particular, the author argues that we can find solutions to our puzzles, and explanations for these phenomena, if we exploit on the one hand Chomsky's theory of Generative Grammar, and on the other Sperber and Wilson's theory of Relevance.

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover
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About the Author
Neil Smith was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and University College London, where he received his Ph.D. in Linguistics for research which included a year's fieldwork among the Nupe in Nigeria. He did further research at MIT and UCLA while holding a Harkness Fellowship, and since 1972 has been at UCL, where he is currently Professor of Linguistics. He was chairman of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain from 1980 to 1986. He is married with two sons.

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