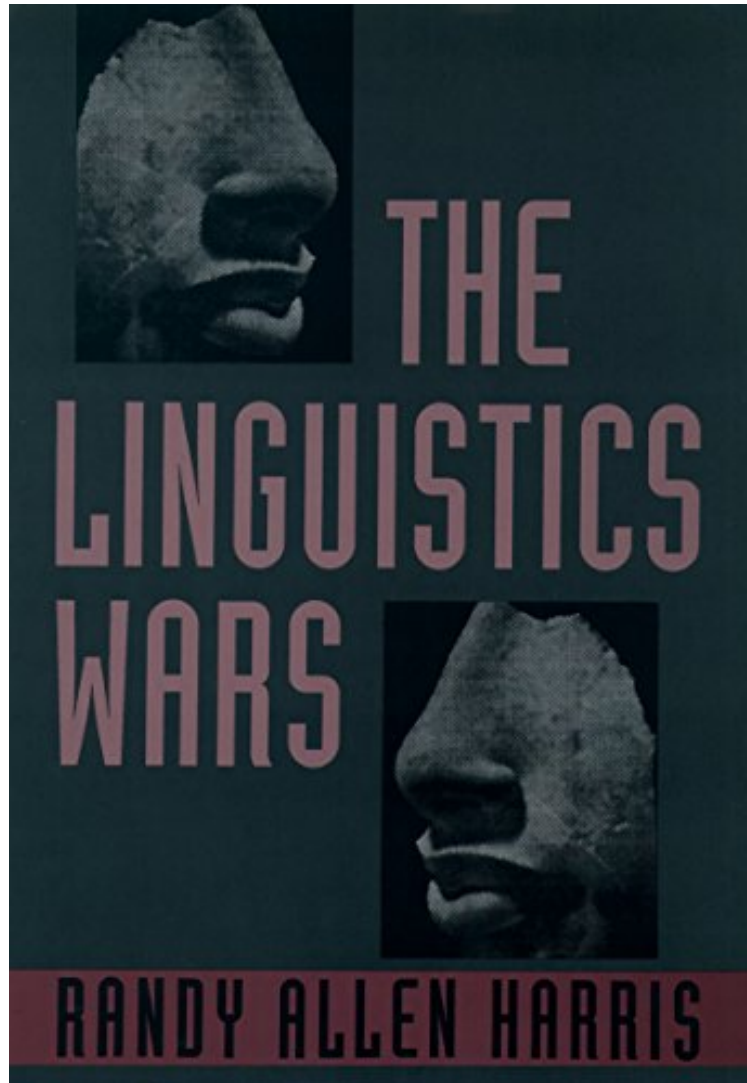


## The Linguistics Wars

Von Randy Allen Harris

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**Von Randy Allen Harris : The Linguistics Wars** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Linguistics Wars:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. One of the best books about linguistics ever writtenVon Kevin B. CohenThis really is one of the best books about linguistics ever written--maybe the best. As a linguist, it brought me to a whole new level of insight about my field. I wish I'd read it before I ever started graduate school, instead of afterwards--every graduate student should read this before taking their first syntax course.1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. BravoVon Ein KundeI've spent months looking for a survey of twentieth century linguistics that explains the models and theories as well as the

politics behind it all. This is the book. Buy it, enjoy it.

**Kurzbeschreibung** When it was first published in 1957, Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structure* seemed to be just a logical expansion of the reigning approach to linguistics. Soon, however, there was talk from Chomsky and his associates about plumbing mental structure; then there was a new phonology; and then there was a new set of goals for the field, cutting it off completely from its anthropological roots and hitching it to a new brand of psychology. Rapidly, all of Chomsky's ideas swept the field. While the entrenched linguists were not looking for a messiah, apparently many of their students were. There was a revolution, which colored the field of linguistics for the following decades. Chomsky's assault on Bloomfieldianism (also known as American Structuralism) and his development of Transformational-Generative Grammar was promptly endorsed by new linguistic recruits swelling the discipline in the sixties. Everyone was talking of a scientific revolution in linguistics, and major breakthroughs seemed imminent, but something unexpected happened--Chomsky and his followers had a vehement and public falling out. In *The Linguistic Wars*, Randy Allen Harris tells how Chomsky began reevaluating the field and rejecting the extensions his students and erstwhile followers were making. Those he rejected (the Generative Semanticists) reacted bitterly, while new students began to pursue Chomsky's updated vision of language. The result was several years of infighting against the backdrop of the notoriously prickly sixties. The outcome of the dispute, Harris shows, was not simply a matter of a good theory beating out a bad one. The debates followed the usual trajectory of most large-scale clashes, scientific or otherwise. Both positions changed dramatically in the course of the dispute--the triumphant Chomskyan position was very different from the initial one; the defeated generative semantics position was even more transformed.

Interestingly, important features of generative semantics have since made their way into other linguistic approaches and continue to influence linguistics to this very day. And fairly high up on the list of borrowers is Noam Chomsky himself. The repercussions of the Linguistics Wars are still with us, not only in the bruised feelings and late-night war stories of the combatants, and in the contentious mood in many quarters, but in the way linguists currently look at language and the mind. Full of anecdotes and colorful portraits of key personalities, *The Linguistics Wars* is a riveting narrative of the course of an important intellectual controversy, and a revealing look into how scientists and scholars contend for theoretical glory. From Publishers Weekly In this evenhanded, trenchant and witty academic chronicle, Harris looks at the fierce, acrimonious controversies that have rocked linguistics since the 1950s. At center stage is Noam Chomsky whose search for the innate structures underlying language revolutionized what had been primarily a descriptive, behavioristic science. Chomsky's followers, notably George Lakoff, James McCawley, Paul Postal and Haj Ross, came to view Chomskyan "deep structure" as a barrier to forging a link between sound and meaning. Their work, known as generative semantics, has been denounced by Chomsky as a heresy, but Harris, an English professor in Britain, credits generative semantics with making linguistics a vibrant, pluralistic field by introducing a crop of phenomena and methods which Chomsky had ignored. At the moment "things don't look especially bright" for Chomsky's model of language and mind, opines Harris, who asserts that the embattled, isolated Chomsky has borrowed ideas from his rivals and erstwhile followers. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

**Pressestimmen** "I enjoyed *The Linguistics Wars* immensely. Randy Harris writes with erudition and wit and always succeeds in presenting a balanced view of the controversies that have raged in the history of generative grammar. He made me reconsider a number of positions that I have argued for in my own work; typically, even where I remained in disagreement with him, he made me appreciate a complexity to the issues that I had overlooked."--Frederick J. Newmeyer, author of *The Politics of Linguistics and Linguistic Theory of America* "In this evenhanded, trenchant and witty academic chronicle, Harris looks at the fierce, acrimonious controversies that have rocked linguistics since the 1950s."--Publishers Weekly "Through his deep and extensive research, Randy Allen Harris has managed to throw new light on the schism in generative linguistics which indelibly colored the period from the late sixties to the late seventies. His insightful account of this period and the major figures involved reveals many new aspects of the disagreements and disputes at issue and the features of fact, theory and personality which underlay them. Future study of this period in linguistics will surely be shaped by this excellent work, which captures very closely the feel of what went on. I am inclined to say that the level of scholarship which the author manifests on nearly every page in many ways puts to shame that of much of the material he deals with."--Paul M. Postal [Note: no affiliation, per author request]