

# Language and linguistics

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## LINGUISTIC THEORY

- 77-1 **Sampson, Geoffrey.** Good grammars or good theory of language? A novel problem for the philosophy of science. *York Papers in Linguistics* (York), 6 (1976), 9–20.

Linguistics is a two-level subject, involving theories about individual languages (grammars) and second order general theories of language. In such a subject, preferred theories at either level may be incompatible with theories at the other level. It has been suggested that a simplicity criterion be allowed to interact with the strength criterion in deciding between theories; but it is unclear what the nature of the relationship should be when these two conflict. For instance, in many cases where we happen not to have observed an utterance of some sentence which would be well-formed if the language in question were regular, we are faced with the choice of treating the sentence as well-formed (and therefore adopting a less than maximally strong grammar) or treating it as ill-formed (and weakening the second order theory by allowing languages to display a novel kind of irregularity). Relatively formalised theory-choice criteria propounded by philosophers of science do not handle the situation where theories whose falsifier sets are disjoint are incompatible. Thus the two-level nature of linguistic methodology seems to generate a problem as yet unsolved by a philosophy of science of a Popperian nature.

- 77-2 **Wexler, Kenneth and others.** Learning-theoretic foundations of linguistic universals. *Theoretical Linguistics* (Berlin), 2, 3 (1975), 214–53.

The task of formulating an adequately explanatory linguistic theory is considered to be the task of constraining the class of possible grammars so that a plausible language learner can learn any member of the class. Some results in language-learnability theory are cited. The criterion of learnability leads to a variety of interesting empirical claims about the nature of constraints on transformations in natural language, the relationship between semantic and syntactic structure, universals of constituent order, and the course of language acquisition. Some suggestive results in support of these claims are presented.

- 77-3 **Yartseva, V. N.** Типология языков и проблема универсалий. [Language typology and the problem of universals.] *Вопросы языкознания* (Moscow), 2 (1976), 6-16.

In a typological analysis it is useful to take account of the concepts and procedures established in practical linguistic investigations of material relating to a single language. The relationship between form and content, homonymy and synonymy in morphology and syntax, the interrelationship of lexis and grammar – these and many other problems are of just as much interest currently in the field of typology as they are in the field of general grammar. The point is, however, that in the analysis of typologically different languages many categories of lexis and grammar should be examined from a particular point of view, i.e. in terms of what items can be grouped together under the same category, what items are interchangeable, in terms of quantitative indices – frequencies of occurrence as a whole, their relative significance for one language or another. The method of analysing transforms belonging to the surface structure and corresponding to the underlying deep structure is of little use in typological research and can be applied only in certain cases. It can be useful as a means of establishing points at which separate structural units of different languages meet, but not as a method for the description of complete systems.

**SEMANTICS** See also abstracts 77-27, -79

- 77-4 **Leech, Geoffrey N.** Being precise about lexical vagueness. *York Papers in Linguistics* (York), 6 (1976), 149-65.

Labov proposes a relaxation of the strict categorial approach to meaning to give an account of semantics in terms of degrees of membership of a category. The author accepts criticism of the categorial approach and attempts a fuzzy-categorial approach to lexical semantics, based on experimental evidence. Labov, though, fails to distinguish denotative and connotative vagueness, considers only words with physical reference, and restricts informant testing to the naming of objects. An alternative research strategy is proposed in which subjects respond to linguistic stimuli; for example, given sentence 1: *The object that Susan is holding is a cup*, the subject is asked to judge the truth of the sentence 2: *The object that Susan is holding has a handle*. Such a procedure can also handle abstract criteria: *The person that wrote this book is a sage/— is wise*. It can also give the same treatment to physical and functional criteria.

An experiment to derive a tentative fuzzy-set definition of *cup* is outlined. The results suggest that both methods suffer from incompleteness, but have, in other areas, complementary weaknesses and strengths and should be used conjunctively.

- 77-5 **Paducheva, E. V.** Некоторые проблемы моделирования соответствия между текстом и смыслом в языке. [Some problems in the modelling of the correspondence between meaning and text in language.] *Серия литературы и языка* (Moscow), 34, 6 (1975), 548-58.

A short evaluative summary of Mel'chuk's 'meaning  $\leftrightarrow$  text' model is given. Of central importance is the notion of synonymy, since the main function of the model is to associate a given 'meaning' with all possible texts having that meaning on the one hand, and on the other to associate a given text with all possible meanings which that text can have. The need for an explicit, unambiguous semantic meta-language for the description of meaning is thus paramount. Despite this fact, the semantic transcriptions in Mel'chuk's book serve a purely illustrative function and give rise to the following problems. (1) The semantic language illustrated in the book seems to be language specific, but as such can not serve as a universal meta-language for the representation of non-language-specific meaning. (2) Such a language must itself be free of ambiguity and synonymy, yet even in formal, logical languages this problem persists. It must be stressed that the semantic representations in Mel'chuk are not the only ones possible. (3) It is assumed that in setting up the correspondence between meanings and texts it is not necessary to describe semantic collocation restrictions (which are not observed, for example, in the well-known collocation *kruglyy kvadrat*). It is thus proposed to describe the semantic language purely on the level of syntactic well-formedness. (4) Postulated lexemes in a semantic language are permissible, but they must be intuitively understandable. In this respect more semantic clarification is necessary for the lexemes *imet'* and *kauzirovat'*. (5) An immeasurably more complex representation is required for those semantic aspects of an utterance which are connected with its actual realisation. In this respect the lexeme *moment ryechi* is inadequate.

## LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS *See also*

*abstracts* 77-15, -20, -26/7, -74

- 77-6 **Cattell, Ray.** Constraints on movement rules. *Language* (Baltimore, Md), 52, 1 (1976), 18-50.

A single derivational constraint is here proposed to account for the same data as Ross's Complex NP, Sentential Subject, and Co-ordinate Structure Constraints. However, if constraints on derivations are not only to prevent the generation of structurally ill-formed strings, but also to illuminate their ungrammaticality fully, they must be combined with certain conditions on structure. It is claimed that the proposed derivational constraint and structural

principles are deeply motivated by the nature of the grammar itself, and that their implications for the theory of innateness are rather different from those normally cited for Ross's constraints.

**77-7**     **Hetzron, Robert.** Two principles of genetic reconstruction. *Lingua* (Amsterdam), **38**, 2 (1976), 89-108.

Two principles useful for genetic classification, inherent in earlier work, are proposed here more explicitly. The principle of archaic heterogeneity implies that when cognate systems (i.e. paradigms) in related languages are compared, the system that exhibits the most inner heterogeneity is likely to be the closest to the ancestor-system. The principle of shared morphological innovations limits the scope of the Brugmann-Delbrück principle of shared innovations. The most arbitrary elements of language are the phonetic shape of morphological and lexical items (the requirement of arbitrariness safeguards against possible developments due to general tendencies), and the phonetic shape of morphological items is the least likely to be borrowed (as against lexical items). [A sketch of Semitic classification is presented to illustrate the principles.]

## DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

**77-8**     **Ellis, Jeffrey.** The role of the concept of text in the elaboration of linguistic data. *York Papers in Linguistics* (York), **6** (1976), 91-107.

Three concepts of text are distinguished: (1) being a text, demarcated from another, (2) being *text*, having the aspect or function of language that constitutes this, and (3) having the *structure* of a text. The syntagmatic cut into texts brings about the paradigmatic cut into registers, since it is when the range of language variation within one text is compared with that in others that broad patterns within the variation can be discerned. Register, generalised, may then help to demarcate texts in particular instances.

Registers differ on all three concepts of text. The most fundamental difference is between spoken and written language; spoken and written data call for differential application of the text concept at the lowest level, that of demarcation. At the level of linguistic conclusions, the text concept is crucial in further differentiating spoken and written, a central case being informational structuring. Although the primacy of dialogue is recognised, 'text' was and often still is applied to written language only, so it is descriptively useful to have a term for any language organised by the textual function, and a framework which to investigate it.

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### SOCIOLINGUISTICS *See also abstracts 77-72, -77*

- 77-9 **Carter, Sheila and Craig, Dennis.** The language learning aptitudes of Jamaican children at the beginning of secondary school. *Caribbean Journal of Education* (Jamaica), 3, 1 (1976), 1-21.

Against the background of the creole-language situation in Jamaica, the need for a study of language aptitudes is examined. The relevance of Carroll's theory of language aptitudes to the Jamaican situation is explored, together with the implications of a comparison of children's performance in language-aptitude and learning-potential tests. The findings suggest that performance in both types of test is strongly influenced by social-class factors. The communication style of creole-influenced speech is different from that required overtly or covertly in most types of test performance; this specific factor could be responsible for the results discussed.

- 77-10 **Edwards, A. D.** Speech codes and speech variants: social class and task differences in children's speech. *Journal of Child Language* (London), 3, 2 (1976), 247-65.

The speech of children aged 11, in socially contrasted groups, was analysed across a range of communicative tasks. On most 'traditional' measures, consistent group differences did not appear. There were significant differences on measures directly derived from the 'planning principles' said by Bernstein to underlie restricted and elaborated codes. Even on these, however, there was considerable task variation. There was no evidence of rigidity in the speech of the lower-working-class children, and no evidence of a persistent orientation to one code rather than the other.

### PSYCHOLINGUISTICS *See abstract 77-43*

### LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN *See also abstract 77-36*

- 77-11 **Landes, James Earle.** Speech addressed to children: issues and characteristics of parental input. *Language Learning* (Ann Arbor, Mich), 25, 2 (1975), 355-79.

The linguistic environment of the child was largely taken for granted by the generative grammarians of the 1960s because of their emphasis on innate ideas as a basis for first-language acquisition. Only recently have researchers studied the child's environment linguistically, indicating that not only are adults sensitive to and affected by the need to communicate with their children, but that

interaction patterns between parent and child change according to the increasing language skill of the child. These interaction patterns are linguistically summarised in terms of their syntactic and stylistic features. Such features include sentence complexity, number of transformations involved, types of sentences addressed to the child, the use of repetition, modelling, correcting, baby talk register, and the speed of delivery. All of these features are correlated with the age of the child, but many relationships are still unexplored and questions unresolved. If the current trend of research continues, our outlook on the role of parental input in the process of first-language acquisition may change quite drastically.

**BILINGUALISM** See abstract 77-36

**PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY** See also abstracts 77-17, -22, -64  
**76-12 Laver, John.** The semiotic nature of phonetic data. *York Papers in Linguistics* (York), 6 (1976), 55-62.

The paper discusses the nature of phonetic quality and the assumptions underlying the claim to be able to abstract from it phonic totality. The phonic medium signals different sorts of information; thus the ability to distinguish the semiotic function of any vocal feature is crucial to practical work in linguistics. But contrary to accepted belief, phonetic quality is not 'raw data', or 'real', 'concrete'; it is a level of considerable abstraction.

A network of typological distinctions is necessary for an exhaustive analysis of the phonic medium. The *recurrent* features which are the central focus of articulatory phonetics are divided into *exponent* and *concurrent* aspects. Exponent features serve as signals, and are the familiar phonetic features. Concurrent features make up the extrinsic contribution to voice quality. With few exceptions, any feature contributing to voice quality may be attributable in different situations to a different semiotic function. Analysis, by conversationalist or linguist alike, can be very difficult. In questioning the assumptions underlying the concept of phonetic quality, one is led to examine the complementary linguistic concept of voice quality, and see phonetics in a wider framework of semiotics.

**77-13 Roca, Ignacio M.** Who is afraid of universal statements? *Journal of Phonetics* (London), 4, 4 (1976), 83-90.

The idea of 'reciprocal rules' stems from a confusion between the levels of phonetics and phonology which results in the making of taxonomic statements. Such statements (or 'rules') are perfectly legitimate for what they are, but cannot

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possibly be accommodated within the model of generative phonology. What is wanted, instead, is a principled separation of the phonology (which deals with voluntary events related to language-specific patterning) and the phonetics (which studies events of speech performance). By making the output of the phonology the input to the phonetics the problem of a mirror image stop deletion-insertion rule vanishes altogether. Stop deletion is a phonological operation present in some languages (e.g. Catalan), whilst stop insertion is a general automatic process which potentially occurs in all languages. This is also the position of Harms (1973). Empirical investigations of timing in speech lend it additional support.

### LEXICOLOGY *See also abstracts 77–20, –27*

**77–14 Corbin, Danielle.** Le statut des exceptions dans le lexique. [The status of lexical exceptions.] *Langue Française* (Paris), **30** (1976), 90–110.

Attempts have been made to derive rules for the formation of lexical items and two of these (those of Halle and Jackendoff) are examined here with regard to their treatment of the great number of irregularities which occur and which have to be accounted for. Exceptions fall into three categories: (1) idiosyncracies in the formation of words; (2) purely accidental omissions (the important distinction is that between possible and impossible words, not existing and non-existent); and (3) cases where productive and non-productive processes of word formation exist side by side. Non-productive rules are best regarded as purely descriptive. Neither theory is considered adequate but Halle's (based on the idea of generative rules of word formation) is preferred to Jackendoff's (which is based on rules of redundancy and fails to take into account that the stock of possible words of a given language is non-finite). Halle also seems to fit the observable facts of French better. [Bibliography.]

### LEXICOGRAPHY *See abstracts 77–67/8*

## STYLISTICS

**77–15 Anscombre, J.-C. and Ducrot, O.** L'argumentation dans la langue. [Argumentation in language.] *Langages* (Paris), **10**, 42 (1976), 5–27.

In the description of both natural and artificial languages there are three phases: syntactic (with its key term 'grammaticality'); semantic (the determination of truth conditions), and pragmatic (the appropriateness of an utterance to a given

situation). While this threefold distinction is beyond question, difficulties arise in defining the order in which an analysis should proceed, and in the assumption that analysis at each level works solely with the output from the previous stage [scheme]. Such a linear order is in conflict with a view of personal pronouns as semantic markers, and a description of presupposition as persisting in spite of negation.

Conjunctions and quantifiers in the two clauses of a complex sentence must interrelate [examples and discussion]. Decisions between synonymous expressions are shown to involve a pragmatic value termed 'argumentativity'. The semantic description of an utterance must include indicators of its possible use in support of a given conclusion. An 'integrated rhetoric' is elaborated in terms of the illocutionary and perlocutionary functions of utterances, as well as their content [discussion and examples of formulation]. If the act of argumentation is held to be an illocutionary act then some illocutionary acts will be derived from others. It will necessitate a radical revision of the notion of illocution, with its related concepts of argumentation and presupposition.

**77-16 Fonagy, Ivan and Judith.** Prosodie professionnelle et changements prosodiques. [Professional prosody and prosodic changes.] *Français Moderne* (Paris), 44, 3 (1976), 193-228.

Verbal style has taken over the role formerly played by totems in identifying tribes. While prosody has almost no grammatical function and no proper denoting capacity [discussion and references], rhythm and melody are recognisable across distances when words have been lost. With laryngograph equipment of a special kind it can be shown that French speakers distinguish on prosodic information: sermon, scientific lecture, political speech, news bulletin, popular story, lyric poem, tragedy, spontaneous conversation.

A comparison of two prosodies [transcriptions and discussion] shows that a news broadcast is staccato, with no respect for grammatical or semantic links between words, and has a barytonic stress pattern, while a story is told in unified style, with oxytonic stress [tables]. It is possible to compare the stress of the news bulletin with that characteristic of English commentaries broadcast throughout the world [example]. Close observation of stereotypes in occupations directly concerned with language use will give evidence of language undergoing change; marked features such as barytonic stress are capable of spreading beyond the use of a single professional group.