

# Language and linguistics

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## LINGUISTIC THEORY

**75-226 Derwing, B. L.** Linguistic rules and language acquisition. *Cahiers Linguistiques d'Ottawa* (Ottawa), 4, 1 (1975), 13-41.

An outline is given of a linguistic theory which claims to be both conceptually coherent and accessible to empirical justification; i.e. a theory of performance. Only structural configurations such as occur in surface structures are permitted in deep structure; extrinsic rule ordering is rejected because it leads to spurious generalisations; the generality of segmental redundancies is captured by making all phonological rules output conditions on well-formed strings; the TG 'simplicity metric' is rejected in favour of representations which correspond to speakers' articulatory and neuromuscular habits as revealed in performance. The theory claims to embody human abilities (important in language acquisition) to discriminate and to generalise on the basis of pragmatic expectancies. Some inadequacies of the proposal, and possible solutions to them, are discussed. [References.]

**75-227 Schank, R. C. and Wilks, Y.** The goals of linguistic theory revisited. *Lingua* (Amsterdam), 34, 4 (1974), 301-26.

Chomsky's competence theory immunises itself against empirical validation with the claim that only performance theories relate to utterances. Its claim to be neutral between a grammar for the speaker and one for the hearer is specious because deletion transformations and many-to-one mappings make impossible the reconstitution of syntactic and semantic structure from a string of phones by reversing existing rules and processes. This is equally true for generative semantics. By invoking pragmatic inference rules Lakoff's grammar is not strictly a competence theory; but unless it is a notational variant of Chomsky's grammar it must depend on rules which convert logical forms into surface sentences, and no such rules have ever been adumbrated. Hence Lakoff's notion of natural logic is vacuous. All existing transformational theories have been concerned to separate grammatical sequences from ungrammatical ones and assign structural descriptions to them; but a linguistic theory needs to attach meaningful interpretations to all utterances, even deviant ones; to do so it must take account of context and hence the possible inferences of utterances, and allow for a re-run of the interpretive process should the initial run fail (impossible by definition in traditional TG). Thus the goal for linguistics is (or ought to be) a theory of linguistic performance. The only means of validating the

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resulting grammar is by programming a machine to use it in response to natural language stimuli. [References.]

**SEMANTICS** See abstract 75-251

**LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS** See also abstracts 75-242/5

**75-229 Hudson, Richard A.** The meaning of questions. *Language* (Baltimore, Md), **51**, 1 (1975), 1-31.

Polar interrogative sentences (*yes/no* questions) are different from the corresponding declarative sentences not only pragmatically – in terms of the illocutionary forces that utterances of them can have – but also semantically, i.e. in terms of the linguistic analysis of their meaning. Keeping a clear distinction between syntactic, semantic and pragmatic analyses, a very small number of syntactic categories and an equally small (but not isomorphic) number of semantic categories can be isolated, but a virtually unlimited number of illocutionary forces, which result from the interaction of these categories with the total situation. The analysis of ordinary polar interrogatives also applies, without change, to tag questions. [References.]

**75-230 Hutchins, W. J.** Subjects, themes and case grammars. *Lingua* (Amsterdam), **35**, 2 (1975), 101-33.

Case grammar analyses of *buy* and *sell* sentences are discussed. Neither Fillmore nor Anderson account for thematisation; Chafe inadequately associates 'given' information with subjects; Melčuk has the necessary distinct subjectivisation and thematisation rules but cannot account for the passives of English three place predicates. It is proposed that a Fillmore-type phrase marker can be made to account for topicalisation if a Topic node is placed sister to M and P, dominating a NP identical with some NP of the P; it could trigger subjectivisation and topicalisation transformations but could not account for the thematisation of 'new' information. An esoteric semantic deep structure is presented which is said to account satisfactorily for thematisation in English. [References.]

**DISCOURSE ANALYSIS** *See also abstract 75-241*

**75-231 Kahn, E.** Algebraic semantics for narrative. *Linguistics* (The Hague), **141** (1974), 27-33.

A narrative can be treated as a finite automaton which computes various combinations of relations between characters or themes. The set of relations in a narrative is the plot which can be represented by a directed graph that is translated into a finite automaton. If this theory is correct accurate paraphrases of the narrative can each be represented by an automaton which simulates the others. Because the simulation of one automaton by another is not readily decidable by computer it is preferable to make algebraic analogues of them (hence the title). Reference is made to an investigation of plot and allegory in *The faerie queene* and paraphrase in Levi-Strauss's *The raw and the cooked* as tests for the theory. [References.]

**STATISTICAL LINGUISTICS**

**75-232 Frumkina, R. M.** Статистические методы и стратегия лингвистического исследования. [Statistical methods and linguistic research strategy.] *Серия литературы и языка* (Moscow), **34**, 2 (1975), 129-40.

An attempt to review the role of statistical methods (SM) and their place amongst mathematical methods employed in linguistics. SM are widely used, but not always appropriately and consistently. Misconceptions among non-statistical linguists include the idea that statistics is simply for counting and stating frequency of phenomena, results only being partially true or a statement of what was anyway already known; that the measuring of frequency of occurrences is either a laborious process or requires expertise in computer techniques beyond the normal competence of the linguist. In fact, computers have simplified the task of measuring and much work of an inventory-building nature has taken place. But measurement is the means, not the end, of SM in linguistics. The analysis of language, a complex and diffuse system, requires the investigator to separate the random from the regular, the more plausible from the less plausible. Probability method is the basis for the linguist's strategy, SM his meta-language. The linguist must analyse his material in advance to know at what stages to apply SM, and to determine the best mathematical model to apply, since language has dimensions which are indefinite – neither random nor determinate – which cannot be fitted exactly into any one mathematical model.

## SOCIOLINGUISTICS

**75-233 Azimov, P. A. and others.** Современное общественное развитие, научно-техническая революция и язык. [Contemporary social development, the scientific and technical revolution and language.] *Вопросы языкознания* (Moscow), 2 (1975), 3-11.

Social factors have primacy over thought and language; the theories of Chomsky of linguistics as a branch of psychology and generative grammar as a theory of linguistic competence are rejected, at least in part. The scientific and technical revolution, urbanisation, internal migrations, growing specialisation in learning, popularisation of scientific thought and the use of language for computational purposes, all lead to changes in the nature of language. Formality boundaries can be defined on three planes: sociolinguistic, structural and technical, the first two of which can be dealt with on two levels: (1) grammatical and (2) informational. There are 2,500-3,000 languages in the world and these differ according to (a) genetic attributes, (b) typology, (c) volume of social functions (d) level of literacy and (e) number of speakers. The languages of the leading industrial nations become widespread in industrially backward countries and thus their social function becomes more important. The number of languages and dialects is decreasing, but the number of literary languages is increasing because of increasing literacy brought about by mass communications and other factors. The development of social life in all its aspects and contradictions indicates that the rules enumerated here will be the dominant factors in the future development of language.

**75-234 Craig, Dennis R.** Developmental and social-class differences in language. *Caribbean Journal of Education* (Jamaica), 1, 2 (1974), 5-23.

Research into the language ability of children of lower social class is discussed, particularly Chomsky's theory of competence. The different stages of 'lexification' (i.e. the giving of a phonological shape and output) in the processing of messages can appear differently in different speakers although the basic message is the same. These differences are what distinguish the speech of subjects of lower and upper social class. Increasing transformational complexity of language is inevitably accompanied by a slower output of words [diagram of communication formats]. Lower-social-class speech has been shown to have the characteristics of early lexification and upper-social-class speech those of late lexification. Increased rate of speech production, however, may make the language of the early lexifier equal in its capabilities to that of the late lexifier.

A comparison of the language usage of Jamaican children of both classes showed that different language systems were being used. [Details of research procedure and discussion of tables of results.] The advantages of the two

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different communication formats are compared: early lexification produces more vivid and vigorous language but late lexification corresponds with the demands of educators. [Relationship of performance differences and intelligence tests.] [Many references.]

### PSYCHOLINGUISTICS *See also abstract 75-251*

**75-235 Oller, J. W.** Pragmatic mappings. *Lingua* (Amsterdam), **35**, 3/4 (1975), 333-44.

Communication consists of the matching of language structures with paralinguistic attitudes by both speakers and listeners; thus, linguistic units are mapped on to extralinguistic contexts. Paralinguistic attitudes and extralinguistic factors affect language structures, e.g. stress patterns, the order of constituents, the use of honorifics, etc. Communication proceeds on the basis of speaker and hearer expectancies which can be predicted by an inductive learning device that recursively applies an inductive categorisation of recurrent partials of experience to match new tokens with known types (pragmatic mapping). Such a device will account for both language acquisition and the interpretation/production of utterances. [References - not complete.]

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**75-236 Harris, Paul.** Inferences and semantic development. *Journal of Child Language* (London), **2**, 1 (1975), 143-52.

Three experiments with children between five and seven years are described. It is shown that nominal predication of an unknown word by a superordinate term enables young children to make appropriate inferences concerning its attributes. The provision of distinguishing attributes also permits the child to differentiate the unfamiliar word from hyponyms of the superordinate. The results are discussed in relation to semantic development and reasoning in the young child.

**75-237 Povey, Robert and Hill, Eric.** Can pre-school children form concepts? *Educational Research* (Windsor, Berks), **17**, 3 (1975), 180-92.

Fifty-six children between the ages of 2:4 and 4:10 were given tests relating to the acquisition of both 'specific' and 'generic' concepts. Several tests of concept acquisition were devised utilising pictures drawn on card. A number of the children were also given some 'Piagetian questions' concerning class inclusion.

The results conflict with the widely held view (following the writing of Piaget) that pre-school children cannot form generic concepts. Nearly all the children

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were able to identify the specific concepts as presented in the items and about half the group responded appropriately to items involving an understanding of generic concepts. There was a clear and statistically significant relationship between the number of correct answers given to the items and the age and ability levels of the children. This was not the case, however, with the Piagetian test questions which showed no discriminatory power in these respects. It is argued that the Piagetian questions do not represent a sensitive or meaningful measure of concept acquisition at this age level whereas these tests of concept acquisition do appear to present pre-school children with intelligible tasks which allow many of them to demonstrate an understanding of generic concepts involving class inclusion.

### PHONETICS *See also abstract 75-248*

**75-238** Lewis, J. Windsor. Linking /r/ in the general British pronunciation of English. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* (London), 5, 1 (1975), 37-42.

The summaries of the distributional usage of linking /r/ made by Daniel Jones and others are not applicable to current usage. The traditional recommendations to the learner of English as a foreign language need updating. The orthographical *r* in such words as *car*, *more*, *dear*, etc., is nowadays usually heard when a vowel sound comes at the beginning of a following word, even if a pause is possible between the words and even if the linking syllable begins with an /r/. Link only tends to be inhibited when the linking /r/ is part of certain clusters. Confirmatory examples can be seen in phoneticians' transcriptions as well as heard in everyday speech.

The so-called 'intrusive' /r/ link, where an /r/ is inserted by analogy which has no 'justification' in the traditional orthography, is now to be regarded as normal usage after schwa though less than universal after words like *shah* and *saw*. There is fairly strong inhibition against the minority usage of *r*-link between word stem and derivative suffix. The prosodic feature of *r*-link elision is quite common in hesitant, deliberate or markedly leisurely styles on the one hand and in rather markedly fluent or causal styles on the other.

## TRANSLATION

**75-239** Tur, Jaume. Sobre la teoría de la traducción. [On the theory of translation.] *Thesaurus: Boletín del Instituto Caro y Cuervo* (Bogotá, Colombia) 29, 2 (1974), 297-315.

Translation unites theoretical rigour and artistic expression. Faults in interpreting an original, leading to translation errors, cannot be used alone to condemn

a translation. A translator needs stylistic as well as philological comprehension, and comprehension of the whole as a literary piece. The problem of cross-language synonymy is approached; it might wrongly lead to the supposition that fidelity to the values of the original is unobtainable. Like an author, a translator is a subjective interpreter of reality, yet he must treat his text as objective material. Changes in the nature of the typical reader make new translations necessary. A translator may have to make use of stylistic possibilities available in the target language but not in the source language; he has to maximise the use of cross-language equivalences.

Translation, like other art-forms, is subject to two potentially competing norms: fidelity and elaboration. [These are exemplified from German theorists, for in eighteenth-century Germany theorising about translation reached a peak.] A third orientation is towards the reader, and translation may be considered as a means of reproducing on contemporary readers the effect of the original on its contemporary readers. Fidelity is not a criterion for evaluating translations but a possible method of translating; criticism of translation should rest on the application of the method in its historico-cultural context.

## SEMIOTICS

**75–240 Stepanov, J. S.** Some burning issues of contemporary semiotics. *Linguistics* (The Hague), **141** (1974), 53–65.

This is a review of Charles Morris's *Writings on the general theory of signs*. The three aspects of semiotics – semantics, pragmatics and syntax – are defined; they are said to be independent of one another such that one may be described in terms of another. There are linguistic models based on each of the three aspects of semiotics, e.g. Fillmore's case grammar is syntactically based; Melčuk's grammar is semantically based; Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum's *The measurement of meaning* is pragmatically based. Morris's semiotics was established in the behaviourist paradigm and it had a pragmatic basis; one result of this was the growth of philosophical interest in the problem of reference. Benveniste distinguished between a semiotics of system and one of text (cf. *langue* and *parole*). Nowadays semiotics is based on the principles of information theory. Morris saw semiotics extending into the fields of physics, biology, psychology and logic, but having a special relationship with linguistics which he regarded as a proper subpart of it (this is not the view of Peirce, Benveniste and many Soviet scholars). The relationship between semiotics and the theory of art is inconclusively discussed.