# *Language and Linguistics*

## SEMANTICS

**71–1** **Lyons, John.** The meaning of meaning. *Times Literary Supplement* (London), 3,569 (23 July 1970), 795–7.

Semantics is the least well developed branch of linguistics, though, at the present time, there are few who would wish to exclude the study of meaning from linguistics. Two important recent developments are the application of the structural approach to the analysis of vocabulary and a better appreciation of the relationship between grammar and semantics.

The structuralist sees the meaning of a word as a function of the relationships it contracts with other words in a particular lexical subsystem. [Illustrations from colour as a lexical subsystem.] Colour terms vary between languages and cultures and most structural semanticists would say that the vocabularies of any two languages are incommensurable. This means that in many instances literal translation is impossible. The language of any society is an integral part of the culture of that society.

The meaning of a sentence is determined, at least in part, by its grammatical structure. It is only recently, however, that linguists have attempted a systematic account of the relationship between semantics and syntax. [Development of this work traced from Katz, Fodor and others who saw semantics as interpretive, and Chomsky's view of semantics as generative.] The generative theory implies that grammatical structure is to some extent determined by meaning.

A good deal of work at the present time is influenced by componential analysis of vocabulary (an attempt to describe the meaning of words in terms of a universal inventory of semantic components and their possible combinations). The central question is whether the meanings of words in all languages can be described in this way. For the vast majority of words in the vocabulary of a language the

cultural context is all-important and there is no possibility of describing their meaning in terms of purely perceptual components.

**ADF**

## LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

**71–2 Algeo, John.** Tagmemics: a brief overview. *Journal of English Linguistics* (Bellingham, Washington), 4 (1970), 1–6.

The tagmemic school of linguistics has sought to develop theory and praxis to an equal degree. Pike, who developed tagmemic theory, aims at accounting for language as an integral part of the whole of man's life. In doing so he might seem to be in conflict with Hjelmslev, who is concerned with language as an end and not a means of investigation. Pike, however, is concerned with scope not with ends. The tagmemic insistence that language be viewed as part of the whole of human behaviour and that there be a unified theory to account for the whole can be seen in two ways: (1) that behaviour, including language, can be described both from emic (functional) and etic (non-functional) standpoints, and (2) that behaviour, including language, is trimodally structured. The three modes are (1) the feature mode in lexicon, (2) the manifestation mode in phonology, and (3) the distribution mode in grammar. In the grammatical hierarchy there is a basic unit called the tagmeme, evolved by Pike to fill the need for a basic grammatical unit parallel to the phoneme (phonological) and the morpheme (lexical). As Pike has defined the tagmeme it refers to the correlation between a 'slot' or grammatical function, and the class of items that can fill the slot. The theory with which tagmemics has greatest affinities is the systemic or scale-and-category grammar of Halliday. If a synthesis is possible between the linguistic theories competing for attention now, tagmemicists would appear to have made progress in that direction. What is most neglected today is the collection and analysis of raw data. It is in this area that tagmemicists are most effective. [The article is followed by an annotated bibliography on tagmemic theory compiled by Ruth M. Brend.]

**ADN**

## PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

71–3 **Oller, John W., B. Dennis Sales, and Ronald V. Harrington.** Towards consistent definitions of some psycholinguistic terms. *Linguistics* (The Hague), 57 (1970), 48–59.

Though the authors do not hold a negative view of transformational theory, they attempt to underline certain dangers in its premises. The grammatical competence of an ideal speaker-hearer is not a suitable object for an empirical study of language; linguistics like other behavioural sciences must begin with the study of performance; theories which cannot be checked by performance are stagnant. The psycholinguistic terms of transformational theory examined with these points in mind are 'competence' and 'performance'. **AG**

## STYLISTICS

71–4 **Leech, Geoffrey.** The linguistic and the literary. *Times Literary Supplement* (London), 3,569 (23 July 1970), 805–6.

The idea of national schools of thought makes sense in stylistics since discussions of style tend to focus on a particular language and literature. Many English and American critics, however, do not appreciate the application of linguistics to the study of literature, though the same opposition is not to be found in Europe.

It is the 'how' rather than the 'why' of literary effects and judgements that stylistics can help to explain. Artists in words, such as Dylan Thomas, have not decried stylistics. Nevertheless there is a gulf between the critic's subjective interpretation, invoking cultural history, value systems and literary conventions, and the linguist's objective analysis. The process of understanding a poem involves movement between linguistic and critical explanation. Linguistics may also help in the definition and understanding of key terms in the vocabulary of literary theory. (The literary theory of metaphor depends on the linguistic theory of selection restrictions, and how violations of these restrictions are understood.) Linguistics may, by developing more sophisticated models of how language works, help

to sensitize areas of literary response which are current critical blind-spots, for example effects of sound patterning. **AVG**

## COMMUNICATION

**71–5** **Oller, John W.** Linguistics and the pragmatics of communication. *Workpapers in English as a Second Language* (University of California, Los Angeles), 4 (1970), 115–21.

Transformational grammar largely ignores the ordinary use of language. It treats language as a self-contained system, independent of its use as a medium of human communication. Four erroneous conclusions follow from the incorrect premise that language is a self-sufficient formal calculus, the informative use of which is derivative and subsidiary: that psychological principles of association and generalization must be rejected in favour of innate ideas; that deep structure is not related in any knowable way to the perceived world; that a theory of competence, based on an ideal speaker-hearer, is the best foundation for an understanding of real language-performance; and that linguistic theory cannot suggest a sound basis for language teaching.

The conclusion that innate ideas must be postulated is based on the false assumption that the phonetic form of utterances is the only information on which the child may base generalizations. On the contrary, utterances occur in contexts rich in situational information. It seems probable that the very principles rejected by transformational theory constitute the essential ingredients of the innate capacity the child brings to the learning situation.

There is little agreement among transformationalists as to what is meant by deep structure. If deep structures are defined as abstract propositions or underlying sentences, how are they understood unless in terms of extra-linguistic experience?

If language were an abstract calculus, unrelated to the speaker's knowledge of the world, its chief characteristics would be discoverable only within the calculus itself. The primary source of information for a theory of language must be its use in communicative contexts.

Transformational theory fails to account for the speaker's ability to use the language in communicating information.

It is because of the relations which hold between linguistic forms and situational settings that we can use language to communicate. Pragmatics emphasizes not so much entities as their relations in a broad context. Pattern drills should be designed so that the learner uses language in response to a paradigm of situations, the focus being the meaning of what he says. Language derives its value from its use alone.

**AX**



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