Language and linguistics

HISTORY OF LINGUISTICS

70–182   Fried, Vilém. The Prague school and foreign language teaching. *Workpapers in English as a Second Language* (University of California, Los Angeles), (1969), 45–60.

The leading members of the Prague school of linguistics were always interested in the application of functional structuralism to language teaching. The Prague school took the view that neither the translation method nor the direct method could achieve satisfactory results, since they were not based on sound linguistic principles.

The structural system of the learner's mother tongue, the learner's awareness of this system, and the purpose of studying the foreign language all help to determine the methodological approach. Functional linguistics was the first to provide a sound theoretical basis for foreign-language teaching.

[The author summarizes Mathesius' basic principles for the systematic analysis of a language, and refers to various textbook courses based on the views of the Prague school.]

For the Prague school, language is a systemic means which enables the user to express himself in a given situation and for a specific end. There are various patterns of encoding. A foreign-language teaching goal may be identified with a certain functional style.

Three aspects of Prague structuralism should be used to a greater extent in language-teaching theory: comparison of differences and similarities between the learner's mother tongue and the target language, attention to functional styles, and phonemic interference coming from the learner's language.

LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

70–183   Halliday, M. A. K. Relevant models of language. *The State of Language: Educational Review* (Birmingham), **22**, 1 (1969), 26–37.

Linguistics needs to give an account of language that is relevant to the work of the language teacher. It is therefore appropriate to ask what is the language model that the child internalizes as a result of his own experience. He knows that language is an instrument for the realization of his intentions. He soon understands that language also has a regulatory function, that it is used to control him, and he learns to use it to control his peers and play games involving rules. Closely related to this is the function of language in social interaction. The child will also acquire a personal model of language, expressing his own individuality, and a heuristic model derived from his knowledge of how language has enabled him to explore his environment. Children have to be helped to acquire early a 'language for talking about language'. They have an 'imaginative' model which may be a world of pure sound, reinforced by poems, rhymes and riddles. Finally they acquire a representational model, which is the only model that many adults have. The 'ritual' use, reducing language to the level of table-manners, is not part of a child's experience. Bernstein has related educational failure to gaps in the child's linguistic capabilities, failure to operate in the personal and heuristic modes. While the limitations of linguistic experience may be ascribed to the social background, the problem for the teacher is linguistic. The child's awareness of language cannot be isolated from his awareness of language function. This conceptual unity provides a vantage point from which language may be seen in a perspective that is educationally relevant.

BILINGUALISM

70–184 Boileau, Armand. L'acquisition d'une langue seconde à l'âge préscolaire. *Revue des Langues Vivantes* (Brussels), **35**, 6 (1969), 647–58.

Most early studies of the acquisition of two languages by small children describe a home situation in which each parent speaks consistently to the child in a different language. In 1962 Mme Tabouret-Keller described the development of her child who was addressed indiscriminately in the Alsatian dialect and French. In 1967, Mme Rūke-Dravina, a Latvian phonetician emigrated to Sweden, described the development of her two children who heard only Latvian at home. When the elder child went to a Swedish school he rapidly became bilingual and the younger child was influenced by this. A careful study is made here of Rūke-Dravina's book *Mehrsprachigkeit im Vorschulalter*, underlining the problem of the age at which children differentiate between their languages and the adaptability of a young bilingual. Children in a cosmopolitan situation, who learn snatches of several languages very young, will learn those languages with greater ease when they are older. The speed at which a child can learn a second language is discussed and compared with the time taken by an adolescent. The young child is particularly apt at imitating pronunciation and intonation but is obviously unable to reach a more advanced stage in his second language than he has reached in his mother tongue. Monolingual children of different languages playing together seem able to communicate. Questions of interference and translation are examined, and the bilingual's eventual choice of his dominant language—usually that of the milieu in which he works. The principal phases of pre-school acquisition of a second language are noted. From these, it is concluded that the choice of method for the formal teaching of a foreign language at school seems unimportant. Variety is to be recommended because the child will draw on his own comparisons of the mother tongue and the new language presented to him and will learn regardless of the method. No answer is found to the question as to whether bilingualism can be harmful to a child. Mme Rūke-Dravina concludes that psychological harm can come only

if the child has a negative attitude to the speakers and *milieu* of the second language. If this attitude is changed no harm will come through his efforts to acquire bilingual speech.

LINGUISTIC SOCIOLOGY

70–185 John, Vera P. Communicative competence of low-income children: assumptions and programmes. *English Language Teaching* (London), **24**, 2 (1970), 112–19.

Programmes for developing the communicative competence of low-income children in the United States are often based on the 'gap theory'. There is a dearth of alternative theories. Vulgarized forms of Bernstein's concepts are current. The relationship between language forms and social class has become the conceptual framework for many early-intervention programmes. The assumption is often made that mastery of standard English is a prerequisite for the development of abstract thought. Language as a communicative process and language as an intrapersonal process are confused. As knowledge of the development of intrapersonal or conceptual language grows, specialized forms of teaching aimed at all children will be perfected.

Children need to be prepared to be permanent learners and to enjoy an adulthood of increased leisure. Preparing children by methods that hasten their alienation from their fellows will not equip them to re-establish more social ways of communication. There are untapped reservoirs of cultural diversity and linguistic richness within low-income communities. Different cultures may be synthesized. Compensatory programmes in language acquisition added to existing programmes have proved to be insufficient. The introduction of new technological devices could be balanced by programmes of man-to-man classroom experiences, and thus more technical competence and better communicative skill would be simultaneous aims. Major research is needed on the role of language in thought, on language acquisition, on educational ideology (with special reference to the disadvantaged), and on programme evaluation. Training and joint activities are desirable. Socio-

142

linguistically oriented field centres should be established in low-income communities.

WORLD LANGUAGE

70–186 Pazukhin, R. V. К определению универсального кода. [On the determination of a universal code.] *Вопросы языкознания* (Moscow), 5 (1969), 55–67.

Language is a universal means of communication; it is also a sign system, that is to say, a code. The ideal of a universal code therefore springs to mind. A universal code must by definition be applicable in all circumstances and in order to accomplish its task it must contain a mechanism for permuting a limited number of signs which in turn can produce an unlimited number of utterances. Quite apart from the precise number of such utterances—they may be limitless or they may merely represent a large but finite set of combinatorial variants—the problem remains as to whether syntactic or semantic utterances are meant. The use of combinatorial methods mentioned by Bühler and developed by Chomsky and Martinet does not provide an effective solution to the problem of linguistic universalism. Even Humboldt recognized the theoretical dangers of accepting language as an unlimited means of communication, preferring to see language and its speakers, with their *Sprachkraft*, as something infinite but constantly developing in time. In these discussions the gnoseological factor is often left unconsidered. It is important to differentiate between extralinguistic experience not bound by any code and linguistic or code experience, and even more important to examine what considerations guide speakers in their choice of new linguistic material to describe new individual or collective extra-linguistic experiences. The notion that any purely linguistic system is fully and coherently adequate and able to 'cope' with events in the future must be rejected. A language cannot 'know' more about extra-linguistic experience than the sum of its own speakers. It is these extra-linguistic, semiological factors which lend language its universality.

PHONETICS

70–187 Malmberg, B. Linguistic theory and phonetic methods. *English Studies* (Amsterdam), **50**, 5 (1969), 417–35.

Phonetics grew out of nineteenth-century diachronic studies, but general phonetics is synchronic or panchronic. Early this century experimental phonetics passed into the hands of non-linguists. Instrumental results did not explain diachronic sound-change, and the ordinary linguist could not cope with the technical resources. Classical phonetics remained faithful to the auditory perceptual principle and rejected advanced instrumental techniques.

The Indian grammarians and the sixteenth-century teachers of the deaf had a practical aim, but the linguistic descriptions of seventeenth and eighteenth-century scholars were determined by their schematic thinking. Further development towards rational analysis and description was cut off by the rise of diachronic study. Comparative grammar should be distinguished from historical grammar. An unconsciously structural approach underlay even nineteenth-century diachronic linguistics when it was at its best, and was inherent in the idea of sound laws. To be accepted as a science, linguistics had to be historical and technical. Classical phonetics contributed to a better understanding of phonetic laws and to the better teaching of spoken language. The approach of the classical school has been both structural and auditory. The international phonetic alphabet was based on the assumption of language universals. The historical approach concentrated attention on differences. The communication process was neglected. Jespersen and Forchhammer were exceptional as phoneticians interested in finding phonetic universals. If the acoustic or spectographic basis of the distinctive feature system can be replaced by a perceptual one, an adequate description of language universals at the expression level may be attained.

Certain phoneticians declared syllables to be either non-existent or phonological units; but the syllable is a structural unit. [The author describes experiments on consonant–vowel transition, and says that his own research is based on the content–expression dichotomy and

144

on the distinction between form and substance. He comments on Chomsky's, Hjelmslev's, and Martinet's views.]

The tradition from Saussure and Hjelmslev, being formally orientated, brought about a phonemic (or cenemic) analysis based on pure relations. The influence of communication theory led back to auditory signals.

Phonetic–phonemic analysis is not a matter of choosing between a form analysis and a substance analysis: we have to do with a whole series of levels of abstraction among which the descriptivist can choose according to intention and need. On the suprasegmental level a functional definition is the only way of reducing phonetically different elements to simpler and more general units which are linguistically relevant. This may be true of the segmental level too.

Language is a structure with many substructures, one of them being phonemics. The linguistic structure as a whole makes part of a more general structure—social life, etc. The history of phonetics reflects that of linguistics and of the social sciences.

GRAMMAR

70–188 Schmidt, Wilhelm. Skizze der Kategorien und der Methode der funktionalen Grammatik. [An outline of the categories and methodology of functional grammar.] *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung* (Berlin), **22**, 5 (1969), 518–31.

The basic concepts underlying the theory of functional grammar are those of form, meaning and function. Whereas form and meaning are intralinguistic phenomena, function operates in an extralinguistic context and is essentially different from meaning—a difference which has escaped the notice of too many scholars hitherto. Function represented the 'speaker's' intended and often achieved effect of linguistic communication with the 'listener'.

In constructing the hierarchy of conceptual categories in functional grammar the following criteria were felt to be necessary: (*a*) due weight should be given to semantic considerations at all times; (*b*)

145

there should be no confusion of lexical and grammatical resources within language, nor of morphological and syntactic resources within grammar; (c) the sentence should be taken as 'the smallest relatively independent speech-unit'; (d) due attention should be given to the need for objectivity, practicability, simplicity and, in so far as is possible, the retention of the categories and concepts of conventional grammar.

Linguistic data should be viewed and classified on several levels which shed light on both the connexions and the differences between grammar, lexicology and phonology. In this process methodology obviously plays a major role as a system of rules determining the procedure for gaining new insights in various areas of scientific enquiry. In the case of functional grammar the basic procedure is that of metamorphosis. If two levels are involved then it is a question of transformation; within one level elimination, permutation and substitution techniques may be used—the last mentioned may be either grammatical or lexical.

Apart from such manipulative procedures it is also most important to make a qualitative, semantic examination of linguistic data and further to subject such data to a quantitative, statistical analysis.

70–189   Scott, Robert Ian. A permutational test of grammaticality. *Lingua* (Amsterdam), **24**, 1 (1969), 11–18.

The means by which native speakers judge whether or not a sentence is grammatical is not as simple as Chomsky seemed to assume in *Syntactic Structures*. For him, grammaticality means formed by the rules of a successful grammar, but this definition is circular and an operational definition is needed. A permutational test is reported here to show that degrees of grammaticality exist. Taking *subject–verb–object–qualifier* (SVOQ) as the most useful kernel it appears that in English, grammatical sentences are those with not more than two or three of the five possible disruptions of the SVOQ kernel and in English, at least, grammaticality seems to be a function of the SVOQ kernel.

LEXICOGRAPHY

70–190 Ludwig, Klaus-Dieter. Die Farbe in lexicographischer Sicht: aus der Werkstatt des Wörterbuchs der deutschen Gegenwartssprache. [Colour from the point of view of lexicography: illustrated from the Dictionary of Contemporary German.] *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (Leipzig), **6**, 4 (1969), 301–6.

Colour is a problem for linguists. There are thousands of shades which language has only restricted means to represent. Foreign words are added to the basic colour words and compounds are made with others which originally had no relation to colour. Such variety presents the lexicographer with great difficulty. Some of the shades indicated in this way are transitory. By looking at numerous dictionary definitions of 'blue', it is established that it is given first as a colour in the spectrum, and then described by semantically relevant words such as 'sky' and 'sea'. Idiomatic uses follow. A comparison of languages shows that the same area of the spectrum does not have the same name in two languages (v. German, *braun*; English, *brown*). The colours are examined in the Dictionary of Contemporary German in simple form, then with the moderating suffix *-lich*, and then in compound form with other colours, adjectives and nouns. It is clear that only the commonest and most typical definitions can be given.

SCIENTIFIC LANGUAGE

70–191 Phal, André. La recherche en lexicologie au CREDIF: la part du lexique commun dans les vocabulaires scientifiques et techniques. [Research in lexicology at CREDIF: the place of ordinary words in scientific and technical vocabulary.] *Langue Française* (Paris), 2 (1969), 73–81.

Although general vocabulary appears frequently in scientific language, this is not an advantage for the foreign student, who will not know the specialized meaning which a word has acquired. At the Centre for Research and Study for the Diffusion of French in the World

147

(CREDIF) a list of 117 French nouns frequently used in transcription of the specialized speech of law, physics, and the factory was analysed. It was found that eighty were used in two texts and fifty-six in three texts. It was impossible to give a precise meaning for most of the nouns except in context. These words played an important role in syntax at speech level, providing a functional vocabulary and serving as 'pivots' for lexical-syntactic structures. Specialized words show great precision in meaning and will either be drawn from words of classical origin or will be compounds making up a new lexical unity (e.g. *eau lourde*—heavy water). Scientific vocabulary shows great creativity and such compounds will vary greatly in length. Within the longer compounds basic words will appear frequently, revealing a general vocabulary of scientific orientation which has considerable coverage and which is common to many branches of science and technology. This is of particular value for scientists learning a foreign language. Machine aid is necessary to establish this vocabulary which lies on the frontier between lexis and syntax. It is best selected from the major divisions of science at an introductory level. Potential users must be considered; some will be grammar-school pupils and others overseas scientists and technicians.

CREDIF undertook the preparation of such a vocabulary and drew on some 40,000 forms, classified according to frequency and distribution, from science books for senior secondary-school pupils. Textbooks and duplicated notes for first-year university science students will be examined next, and finally works such as technical encyclopaedias, popular journals and research reports.

COMMUNICATION

70–192 Tarnóczi, L. Zur Frage der Abkürzungszeichen. [On the question of abbreviatory signs.] *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung* (Berlin), **22**, 3 (1969), 272–84.

The category of abbreviatory signs may be said to include not only abbreviations proper but also various symbols which reflect certain

concepts directly. One possible classification for these units considers abbreviations (in the strict sense of the term), designations and symbols. Graphemes normally constitute a deficient phonemic representation but in the case of abbreviatory devices their phonemic realization may exhibit wide divergences. The meaning of abbreviations proper is often dependent on context and can be materially affected by phenomena such as capitalization and punctuation marks. Designations are letters or letter combinations without a full-stop and they usually denote units of measure or scientific designations such as chemical elements. The International System of Units, dating back to 1960, has not had the desired standardizing effect and many national deviations continue to flourish. Symbols, on the other hand, are graphical signs and modern ideograms and, although they are much more widely accepted with one specific meaning, variations do occur. In general, abbreviations, designations and symbols give way in speech to their full forms. However, there is an increasing tendency, especially in certain scientific and technical terminologies, to pronounce new 'words' consisting of initials or truncated elements; this category also includes brand names. The proliferation of new items of this type is a dangerous phenomenon as such innovations may refer in a given context to a concept well known to those conversant with that context but will be unintelligible to the uninitiated, or may even have another meaning in another context. International standardization of such abbreviatory signs is now of prime importance.

CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTICS

70–193 Banathy, Bela M. and Paul M. Madarasz. Contrastive analysis and error analysis. *Journal of English as a Second Language* (New York), **4,** 2 (1969), 77–92.

Contrastive linguistic analysis can only point toward a potential learning problem or difficulty. On the other hand, error analysis can tell us the intensity of this difficulty or the size of the problem. Thus it appears that in designing a pedagogical grammar both are needed with error analysis complementing the findings of contrastive lin-

149

guistic analysis. [The research work supporting the article was carried out by the American Defense Language Institute while teaching Hungarian to American students of varying backgrounds who had never been exposed to Hungarian before.]