

# Language and linguistics

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## HISTORY OF LINGUISTICS

**71–86 Aarsleff, Hans.** The history of linguistics and Professor Chomsky. *Language* (Baltimore), **46**, 3 (1970), 570–85.

Chomsky's version of the history of linguistics is fundamentally false. He relies on inferior sources, is ignorant of the general intellectual history of the period, takes for granted that everything of value in eighteenth-century linguistic theory is Cartesian, and fails to grasp the nature and importance of universal grammar. The term 'Cartesian' is not historically justified in regard to the linguistic theory of the Port-Royal grammar. Locke and not Descartes was dominant in the period from 1660 to the Romantics. Condillac's *Essai* was the most influential work in eighteenth-century linguistics.

**ABT**

## GENERAL LINGUISTIC THEORY

**71–87 Spenter, Arne.** Inhaltskategorien. [Content categories.] *Publication no. 1 Copenhagen School of Economics and Business Administration Language Department* (Copenhagen), **1** (1970), 84–94.

The differentiation between form of expression (represented by sounds and letters) and content or meaning is crucial for the understanding of language. Content is not necessarily tied to a word but can be expressed by a morpheme or a vowel change. [An article by Hjelmslev is quoted which lists tense, case, person, mood, number and gender as content categories. The author concentrates on gender in his discussion of content categories.]

Many linguists believe that gender in German and French is generally not related to natural sex and that it is without meaning. Hjelmslev, however, maintains that gender goes back to a basic

meaning with three dimensions [listed] and is part of a number-gender category. He investigates nouns with more than one gender and regards those with only one gender as defective. [Examples from Danish.] The conclusion drawn from several German examples is that the masculine gender tends to express limitation, concentration, whereas the feminine is more expansive.

The author suggests two subcategories for the number-gender category [listed, diagram given]. Several writers on the nature of gender are quoted: Hansen, who regards genders as variants within a paradigm; Glinz, who divides genders into natural and grammatical, the latter being purely formal and devoid of meaning; Weisgerber, who stresses the syntactic function of gender, mainly for the purpose of congruence; Weinold, who recognizes some semantic value in the gender, apart from its syntactic function.

**AD**

**71-88** **Algeo, John.** Stratificational grammar. *English Teaching Forum* (Washington), **8**, 4 (1970), 11-15.

New linguistic theories rapidly follow one another. Stratificational theory is undeveloped. The term is used in three senses: to indicate the view that a language consists of a number of strata or subsystems, to designate a model of language developed chiefly by Lamb and Gleason, and to refer to a system of notation. Stratified grammar recognizes six strata: two semiological, two grammatical, and two phonological. [The author explains these strata.] Strata are interconnected by realization rules. Any text exists on all the strata simultaneously. A text is a complete set of relationships linking a piece of human experience to sound waves. Two texts may be identical or similar on one stratum but different on some other. A properly stratified description can handle any kind of homonymy or synonymy. Process statements are unnecessary. Stratificational grammar can be written in quasi-normal English or in quasi-algebraic formulae, or in the kind of diagrams used by Lamb. It offers an alternative to transformational grammar, aims at accounting not only for sentences but for more extensive texts, and proposes itself as a model not only

for the abstract system underlying the process of language but for the process itself.

ADB AK

## LINGUISTIC SOCIOLOGY

**71–89 Sabatino, Marilia.** Il rapporto linguaggio–società: dati di una ricerca. [Relation between language and society – results of an enquiry.] *Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata* (Rome), 2, 2 (1970), 729–42.

Awareness by linguists of the influence of social environment upon language goes back to Saussure.

According to Bernstein, there are two codes of expression: the ‘restricted’, characterized by elliptic expressions, abundance of personal pronouns, syntactical and lexical poverty, peculiar to those with little cultural contact; and the ‘elaborated’ code, allowing for the presentation of abstract ideas with richer expression, reflecting a more expansive social environment. Three French observers have devised a grid for error classification, adaptable to Italian; this permits analysis of errors on the basis of their possible restitution in correct form; errors were shown to be based on misconception of the grammatical rule, thus indicating that the type of error rather than the number is worth further study.

[The author examined, referring to the methods indicated, the correlations between social environment and linguistic attainment. His study was based on middle-school pupils belonging to three different social groups: working class, agricultural workers and bourgeoisie. Results showed that a particular environment has a determining influence on linguistic capacity and expression. The author proposed that efforts should be made to revivify the Italian taught in middle schools by narrowing the gap between written and oral and between standard and dialect usage, by revising the criteria for language based on antiquated linguistic values, and by considering the creation of a ‘standard’ Italian incorporating those usages which belong to the spoken language.] [Bibliography.]

AFK

- 71-90 **Zabrocki, Ludwig.** Kommunikative Gemeinschaften und Sprachgemeinschaften. [Communicating groups and speech communities.] *Folia Linguistica* (The Hague), 4, 1/2 (1970), 2-23.

Although linguists have shown great interest in speech communities 'communicating groups' have hardly been investigated, with the exception of some narrowly defined groups such as those linked by political, cultural or geographical ties. Today such communicating groups include technicians, doctors, linguists, who all need to understand other national languages as well as the language of their own special fields in order to have a comprehensive picture of the present state of knowledge in their particular subject. Ideally, specialists today should master at least two languages. It would be economical if one language could be the language of one occupation. English is the dominant language in shipping and flying and will soon dominate commerce also. The acceptance of 'conference' languages (English, Russian, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Chinese and sometimes Arabic) already limits the number of important national languages of communication.

It is essential that a scientific base for the acquisition of foreign languages be developed speedily, and from this need springs the increasing study of linguistics and the appearance of more and more linguistic journals. Attempts have been made to develop an artificial world language but these remain as attempts. Such a language can never replace a natural language. Attempts at machine translation have also been made to speed up communication, but these could only serve the written language and would be too costly for most potential users. The twentieth century needs massive and speedy exchange of information. Modern world economy depends upon it and the present barriers can only be overcome with the help of the linguists.

**AFK**

## SYNTAX

- 71-91 Wang, Marilyn D.** The role of syntactic complexity as a determiner of comprehensibility. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* (New York), **9**, 4 (1970), 398-404.

Miller and Chomsky suggested in 1963 that the psychological limitations of the listener which make some complex sentences difficult to understand are primarily limitations of short-term memory. The hypothesis that comprehensibility is a function of syntactic complexity was therefore investigated. Seventy-five sentences, ranging in length from five to twenty-nine words, each with a different syntactic structure, were recorded and judged for comprehensibility by forty students. Results implied that surface-structure complexity *is* a significant determiner of sentence comprehension, but its importance relative to other factors such as deep structure and semantic content may be small. [Details of measurement and scoring given.]

AKN ATL

## COMPARATIVE GRAMMAR

- 71-92 Giuliani, M. Vittoria.** Grammatica trasformazionale e grammatica correlazionale. [Transformational grammar and correlational grammar.] *Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata* (Rome), **1**, 2 (1969), 117-24.

Without expounding the essentials of either transformational or correlational grammar one may contrast the solutions offered by both. They share a critical attitude to traditional linguistic theory, both on theoretical grounds and because of the uselessness of its grammars in solving problems of linguistic analysis, e.g. mechanical translation. They also agree in recognizing the mental aspect of language, in searching for language universals, in aiming at descriptive and non-normative grammar, and constructing grammars in terms suitable for mechanization.

Chomsky regards the mind as static. He does not describe the

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operational steps by which the mind carries out the 'creative' arithmetic at the root of linguistic production, nor does he state the relationship between production of designator and production of designatum. The originality of the correlational position is that it sees the human mind as a complex of operations which can be described and analysed in positive terms without recourse to philosophy. For Chomsky, *statua marmorea* and *statua di marmo* have the same deep structure and differ only in surface structure. According to the transformationalists the underlying thought is the same, ignoring the obvious fact that now only one, now only the other expression is appropriate.

Correlational grammar offers a more convincing solution. The thought is seen operationally as a construction of correlational structures in which two correlata are joined together by a third, called the correlator, a mental category of relationship. (450) AKT