

# *Language and linguistics*

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## SEMANTICS

- 72-1 **Shreider, Yu. A.** Basic trends in the fields of semantics. *Statistical Methods in Linguistics* (Stockholm), 7 (1971), 50-9.

Works on semantics have three trends: logical, linguistic and ontological. All the approaches attempt to solve the same problems of what meaning is and in what terms it can be stated. Logical semantics studies formal sign systems. Linguistic semantics (semasiology), working on a base of concrete language material, seeks to elucidate the inherent organization of a natural language and study those properties of natural language which make it possible to construct observable semantic diagrams. It attempts to show how best to name an infinite number of objects and phenomena using the limited vocabulary available. Working away from a study of texts, it tries to formulate the inherent regularities of languages and construct a system of basic relations. The investigations of logical and linguistic semantics are not only different in nature and method but in many cases are opposite approaches to the study of the meaning of lingual expressions. This does not contradict the fact that semantics is a single science.

Ontological semantics is a new trend of logico-philosophical investigations which have not yet received a generally accepted name and are devoted to the study of various philosophic aspects of the relationship between the sign and the signified. It studies the properties of extralinguistic reality using the methods of mathematical logic. One recent investigation is devoted to an enquiry into the nature of logical paradoxes and ways of eliminating them. Works on the theoretical foundations of library classification, particularly on a facetal system, should be assigned to the field of ontological semantics.

**ADF**

## LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

### LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

72-2 **Coblans, Herbert.** Words and documents. *ASLIB Proceedings* (London), **23**, 7 (1971), 337-50.

Standardization of language is a priority today for the successful storage and retrieval of information. This causes problems because natural language cannot be standardized while Esperanto or any other artificially standardized language can only function as a common language of communication at a very inadequate level. Valuable insights into the problems of information retrieval came with the growing understanding of the key role of natural language in the 'fifties and early 'sixties. The impact of computer achievements in the post-war period increased interest in the discipline of linguistics, though investment in computers for linguistic research may not have advanced our understanding of the use or nature of language. Nevertheless the rigour demanded by the handling of textual material in a computer showed gaps in syntactic and semantic studies. Although the vigour and variability of natural language defies standardization and automation, documentalists have to elucidate it and campaign against its abuses. New terms are constantly being coined and there are no simple solutions to the search for a common language of communication. At best a few of the great languages of human discourse can be fostered and these will probably be increasingly accepted as the languages of international exchange. This would mean that the main tools of documentation need only be standardized in a few key languages. In the foreseeable future, books and periodicals will not disappear but will be extended and supplemented; new technology will modify rather than revolutionize existing methods of treating information.

**ADN AXM**

- 72-3 **Mitchell, T. F.** Linguistic 'goings on': collocations and other lexical matters arising on the syntagmatic record. *Archivum Linguisticum* (Menston, Yorkshire), 2 (1971), 35-69.

An attempt is made in this paper to develop the Firthian concept of collocation and to define it more closely than hitherto. Interrelated lexical categories of a syntagmatic kind are considered as well as the status of 'word'. Concern is principally with 'forms of language' but this interest is seen against the background of a total approach to meaning.

ADN

- 72-4 **Ward, Dennis.** Diachrony and register: an aspect of the study of contemporary language. *Forum for Modern Language Studies* (University of St Andrews), 7, 2 (1971), 170-82.

Historical linguistics has probably benefited from the development of descriptive linguistics in that it can now be seen as a study of shifting systems and of the replacement of one system by another. The term 'synchronic', used interchangeably with 'descriptive' linguistics has been defined as describing a state of a language (1) at a given time and (2) during time in which it is assumed that no changes are taking place. These two points are studied and the problem of deciding what is 'contemporary' is discussed. If, in a synchronic study, innovations and rejections occurring within the chosen period are described, something must be known about an earlier state of the language for purposes of comparison. A diachronic study going backwards in time might be the most appropriate, though this does not need to be carried right back through the centuries. Diachrony interacts with register. That which is obsolescent or even obsolete in one register may not be so in another register. [Examples illustrate diachrony in grammar and lexis.] Diachrony will also be manifested in phonology and phonetics. [In a second part of the article some examples of diachrony features from English and Russian are adduced and an attempt is made to categorize them.]

ADN AVD

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

- 72-5 **Graham, Louella W. and Arthur S. House.** Phonological oppositions in children: a perceptual study. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* (New York), 49, 2 (part 2) (1971), 559-65.

The general properties of language systems are visible in the processes by which children acquire language. Speech-sound production by individual children over a long period has been studied, but little attention has been given to perceptual ability. [The authors describe an experiment in which young children were required to respond 'same' or 'different' to pairs of English consonant sounds presented.] A detailed analysis showed that children's errors were similar to, though more numerous than, adults' errors. Results did not support the view that current linguistic descriptions can identify the ways in which children categorize speech sounds.

AGR AJ

PROSODIC FEATURES

- 72-6 **Crystal, David.** Relative and absolute in intonation analysis. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* (London), 1, 1 (1971), 17-28.

It is conceivable that an intonation system should have various characteristics, some explicable on relativistic principles, others through some concept of absolute pitch.

The concept of absolute pitch should not be defined solely in terms of fundamental frequency. The idea of absolute definition in such terms is not a precise one. A voice-type or voice-quality is a complex phenomenon, and it may be that some combination of features is used in a fixed, absolute way. Perhaps there are correlations between frequency and other kinds of vocal effect which are constant throughout a person's range.

The range of pitches is not in principle infinite. The number of possible discriminations at any given reference level is restricted. If the relativity hypothesis is restricted to explain pitch and other varia-

tions which do not affect meaning, then the point should be clearly made. There are limits to the amount of variability subsumable under the heading of any linguistically significant pitch level. There is something not relative in an intonation system, something which provides a consistently recognizable invariant basis from person to person.

The range of conditioning factors can be made explicit, or an absolutely defined pitch level can be postulated to which pitch variations can be related. Other factors than the speaker's voice-range or voice-type affect pitch relativity. The evidence from voice stereotypes is important. We do not hear unlimited variability within an individual's voice, nor unlimited variability between individuals. Speakers learn a finite set of standardized perceptual values, derived from a selection of the available range of vocal effects, which combine in different ways to produce a set of semantic stereotypes. A person's intonation system will be interpreted within the vocal stereotype people have of him. Intonational contrastivity is explicable only within a framework of absolute values.

There is evidence that a person's 'natural speaking level' has a neurophysiological basis. Recognition of a norm of pitch level is both economical and a means of relating observations about linguistic structure and semantic effect. [The author describes an experiment which suggested that people tend to identify two ranges of pitch independently of voice-type and voice-quality.] An unqualified relativistic view of intonation is as untenable as an unqualified absolutist one.

**AJP**