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# REVIEW ARTICLE

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## DISCUSSING LANGUAGE AND THE LANGUAGE OF LINGUISTS\*

Herman Parret, *Discussing Language*. Dialogues with W. L. Chafe, N. Chomsky, A. J. Greimas, M. A. K. Halliday, P. Hartmann, G. Lakoff, S. M. Lamb, A. Martinet, J. McCawley, S. K. Šaumjan and J. Bouveresse. Mouton: The Hague-Paris, 1974. Pp. viii + 428, Dfl. 45.-.

Reviewed by LEONHARD LIPKA, *University of Munich*

### 1. *Linguistics: its development and representatives.*

1.1. The book under discussion provides a very good starting point for a consideration of what is sometimes called 'the state of the art'. It gives a useful survey of how a number of eminent and representative linguists view language, and, at the same time, of how they themselves use language when they discuss language. Linguistic terminology and the language linguists use and the language linguists describe will therefore be the subject of this article, and this is inherently determined by their definition of the field of linguistics and its methodology.

1.2. In his presentation of the development of modern linguistics Crystal (1971:167-243) distinguishes six 'ages' on the basis of the shifting of focus of attention to specific 'areas of concentration which were developed at a particular time during this period' (1971:167). The six successive stages in the development of linguistics in his view are: phonetics, phonology, morphology, 'surface' syntax, 'deep' syntax, semantics. These 'ages' can be discerned for the period from 1900 to 1970, and Crystal points out that by using such an interpretation inevitably certain issues will have to be omitted. At the end of his sketch of major linguistic themes he speculates about a subsequent seventh age and claims that 'it will be doubtless a distinctive contribution to semantic

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\* I would like to thank J. Monaghan and B. Brömser for very helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

analysis' (1971:244). His forecast is disproved by Parret's book and the development which has taken place since its conception and publication. To my mind the dialogues clearly show the dawning of two further 'ages' which follow the six major themes distinguished by Crystal: the age of pragmatics and the age of discourse analysis (or text linguistics, as it is also called). I believe that this shifting of focus can be interpreted—in the same way as the previous development—as a re-discovery of or a renewed interest in neglected areas and a counter-revolution against earlier trends. I hope that some of this will become clear in the following.

1.2. *Discussing Language* contains dialogues with ten linguists (cf. the subtitle)—five American, two French, one British, one German, and one Russian (1-295) followed by a 'Synthesis' by the author-interviewer (297-299) and a summarizing dialogue with the French philosopher Jacques Bouveresse (301-403). The book further contains bio-bibliographical notes (407-411) on all the contributors, a comprehensive bibliography, and an index of names as well as a succinct three-page index of subjects. The form of dialogues (preceded by informal conversations and a thorough preparation of subject matter) was chosen in order to present the highly technical matter in an easily readable form. It also facilitated the contrasting of alternative theories by asking some linguists questions suggested by answers from others. Except for the interview with Lamb and Šaumjan the dialogues do not contain any formulas, diagrams, or other notational devices for formal representation. The aim of the book is defined by Parret (VII) in the following way:

The purpose was to present a substantial but easily readable survey of the most characteristic trends in contemporary linguistics, and of the methodological and epistemological problems raised by these trends.

1.3. The choice of the collaborators to be interviewed is not discussed explicitly by Parret. He mentions (VII) that when he invited the ten linguists 'the representativeness of their work' and also 'the richness of the philosophical problems connected with their linguistic theory' played a role. The collaboration of the philosopher Bouveresse is not motivated at all. An explanation would not have been inappropriate, especially since the latter more than once begins answering a question with formulations such as: 'it is really, I am afraid, a question for the language science specialist and not for the philosopher' (338), or 'I am, of

course, totally incompetent to answer this question' (363). However, statements such as the last one must be considered as obvious understatement, in view of what Bouveresse then really has to say. His comments and judgments prove him to be not only a philosopher of language but also a serious, competent, and well-read linguist. His dialogue with Parret on such topics as linguistic methodology, rationalism vs. empiricism, dichotomies, theories of meaning, pragmatics and natural logic, and on the philosophy of language turns out to be a very useful and well-balanced synopsis and evaluation of the interviews with the ten linguists. As to the latter, one wonders whether they really represent the ideal choice for a complete and characteristic picture of the most important trends in contemporary linguistics. The fact that five out of the ten scholars are Americans and that two representatives of Generative Semantics have been included may perhaps be justified by their enormous influence and their contribution to the amount of linguistic publications. Nevertheless, the omission of such names as Fillmore, Hockett, Lyons, Nida, and Pike, which partly turn up in the course of the interviews and also in the bibliography, could perhaps have been justified one way or the other. Of course, there are limits imposed on the length of such a book, and the line had to be drawn somewhere. On the whole, Parret's selection is certainly not a bad one, and it is balanced in that neither generative grammar on the whole is over-represented, nor are there important unorthodox European tendencies and developments which are completely neglected. In sum, *Discussing Language*, in my opinion, must be regarded as a very valuable and welcome contribution to a better understanding of language and linguistics, which prevents its field from becoming too narrow and restricted and from ossifying in dogmatic orthodoxy. From this point of view the book is itself a document of the widening scope of research in understanding and explaining language.

## 2. *Definitions of language, language functions and linguistics.*

2.1. It would seem obvious that when linguists talk about language, they must draw the distinction between object-language and metalanguage. Strangely enough, however, this distinction is never referred to in these terms in all the dialogues with the ten linguists, and is only mentioned once in the book (368) by the philosopher Bouveresse. As a result of this, neither term appears in the index.

This lack is perhaps explained by the fact that the interviews took place in 1972. In my opinion, the failure to draw the distinction between object-language and metalanguage is responsible for a considerable amount of confusion which has arisen especially within the framework of early Generative Semantics. That linguistic terminology is a metalanguage, not on the same level as the object-language which is analyzed, has often been disregarded. On the other hand, since it is a language, it can and should be analyzed itself with the help of linguistic methods (cf. Lipka, 1975: 200, 202, 205f, 212f for an analysis of *presupposition*, *transformational*, *lexicalization*, *lexical insertion*, *discovery procedures*). The symbolization of meta-linguistic terms and theoretical constructs by means of some notation is, in my opinion, on the next higher level of abstraction, and could therefore be called meta-metalanguage. This characterization would apply, for example, to the use of some artificial language or logical system for the analysis and representation of natural languages. Such a three-level approach is in agreement with what Hartmann has to say on this subject in the book (138):<sup>1</sup>

One should distinguish the *object language* from the *descriptive language* and the *theoretical language*. The descriptive language would be there to refer to the object language; the theoretical language would formulate what has shown up in the relation between descriptive language and object language or what has been explained or theoretically recognized.

In my interpretation Šaumjan leaves out the middle level when he makes a two-way distinction between *genotype language* and *phenotype language* (279):

Because to study natural languages it seems necessary to construct an ideal language, i.e. artificial symbolic language which simulates the universal properties of natural language. I call this ideal language the *genotype language*. The genotype language may be considered the semiotic basis of natural languages which I call *phenotype languages*.

Bouveresse also makes a two-term separation and stresses the different properties of the two languages, leaving aside the degree of abstraction (368):

When he formulates the interpretation rules of an object language in a semantic metalanguage, the logician chooses the dictionary arbitrarily; in the case of a natural language, however, the dictionary is explicitly given, in part, and, for another part, it is implicit in the usage. The rules do not play the same role depending on whether a formal system or an ordinary language is

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1. Unless stated otherwise the italics in the quotations are those in the original.

at stake: they are *definitional* in the first case, *descriptive* and explanatory in the second.

Chafe draws attention to still another aspect of the difference between logic, used as a metalanguage, and the object-language—with which linguists, in my opinion, should be primarily concerned—namely (11):

Logic is just another kind of language; it is a language that leaves out a lot and therefore allows you to do things that you could not do otherwise.

2.2. Let us now look at the way the word *language* is used in the book by the ten representative linguists. There are very few explicit remarks on this usage, and the most pertinent ones are made by the philosopher Bouveresse. Of course, the usage of the term for denoting an extra-linguistic referent—in other words, its referential function—is very closely connected with the definitions of language given by the ten linguists, to which we will come presently. The first explicit comment is made by Chafe (18):

Of course it all depends on how you use the word *language*. You can use it to include gesture systems or traffic light systems, but it is probably best to restrict it to what we usually mean by language. The other systems are clearly much more primitive than language—the remarkable thing about language is its tremendous complexity and variety.

That the word *language* may be used in a very wide sense is illustrated by a remark in the dialogue with Greimas (72):

Musical language for example can be studied on the basis of a score, but also on the basis of an analysis of the gestures of the pianist's hands, or also as a perceptive phenomenon.

Halliday, on the other hand, stresses the fact, that the term should be restricted to vocalized language, and that gesture, although it plays an important role, is a 'paralinguistic system' (84).

There is, today, a characteristic and disastrous trend towards applying 'language' or 'logic' to almost everything, to everything that somehow resembles a system of signs.

This remark by the philosopher Bouveresse (308) is certainly very true. Furthermore, it is also justified with reference to the ten other contributors to the book. Some of them, it is true, have a rather narrow conception of language. Others, however, give a very comprehensive definition of their subject. Bouveresse sums up the differences in a very convincing way (302f):

What the linguists do not agree upon is, first of all, the definition itself of what they are supposed to study: language. . . . one could say, on the one hand, that they disagree totally, but, on the other hand, that there is no real

disagreement because, when they talk about language, they talk principally about the same empirical entity, but not about the same *scientific object*.

2.3. I propose to interpret the nominalization *the language of linguists* in two ways: firstly, as denoting the scientific object with which the ten linguists are concerned; secondly, as the language linguists use (see 3.). The linguists' definitions of the language they study have some features in common—which allows the setting up of certain groups—but there are also important differences between the definitions of some linguists of very different convictions. One might employ the technique of establishing bundles of features in order to capture the cross-classification of the characteristics of language<sup>2</sup>. The view that language is an instrument of communication is the common denominator that is probably not denied by anyone, although it is neglected to some extent by certain contributors. The classical structuralist position can best be seen in the following statement by Martinet (234):

I start from a definition of language as an instrument of communication, with a double articulation and a vocal nature. . . . I shall call language whatever fits that definition and refuse to call language an object that does not.

For Greimas, who takes up one of the three criteria, this definition is not sufficient since it leaves out an important aspect of natural language (73):

However, it is not the 'double articulation' that constitutes alone the specificity of natural language. From the syntactic point of view it is necessary to add another characteristic that is at least as important: the capacity of splitting, through procedures of shifting, the utterance from the utterance act.

The criterion of the basically vocal nature of language—whose importance must be understood as determined by the specific situation of structural linguistics in America analysing dying spoken languages—is also to be found in Halliday's position (84). However, Halliday furthermore stresses the importance of paralinguistic systems, the functional and social aspects of language, and the view that language is stratified (85f):

I adopt the general perspective on the linguistic system you find in Hjelmslev, in the Prague school, with Firth in the London school, with Lamb,

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2. Cf. the procedures of semantic analysis, including the use of tree diagrams and feature matrices for the representation of the results, that are employed in Lipka (1979) to the usage of terms such as *lexical field*, *semantic field*, *wordfield*, etc. by a variety of linguists.

and to a certain extent with Pike—language as a basically tristratal system: semantics, grammar, phonology.

Lamb himself explains his theory of stratificational linguistics in great detail in his dialogue with Parret. He furthermore stresses the point that in his view language is a network of relationships and not of entities (196).

Besides considering the spoken form of natural language as the key system, which is seen as stratified, Halliday points out that language is not simply a system, but a system in use (99):

I think that the use of language can be defined in precisely these terms, namely as the actualization of a potential. Now we want to understand *language in use*.

This stress on the functioning of language is fully compatible with another extension of the scope of linguistics as it is found in the following remarks by Hartmann (123):

Language presents itself *in a text*. Every linguistic function observed or ascribed to elementary units until this time—words, sentences, parts of words, etc.—only appears to be clear within a normal language event, i.e. when linguistic expressions appear in the form of a text.

Both tendencies, the functional approach and the widening of the field beyond the sentence, must, in my opinion, be explained as a rehabilitation and rediscovery of areas which were particularly neglected by generative grammar. This is also the interpretation of the philosopher, when he looks at the linguistic trends which become apparent in the dialogues (351):

What surprised me in the dialogues I read is exactly the vigorous reaction today in favor of a theory of language *use*. It seems that many people are now tired of studying language as a *being* or entity, if I may say so, and that they are tempted to study language more as a *doing*, as an action and behavior. In a way, the interest given to language as a system and as a structure, which has been dominant since Saussure and which generative grammar has carried to an extreme, is visibly decreasing. Some linguists and language philosophers realize that one has not really reached an understanding of the essence of language as long as it is not understood how language is used by those who possess it.

He also claims (302f) that Chomsky considers the communicative function of language as accidental and regards 'language primarily as an infinite potential to produce sentences' [sic!]<sup>3</sup>. A clear defini-

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3. In fact—to be more precise than Bouveresse—this is Chomsky's standard definition of grammar, not of language.

tion of language does not emerge in the interview with Chomsky. He only remarks, at one point, with regard to the distinction between language and dialect, that 'the characterization of a "language" as a dialect with an army and a navy is not far from the truth'<sup>4</sup>. Far more revealing, in my opinion, is the observation Bouveresse (328) makes about Chomsky's scientific object, language:

The difficulty comes from the fact that Chomsky uses two very different languages simultaneously. He suggests on one side that the prescriptions of the grammar are simply registered in *mechanisms*, probably neurophysiological mechanisms, of which the functioning may naturally be partly accompanied by conscience; on the other hand he presents them as systems of *rules* of which we have a certain form of 'knowledge'.

2.4. We have seen how various linguists agree on some characteristics of language, but differ in their definitions in the way these features are taken together and emphasized. In order to get a complete picture let us now briefly look at what the ten linguists have to say about the function of language. The reference of this term is by no means obvious, as Greimas points out (71):

I would first like to stress the polysemy of the term *function*—it has at least three distinct meanings. First its *utilitarian*, instrumental sense; to the question 'what is language used for?' the answer is obviously, to communicate, to express.

Greimas further distinguishes an organicists' sense and a logico-mathematical sense of the term. As regards the instrumental sense, most linguists agree that language has a variety of functions, of which, however, communication is the most important one. Chafe (17) includes all these functions 'in the word *communication*'. Chomsky (51f) objects to the assignment of a central purpose to language and to the opposition of communicative function and the function of language for the expression of thought. He insists, however, on the importance of the latter (53) which leads Bouveresse (303) to interpreting his position as regarding the communicative function of language as accidental. For Martinet, on the other hand, language is fundamentally an instrument of communication, as we have seen already.

Halliday, who in his published work uses the term *function* in a variety of ways, which is sometimes confusing, makes the following explicit statement in the book under discussion (93):

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4. This definition goes back to Robert Hall, as is mentioned in the dialogue with McCawley (264).

I would like to make a distinction between *function* and *use*, just as you suggest, and somewhat in these terms. As far as the adult language is concerned, it is possible to talk about the 'uses' of language, by which I would understand simply the selection of options within the linguistic system in the context of actual situation types: 'use' in its informal everyday sense. . . . now I would distinguish that from *function* because the whole of the adult language system is organized around a small number of functional components.

For child language Halliday (110f) recognizes six distinct functions: the instrumental, the regulatory, the interactional, the personal, the heuristic, and the imaginative function. For adult language Halliday distinguishes three *meta-functions* or *macro-functions*, also sometimes called components: the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual function. The ideational function is split into the sub-components of experiential and logical function. In the dialogue with Parret (95), Halliday relates his distinctions to Bühler's representational, conative, and expressive functions. For several contributors to the book, such as Lakoff (177), Martinet (235f) and Šaumjan (293) language combines the two functions of communication and expression. For McCawley (253), finally,

Language can be used as an all purpose instrument, to express meanings appropriate to essentially any situation, to convey essentially any information that one might want to convey. A language can accommodate itself to all possible matters, to any possible intention of the speaker.

2.5 The field of linguistics is obviously determined by the definition of language and the functions ascribed to it by the linguists. As Bouveresse points out (306) there are some linguists, such as Chomsky, who attribute a central position to the ideational function of language, and are therefore psycho-linguistically oriented, while others consider the interpersonal function as most important, and consequently subscribe to a socio-linguistic orientation of the field. The most outstanding representative of the latter view is Halliday, as is amply documented in his dialogue with Parret. The restriction to natural languages leads Greimas to the definition of the field of linguistics as a subpart of semiotics (78):

If linguistics, instead of being concerned as it is now with natural languages, proclaimed that its object of knowledge is all possible languages, then it could be said that linguistics as a language talking about all other languages is the ultimate scientific object. Since that is not the case, it is the *general semiotics*, the 'semiology' announced by Saussure, which contains linguistics as a particular semiotics, that will appear the goal of the general scientific project.

Lakoff, on the other hand, defines the field in an all-embracing way, that is parallel to the comprehensive definition of language function

given by McCawley earlier, namely as (151):

I take linguistics to be the study of natural language in *all* of its manifestations. This is a broad conception of the field, and I think it is an appropriately broad one. It includes not just syntax-semantics, phonetics-phonology, historical linguistics, anthropological linguistics, etc. which form the core of most academic programs in this country, but also the role of language in social interaction, in literature, in ritual, and in propaganda, and as well the study of the relationship between language and thought, speech production and perception, linguistic disorders, etc.

This surprising statement by Lakoff shows, especially if compared to pronouncements about the aim and scope of linguistics in early generative grammar, how much the orientation of so-called generative linguists has changed within the last twenty years. It has serious consequences for the methodology of linguistics, especially as regards the status and function of formalization which will be discussed later. In my opinion, this shifting of point of view has resulted in a trend away from rigorous mathematical formalization and symbolization to a preference of such collocations as *fuzzy logic*, *fuzzy grammar*, and *sloppy identity* as used in the language of linguists. Instead of hard and fast rules, based on yes/no-decisions, what Bolinger (1961) once called the 'all-or-none' as opposed to the 'more-or-less', tendencies and overlaps have been re-discovered by linguists. In my opinion, the way for the recognition of gradience has been paved by such terms as *nouny*, *squish*, introduced by Ross, and the 'brand-name' *natural logic*, coined by Lakoff himself<sup>5</sup>. In this respect the language of linguists is significant and indicative of their changing attitudes towards their own field of research.

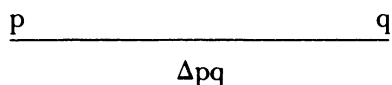
### 3. *The language linguists use: formalization, terminology, and hypostatization.*

3.1. As we have seen already, the expression *the language of linguists* may be used to refer to their scientific object. On the other hand, the nominalization may also be interpreted as denoting the language linguists use. However, the referent of the nominalization interpreted in this manner is not a unified object. At least two large areas, with further subdivision may be distinguished: the linguist's object language and his terminology (i.e. his metalanguage) on the one hand, and his notational system, his symbolization, his formalization (i.e. his meta-metalanguage) on the other hand. We will discuss both

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5. Cf. Ross (1972). Bouveresse (394) states that 'the expression "natural logic" is somewhat misleading' since it suggests that the other logic is not natural and 'a rather gratuitous invention of the logician'.

uses of language by linguists in turn, beginning with the problems of formalization and its function. Before we come to this point let me briefly illustrate my view of the former area. Bouveresse mentions (350) that terms such as *psycholinguistic* or *sociolinguistic* 'are now being used by a certain number of linguists with a clearly pejorative connotation'. *Mentalism* was the deadly sin of structural linguistics, and being accused of it in those days was as bad as being called a *taxonomic* linguist in the hey-day of transformational-generative grammar. Such uses of language by linguists, with implicit or explicit negative meaning, can be compared to the more or less conscious uses of terminological labels, which conceal differences in denotation, i.e. have non-identical extralinguistic referents. A particularly striking example in the book is the use of *tree diagram* by Šaumjan (283) for the following 'scheme':



3.2. Let us now consider the problem of formalization and its function. In her review of a collection of papers edited by Bierwisch and Heidolph under the title *Progress in Linguistics* Robin Lakoff (1973:696) gives a number of reasons why the volume is worth reading, and concludes:

Finally, because it provides a number of terrible examples of the dire results of over-dependence on formalism, and is thus an instructional device for the weaning of the young from excessive use of formalism for its own sake.

I believe that it is this hypertrophic development of formalization which has provoked a counter-reaction. This reaction is responsible, in my view, for the rise and fall of the term *presupposition* (cf. Lipka, 1975:201), the growing insistence on the fuzzy nature of language, and, in general, the abandonment of attempts at formalization in many recent linguistic publications. This development may be illustrated, for example, by Fillmore's published work since 1965. His case is only a particularly striking example.

3.2.1. I do not want to argue that formalization in itself is a bad thing. Even those linguists who refrain from formalizing the results of their research today will probably subscribe in principle to the characterization of the function of formalization which Chomsky (1957:5) gave in the preface to *Syntactic Structures*:

Precisely constructed models for linguistic structure can play an important role, both negative and positive, in the process of discovery itself. By pushing a precise but inadequate formulation to an unacceptable conclusion, we can

often expose the exact source of this inadequacy and, consequently, gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic data. More positively, a formalized theory may automatically provide solutions for many problems other than those for which it was explicitly designed.

It must, however, be pointed out that the basis of formalization is not questioned in *Syntactic Structures*. This is true as well for the employment of traditional categories of word-class, such as Noun, Verb, Adjective, the morphologically-based category Prepositional Phrase, and the classical binary cut of the sentence, into NP and VP which is equivalent to the Subject/Predicate distinction. A verb-central approach, such as dependency theory or case grammar, no matter how it is formalized, is much more revolutionary than Chomsky's 'revolution' in 1957. The next revolution, so-called Generative Semantics<sup>6</sup>—where categories of symbolic logic were introduced for the formalization of semantic representations, that were believed to be of the same formal nature as syntactic representations (for example in McCawley, 1970:168-172)—did not proceed in exactly the same fashion. However, explicit procedures for assigning symbols to concrete elements of language were also not given. Furthermore, instead of syntactic categories, many syntactic transformations were taken for granted, and carried over in unanalysed form. This, I believe, was the result of the hypostatization of linguistic constructs (see 3.4.). It is significant, in my view, that rigorous explicit formalizations of such transformational processes are to be found more and more rarely.

3.2.2. In his dialogue with Parret, Halliday (84) gives credit to Chomsky for having shown for the first time, that natural language can be 'brought within the scope of formalization', however, at the cost of a 'very high degree of idealization'. Martinet (242) states that he may have been 'too tempted to resist formalization, perhaps as a reaction against what I consider to be excesses'. McCawley (262) gives the following very appropriate comment on the advantages and disadvantages of formalization:

The biggest advantage to formalization is that it forces one to be *explicit* . . . the principle disadvantage to formalization is that one very often doesn't have means of formalization at his disposal which are really appropriate for what he wants to say . . . A lot of work in transformational grammar, particularly in the early sixties, had very little point, due to the fact that so

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6. For a criticism of some central assumptions of Generative Semantics cf. Brame (1976); for an evaluation of its status as a coherent, alternative theory cf. O'Donnell (1974).

much attention was devoted to questions of applying an existing formalism, without regard for substantive questions about language and its structure. A formalism is valuable only if one at every step takes a *critical* attitude towards the formalism and is prepared to reject or modify the formalism whenever it ceases to be servant and becomes master.

It is refreshing to read such a statement published in 1974, but one wonders if McCawley's advice has really been taken heed of by the many linguists who have followed the fashion of applying Montague's theory (cf. for example Hausser, 1976).

3.3. Let us now take up another language linguists use, namely their terminology. The problems of terminology will be discussed in two sections: first some explicit remarks about it will be considered, and, secondly, some more crucial terms and their divergent use by the linguists will be treated in greater detail.

3.3.1. There are some passages in *Discussing Language* where the linguists explicitly refer to the possible ambiguity of their metalanguage. Thus Chomsky (43) mentions the 'systematic ambiguity' of *grammar*, which may denote either the system of rules internalized by the speaker-hearer, his competence, or the system of rules as constructed by the linguist, his theory of the speaker-hearer's competence. He further (46) draws attention to the different uses of *presupposition*, which may denote the presuppositions of a sentence, or those of a speaker. Halliday (94) mentions that *structure* 'can be used in a sense which is more or less synonymous with "system"', and points out that he has avoided using the term in that sense. Furthermore, there are remarks by Lakoff (173) and Lamb (216) on *generative* and by McCawley (271) on *presupposition* to which we will return presently. Finally, as regards *performance*, the philosopher Bouveresse (349) states that the notion

has actually often been used to cover almost indistinctly all the untheorizable aspects of language mastery and use. Under these conditions it is, as you say, rather strange to talk about a 'theory' of performance

and that Halliday and McCawley explicitly refer to this problematical usage in their dialogues with Parret.

3.3.2. In the following, some more central lexical items of the linguists' language will be considered in detail. For easier reference the analysis will be in alphabetical order. *Deep structure* is perhaps one of the most influential terms in recent linguistics. It must be stressed, however, that a variety of heterogeneous extralinguistic referents have been denoted by the term. Chomsky, who took over Hockett's

distinction between *surface grammar* and *deep grammar*, claims that the syntactic component of a grammar must assign both a surface structure and a deep structure to each sentence. In the Standard Theory the semantic interpretation of the sentence is fully determined by the deep structure; in the Extended Standard Theory, the surface structure also plays a role. Besides denoting a specific 'deeper' representation of a sentence, *deep structure* is also used for referring to a specific level of the theory. The existence or non-existence of such a level of deep structure is a controversial issue between Chomsky and the Generative Semanticists, to which Chomsky (38) refers in *Discussing Language*. With regard to the changing usage of *deep structure*—in the former sense—we can characterize the development in general terms in the following way: deep structures have become more abstract, more semantic, and more logical in Generative Semantics. In the book under discussion (152), Lakoff claims—with some justification—that in his Extended Standard Theory Chomsky 'created a new and very different notion of deep structure' which is very close to surface structure, since it precedes transformations and contains all lexical items. Lamb points out (204) that in stratificational grammar 'the analogy is going in the opposite direction' and the level of *deep structure* corresponds to 'a higher stratum'. If we leave questions of directionality out of consideration, it is significant that McCawley (254) notes that *deep* may not only mean removed from the surface, but also close to semantic structure, and that deep structures have become 'progressively deeper . . . until the distance between deep structure and semantic structure approached zero'. He further remarks (256f) that *underlying structure* might be identified with 'certain characteristics of "deep structure", as that term was used in Chomsky's *Aspects*', although *underlying* would refer to all of the intermediate stages of derivation, including 'the deepest end of derivations' which is the semantic structure. *Deep structure* in the former sense, i.e. for a particular representation of a concrete sentence, may also be used synonymously with *underlying structure*. Such a proposal is made in Haas (1973:283), where it is argued—I believe correctly—that a choice between several equally informative deep structures is both arbitrary and undesirable, and the following definition is given:

The term 'deep structure', as I shall be using it, is then to be taken as referring indifferently to any kind of underlying structure that may be proposed when a sentence or construction is to be assigned to transformationally related structures, one 'deeper' or semantically more instructive than the other.

That there is no single *deep structure*—neither as a level, nor as ‘the correct’ representation of a sentence—existing independently of theoretical assumptions, has often not been recognized, even by linguists. In my opinion this failure is a result of hypostatization, induced by the existential presupposition of such a term. A striking example of this phenomenon is found in the book (240) in Martinet’s remark on *deep structure*:

It is a fascinating term that entrances people. Nobody *actually knows what deep structure is*, as is clearly demonstrated by the divergence between the Chomskyan and Fillmorean points of view: Chomsky considering the subject as an essential element of deep structure, whereas Fillmore denies its existence [My emphasis, L.L.].

Let us now turn to the use of *generative* by linguists. Two extreme views can be found in the book. The first one, derived from the technical term *generate*, as used in mathematics and introduced to linguistics by Chomsky, is referred to by Lamb (211) in the context of a discussion of idioms and their delimitation:

It is very important for psychological reality to recognize the fuzziness of this boundary. And therefore we don’t want such a thing as a strictly *generative* grammar, since, as Hockett pointed out, generative grammar presupposes a sharp boundary between the grammatical and the ungrammatical.

Since the fuzziness of natural languages has been re-discovered, in my opinion, by the so-called Generative Semanticists they could not go on any longer to use *generative* in this sense. Consequently, Lakoff (173f) defines the meaning of the term in both the collocation *generative grammar* and *generative semantics* as being simply ‘complete and precise’. This second position with regard to the use of *generative* shows a rather strange semantic development of the term. Some explanation is to be found in the following remark by Lakoff (174) on the collocation *generative semantics* which

is not a very accurate descriptive term for what we are doing. When I first used the term back in 1963, it was an amalgam of ‘generative grammar’ and ‘interpretative semantics’.

McCawley (256) is more outspoken about it, admitting that *generative semantics* is ‘misleading’, and that he does not have a name ‘that I am happy with for what I am doing’, since he considers the proposed alternative term *semantax* as ‘barbaric’. He further rejects the use of *generative* in the former, classical sense (249):

I maintain that it makes no sense to speak of the grammaticality or ungrammaticality of *strings of words*; what I am doing is thus not generative grammar in Chomsky’s sense.

The term *presupposition* has for some time been a vogue-word in linguistics and has generated (in the non-technical sense) a flood of literature. Its use in philosophy and linguistics has been the subject of many articles, books, and readers, and it is therefore completely impossible, to give an appropriate account here. Some issues will nevertheless be taken up. The first one is that it has been noticed and explicitly mentioned that the use of the term is confusing. This state of affairs has been deplored by philosophers and linguists alike. Secondly, it has been increasingly recognized that the term does not denote a single phenomenon, and that therefore several kinds of *presupposition* must be distinguished. The failure to do so at an earlier stage is, in my opinion, a result of hypostatization. My last point is that the problems connected with this term may be partly solved by applying linguistic methods to linguistic terminology.

As mentioned earlier, Chomsky (47) draws attention to the fact that one may speak of *presuppositions of a sentence* as well as of *presuppositions of the speaker*. This is related to the distinction between *logical* and *pragmatic presuppositions* to which Lakoff (164) and McCawley (271) refer in the book. McCawley furthermore admits that

I and other generative semanticists are guilty of using the term 'presupposition' in a variety of senses and not always distinguishing between those senses.

He considers (273) the *existence presupposition* as a subclass of logical presuppositions. Parret and Bouveresse (382-386) state that there is 'almost total confusion' with regard to the use of *presupposition* and that logical, pragmatic, lexical, sentential, existential, and textual presuppositions could be distinguished. This long list only implicitly contains another use of the term, as it is to be found in Fillmore's and McCawley's writings, namely as a successor to the theoretical construct of *selection restriction*. Bouveresse also points out (383) that Ducrot proposes to treat *presupposition* 'as a particular speech act'. The failure to draw the necessary distinctions explicitly and openly is, in my opinion, due to the phenomenon of hypostatization, caused by the existence of the single lexical item *presupposition* (cf. 3.4.). Part of the ambiguity, or rather polysemy, of the complex lexical item *presupposition* can be explained with the help of linguistic methods, as I tried to show in Lipka (1975:200). Using the methods of word-formation developed by Hans Marchand, *presupposition* can be synchronically analysed as a suffixal derivative in *-ition*, and related to an underlying sentence containing the two-place predicate *presup-*

pose<sup>7</sup>. The collocation *existential presupposition* can thus be derived from an underlying sentence containing the noun *existence* in object-position; the nominalization *presupposition of a sentence* (equivalent to *sentential presupposition*) as well as the nominalization *presupposition of the speaker* from a sentence with the noun (*sentence, speaker*) in subject-position.

We just saw that there is not a single extralinguistic referent denoted by the term *presupposition*. The same is basically true for other labels of the metalanguage. Let us briefly look at the use of *semantics* to further illustrate this point. In one of his questions addressed to Hartmann, Parret (129) states:

There are many kinds of semantics: philosophical semantics, logical and linguistic ones.

These distinctions are further taken up in the dialogue with Bouveresse (362, 368) where the latter also concentrates on Carnap's notion of *pure semantics* (369, 379f). This is by no means to be identified with linguistic semantics, as the following characterization of its function shows (380):

The task Carnap assigns to *semantics* is relatively restricted and well-defined: its goal is to define the predicate 'true' for a given object language—that is, to assign truth conditions to all the propositions of that language.

As regards *linguistic semantics*, we will probably have to distinguish furthermore between *word semantics* (or *lexical semantics*) and *sentence semantics*, as has become customary since Katz-Fodor's stimulating but unsuccessful attempt in 1963 to come to grips with sentence meaning.

In closing our analysis of some more central metalinguistic terms let us now consider some uses of *transformation* and *transformational*. In his dialogue with Parret, Chomsky (36f) distinguishes his use of *transformation* from Harris's view in the following way: while the latter's notion 'remained a relation between sentences or sentence forms' his own approach was 'developed within an entirely different general framework', incorporating the notion of transformation 'within the theory of generative syntax.' This is characterized as follows (36):

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7. For a detailed explanation of the view that complex lexical items can be understood as topicalized underlying sentences cf. Lipka (1976).

The phrase structure component specifies a system of abstract forms that are mapped into surface structures by grammatical transformations, which are operations converting phrase-markers, in essence, labelled trees, into other phrase-markers.

This description creates the impression that Chomsky's own use of *transformation* has not changed at all since 1957. However, although *transformations* did in fact relate abstract representations of sentences to each other in *Syntactic Structures*, these were relatively close to surface structure, since the notion of *deep structure* had not yet been developed. Only once this had been done, could the function of *transformation* be defined as obligatorily converting deep structures into surface structures. The meaning preserving nature of transformations was furthermore affected by the development from Standard Theory to Extended Standard Theory. The effect of the change from 'surface syntax' to 'deep syntax' (in Crystal's terms) on the notion of *transformation* is referred to explicitly in the interview with Lamb (182):

As far as I know, it was only about 1962 that Chomsky began to recognize deep structure as somehow on a different level from surface structure. The transformations then took on a different aspect.

McCawley (250) draws attention to the fact that he uses *transformational* differently from Lakoff, namely in 'a broader sense which covers both what Chomsky does and what generative semanticists do'. If the term *transformation* is used for denoting very different extralinguistic referents, the obvious conclusion to draw is to introduce different terms for different phenomena. This conclusion is drawn in *Discussing Language* by Šaumjan (289) who points out that *transformation* in TG:

and the notion of the transformation rule in applicative grammar are so fundamentally different that it seems necessary to introduce a new term for the transformation rules in applicative grammar. In applicative grammar I propose to speak of *semantic derivation rules* instead of transformation rules.

In the development of generative grammar the notion of *transformation* has changed so radically that it does not denote the same phenomenon at the different stages of the development of the theory. It is therefore misleading, in my opinion, to give a very comprehensive definition, as Chomsky does in the book, which creates the impression that the underlying theoretical assumptions are still the same. But even during a single phase *transformation* has been used to refer to very different entities. However, all of these are theoretical constructs, a fact which has not always been kept in mind, and has therefore led to hypostatization (see 3.4.). For

example, in *Aspects* Chomsky uses the collocations *elementary transformation* and *passive transformation* side by side, although they denote very different operations. Specific transformations that are partly language-dependent, such as Passive, the Do-Transformation (both in *Syntactic Structures*), Extraposition, There-Insertion, and Equi-NP-Deletion are not on the same level as very general, probably universal, operations such as deletion, substitution, adjunction and permutation (seen as a combination of more elementary processes). Only for the latter Hasegawa (1968:242) proposed to use *transformation*, while the other particular processes should be considered families of transformations. Chomsky (1970:203) partly followed this proposal in *Remarks on Nominalization*, where he considers 'the passive operation' as 'an amalgam of two steps' which he called Agent-Postponing and NP-Preposing. The use of a single term, such as *transformation*, for denoting very different phenomena is dangerous, in that it creates a false impression of unity. Furthermore, it makes people forget that the notion is a theoretical construct, and may lead them to believe that *transformations* exist independently of theoretical assumptions. This is what I call hypostatization.

3.3.3. Before we come to a closer examination of this phenomenon, let me draw attention to a single instance in *Discussing Language*, where linguistic methods are applied to linguistic terminology, as it is advocated here. McCawley (263) points out explicitly that *performance* is not only referentially vague, but also grammatically ambiguous:

The principal thing that I find wrong with Chomsky's terms 'competence' and 'performance' is that he used 'performance' to cover everything other than 'competence' . . . Also, 'performance' is grammatically ambiguous between an object nominalization (meaning 'what one produces') and an action nominalization (meaning 'act of producing' or 'way of producing'), and Chomsky uses it in both of those senses.

Unfortunately, this is the only explicit remark in the book, where linguistic analysis is directly applied to the language linguists use.

3.4. Throughout this review-article I have repeatedly referred to a phenomenon called *hypostatization*. I use this term to denote the phenomenon that the existence of a linguistic sign suggests the existence of a single entity as its referent. As pointed out in Leisi (1952; 1975:25f) there is a tendency for all lexical items, whether simple or complex, to imply that the entity denoted by a word actually exists as a substance or person—something he calls 'Hypostasierung durch das Wort'. Leisi claims that there are different

kinds of hypostatization according to word-class. The hypostatization induced by nouns and noun phrases is, in my opinion, a result of the existential presuppositions of such linguistic expressions. The existence of a simple or derived noun, (such as *transformation*), or of a stable collocation (such as *deep structure*), suggests to the naive hearer and speaker that only a single entity, denoted by the term, exists. However, as the remark by Martinet quoted above shows, even linguists are not immune to this suggestion. In fact, I believe that the hypostatization of theoretical constructs has played a considerable role in recent linguistics.<sup>8</sup> The existence of terms such as *competence*, *generative*, *presupposition* etc. have induced many linguists to forget that such terms are dependent on theoretical assumptions and their referents do not exist independently as unitary absolute entities. The use of such elements of the metalanguage is either explicitly defined by the linguist, or must be derived from his usage in context. Sometimes actual usage and explicit definition are at variance as we have seen above in some instances. In order to discover such discrepancy the language of linguists must be carefully analysed with linguistic methods, as I have tried to do above. This procedure is perfectly in agreement with the re-discovery of the referential function of language which is stressed both by Parret and Bouveresse (386) in the book. The recent development of linguistics can therefore bear fruit for the methodology of linguistics itself. In my opinion, the following remarks by Bouveresse (386) are particularly to the point:

The theory of reference, particularly of contextually determined reference, belongs obviously to pragmatics . . . You are completely right when you say that it has long been practically impossible to insist on the referential properties of language without the risk of being accused of returning to an atomistic, pre-scientific, and completely obsolete conception . . . Language is *also* a means to refer to objects and to describe states of affairs. Thank God, the disastrous situation to which we have just alluded is changing completely.

#### 4. *A synthesis of recent trends.*

4.1. If we now attempt a synthesis of both, *Discussing Language* and the present article, we may say that it is extremely important for linguists to reflect on language including their own language. This means that they must explicitly discuss the language they describe, their scientific object, as well as the language they use, their

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8. Cf. the remark on 'the hypostatization of "conversational postulates" or alternative deep structures' in Searle (1975:60).

formalization and terminology. For this purpose an awareness of the history of linguistics is extremely helpful. Recent developments as witnessed by *Discussing Language* can be characterized in the following way. Linguistics has gone beyond the sentence, including co-text, developing into a linguistics of discourse or text linguistics. It has also gone beyond sentence meaning, considering such aspects as context (of situation) and illocutionary force, thus embracing pragmatics within its scope. On the whole, linguistics has become more inclusive, more open-minded and this extension of the field particularly concerns the functional aspects of language. The development can perhaps be best summed up in the following words of Bouveresse (386f):

All the phenomena which we have discussed at one time or another—the renewal of interest in semantic but also pragmatic research, the need many people feel for a linguistics of *discourse*, and no longer only of the word or the sentence, the opening toward other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and ethnology, the attempts to constitute a theory of reference and of presupposition in rather close conjunction with logic, etc.—are finally going in the same direction. What matters, once more, is to understand language no longer by itself, but as a potential of linguistic *acts* (whereas Chomsky understands the possession of language more as a disposal of a potential of linguistic characterizations).

This characterization of 'the state of art' as documented by *Discussing Language* has to be supplemented by a further striking feature also noted by Bouveresse (302): the plurality of trends. It is both refreshing and a promising sign for its future development that linguistics is no longer to be identified with one brand or the other of transformational-generative orthodoxy.

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