Introduction: "What is Meaning in a Legal Text?" A First Dialogue for Law and Linguistics

Judith N. Levi
Northwestern University

INTRODUCTION:

"WHAT IS MEANING IN A LEGAL TEXT?" A FIRST DIALOGUE FOR LAW AND LINGUISTICS

JUDITH N. LEVI*

This Essay reviews the interdisciplinary events that led to the 1995 conference entitled, *What is Meaning in a Legal Text? A Dialogue Among Scholars of Law and Linguistics.* The transcribed proceedings of this conference form the core of this special issue of *Washington University Law Quarterly.* This Essay begins by describing the development of interest within linguistics over the last two decades in the language of legal processes, continues by tracing the evolution of the conference from a 1993 collaborative research project carried out by one law professor and three linguists, and concludes with some personal observations of the author on the benefits that linguists like herself stand to gain from further interdisciplinary efforts in this domain.

I. PRELUDE: LAW AND LINGUISTICS BEFORE 1993

We can attribute various birthdates to the discipline of linguistics, some going back into ancient history with others placed at diverse points in the last century or two. However, it is a fact beyond dispute that the discipline in the United States experienced extraordinary growth and unprecedented intellectual expansion following the publication in 1957 and 1965 of Noam Chomsky's two seminal works on transformational grammar, *Syntactic Structures*[1] and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax,*[2] respectively.[3]

The major thrust of the Chomskyan revolution was in theoretical linguistics, comprising those subfields of linguistics that focus on analyzing the structure and organization of the largely unconscious yet wondrously complex knowledge that humans have of their native language(s). These

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subfields correspond to the various subsystems of language that make up our linguistic knowledge, including *phonology* (the study of sound patterns in human languages), *morphology* (the study of how words are structured in human languages), *syntax* (the study of how sentences are organized in human languages), and *semantics* and *pragmatics* (the study of how meaning is communicated in human languages, both in terms of the language itself and in terms of the context in which that language is used).

The decades since the 1960's have seen, however, not only unprecedented development of theoretical linguistics but also the development of a broad spectrum of other subfields that overlap in focus and methodology with other disciplines. These subfields include *sociolinguistics* (the study of language in society, and of the mutual influence of social and language variables) and *psycholinguistics* (the study of how the human brain enables us to use and understand language, and of how children learn language), as well as such other subfields as anthropological linguistics, computational linguistics, and mathematical linguistics. While theoretical linguistics for many years focused on the study of language in ways that were thought to be "independent of context," linguists in other subfields, especially sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, were from the start intensely interested in how context affects language use and language behavior.

Of course, one such context that would have been a natural for such study is the legal system. Nevertheless, the importance of studying language in the legal context began to become clear to linguists only recently, mostly in just the last decade. In turning their attention to language use in legal contexts, the linguists joined a larger number of social scientists from other disciplines (such as psychology, sociology, political science, and anthropology) who themselves had come somewhat belatedly to the study of language and law, but who had begun to contribute to this interdisciplinary domain in the 1970's and 1980's.[4]

A major step forward for the nascent interdisciplinary field of language and law took place in 1985 in the form of a conference entitled, "Language in the Judicial Process," the first—and still the only—U.S. conference to focus solely on social science research on language and law. Organized by two linguists and funded by the National Science Foundation, the

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4. For more information on the historical development of social science research on language and law in the United States, see Judith N. Levi, *The Study of Language in the Judicial Process, In* LANGUAGE IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS (Judith N. Levi & Anne Graffam Walker eds., 1990); and JUDITH N. LEVI, LANGUAGE AND LAW: A BIBLIOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN THE U.S.A. iv-vi (1994).

conference took place at Georgetown University in conjunction with the 1985 Summer Linguistics Institute of the Linguistic Society of America. The conference broke new ground by bringing researchers from across a wide variety of disciplines together for the first time to discuss their shared intellectual focus: language in the legal context.[5]

The conference encompassed two domains of language and law: One was primary research performed by social scientists bringing their respective disciplinary foci to the special world of the law (from social psychological judgments by jurors of witnesses, to representations of legal reality in lawyer-client conversations, to narrative structure in plea bargaining), while the second was the application of specifically linguistic expertise to actual legal cases, both civil and criminal. This latter area, often referred to as "forensic linguistics," has seen considerable growth in the last decade, as increasing numbers of litigation attorneys discover the potential value of bringing a linguist onto a case as consultant and/or expert witness.[6]

Although the evidence suggests that use of linguists as consultants and/or expert witnesses is on the rise, the number of linguists who publish articles in this area with any regularity remains quite small.[7] Moreover, the number of linguists who published *in collaboration with* legal scholars on topics of interest to both linguistic and legal scholarship, such as interpretation of legal texts, was zero—until a most unusual opportunity presented itself to Clark Cunningham, Professor of Law at Washington University, in the summer of 1993.

At that time, the editors of the *Yale Law Journal* asked Cunningham to review the newly published book, *The Language of Judges*[8] by Lawrence M. Solan, one of the few practicing attorneys in the U.S. to have earned a Ph.D. in linguistics before receiving his J.D. In that book, Solan examined a series of Supreme Court cases centering on language, and focused his attention on the quality of the linguistic analysis that the Justices provided in their decisions. He writes at the beginning of his book, "[a]s we will see

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5   Papers from that conference formed the core of a collection that was published several years later *See* LANGUAGE IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS, *supra* note 4.

6   For a summary of such cases, see Judith N. Levi, *Language as Evidence: The Linguist as Expert Witness in North American Courts*, 1 FORENSIC LINGUISTICS 1 (1994). For a bibliography of such cases, see LEVI, LANGUAGE AND LAW: A BIBLIOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN THE U.S.A., *supra* note 4, at 40-43.

7   That number may rise as a result of the availability of a new forum for scholarly and professional exchanges on this subject, namely, *Forensic Linguistics: The International Journal of Speech, Language, and the Law*, which Routledge began publishing in 1994.

8   LAWRENCE M. SOLAN, THE LANGUAGE OF JUDGES (1993).

throughout this book, their use of linguistic argument as justification [for their decisions] is by no means consistent, and is frequently incoherent and idiosyncratic"[9] and observes near the end:

> For each interpretive principle that becomes the rule of law, even in cases in which it is relatively easy to apply, there will always be instances in which judges will want to avoid applying it because its application would lead to what the judge perceives as an injustice. Thus, we saw that courts regularly attempt to see plain meaning where ambiguity exists and to find ambiguity where there is none in order to subvert principles like the rule of lenity, the rule that ambiguous insurance policies are interpreted against the insurer and the plain language rule.[10]

Thus, Solan argues that some of the language-centered cases decided by Supreme Court Justices (and by judges in the courts below) reflect attempts at reaching decisions that are guided by the facts of the language—but attempts which fail for lack of accurate analysis of those facts, while others reflect attempts to mask nonlinguistic justifications in the cloak of a "the-language-made-me-do-it" argument.

In planning his review of Solan's book, Cunningham decided that it might be instructive to test Solan's hypothesis about the potential value of linguistic expertise in judicial decision-making by attempting to provide informed, expert linguistic input to the Justices *prior to* their decisions on language-centered cases. He would do this by culling those cases that raised interesting language issues from the set of all those yet to be argued in the fall term, and by inviting a number of linguists to analyze the language in dispute in those cases. His recruiting efforts brought Green, Kaplan, and myself onto the project.

Cunningham identified three important language-centered cases from the set to be argued in the fall term,[11] which were then distributed, with some expected overlap, among the three linguists, while Cunningham continued his review of Solan's book. However, the project rapidly evolved into a four-way, four-author collaboration on all fronts. Some half-dozen major drafts and many late nights later, the article was sent in galley form to all nine Supreme Court Justices as well as to the attorneys of record in the three cases which we had analyzed within the article, which appeared as

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9. *Id.* at 1.
10. *Id.* at 186.
11. United States v. Staples, 971 F.2d 608 (10th Cir. 1992), *rev'd*, 114 S. Ct. 1793 (1994); United States v. Granderson, 969 F.2d 980 (11th Cir. 1992), *aff'd*, 114 S. Ct. 1259 (1994); and National Org. for Women v. Scheidler, 968 F.2d 612 (7th Cir. 1992), *rev'd*, 114 S. Ct. 798 (1994).

Plain Meaning and Hard Cases in the April 1994 issue of the *Yale Law Journal.*[12] The first law-linguistics collaborative article to focus on statutory interpretation, it became cited in three Supreme Court decisions of that term (including two of the three cases analyzed within the article).[13]

Because one of the three cases in the *Yale* article centered on an analysis of the scope of the word *knowingly* (*i.e.*, which parts of the sentence were modified by it), the *Plain Meaning* co-authors chose to offer an *amicus* brief in another case involving the scope of that word, *United States v. X-Citement Video, Inc.,*[14] which was argued in the 1994 term. It did so with Cunningham serving as the attorney of record for the newly-formed "Law and Linguistics Consortium," which the brief characterized as follows:

> The Law and Linguistics Consortium is a recently formed association of lawyers and linguists interested in applications of linguistics to legal problems. Its founding members are: Clark D. Cunningham, Professor of Law, Washington University; Georgia M. Green, Professor of Linguistics, University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign); Jeffrey P. Kaplan, Associate Professor of Linguistics, San Diego State University; Judith N. Levi, Associate Professor of Linguistics, Northwestern University; and Lawrence M. Solan, Partner, Orans, Elsen and Lupert, New York City. One goal of the Consortium is to make available to courts faced with questions of statutory interpretation information about how a statutory provision would be understood as a matter of ordinary language.[15]

The formation of the Law and Linguistics Consortium was the first hint of things to come, in that it created an informal framework for expanding the circle of scholars interested in bridging law and linguistics. The next step was a roundtable discussion at the annual meeting of the Law and Society Association in Phoenix in June 1994.[16] Led by the *Plain Meaning* co-authors and joined by Professor Fred Schauer as a participant-discussant,

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12   Clark D. Cunningham et al., *Plain Meaning and Hard Cases,* 103 YALE L.J. 1561 (1994).

13   *See Staples,* 114 S. Ct. 1793, 1806; *Granderson,* Director, Office of Workers' Compensatin Programs v. Greenwich Collieries, 114 S. Ct. 1259, 1267; 114 S. Ct. 2251, 2255 (1994). For a more detailed history of the preparation of this article, and judicial responses to it, see Jeffrey P. Kaplan, Georgia M. Green, Clark D. Cunningham, and Judith N. Levi, *Bringing Linguistics into Judicial Decision-Making: Semantic Analysis Submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court,* 2 FORENSIC LINGUISTICS (forthcoming 1995).

14   115 S. Ct. 464 (1994).

15   Brief Amicus Curiae of the Law and Linguistics Consortium in Support of Respondents, United States v. X-Citement Video, Inc., 115 S. Ct. 464 (1994) (No. 93-723) (on file with author).

16   Law and Society Association Annual Meeting (June 18, 1994).

the discussion presented the *Yale Law Journal* project to an interdisciplinary audience of scholars and legal practitioners in order to seek feedback on ways of extending such efforts.

II.   CREATING A FORUM FOR FURTHER DIALOGUE

As we were contemplating what might be an appropriate direction for future collaborative efforts, it occurred to me that a fruitful next step might be to seek funding for a small, invitational brainstorming conference that would bring together legal and linguistic scholars to plan a future research agenda and to explore other possibilities for bringing law and linguistics closer together. It seemed reasonable to expect that brainstorming in a larger group about "what next?" could also be a useful way of expanding the circle of linguistic and legal scholars interested in the intellectual and professional connections between law and linguistics.

In fall of 1994, we were awarded funding from Northwestern University's University Research Grants Committee for a small conference to take place at Northwestern over one long weekend in the spring of 1995. Soon thereafter, Professor Cunningham and the *Washington University Law Quarterly* obtained additional funding from Washington University School of Law to cover the remaining costs of the conference, including the costs of having court reporters transcribe the proceedings to facilitate subsequent publication.[17]

Because the primary purpose of the conference would be to brainstorm, we wanted to keep the atmosphere informal and the number of participants small, and so we planned for a group of just twelve: six from linguistics and six from law.[18] As we sought funding, we had three linguists and three law professors already committed to the enterprise; the three linguists were those from the *Plain Meaning* project—Georgia M. Green, Jeffrey P. Kaplan, and Judith N. Levi—and the three law professors were Clark D. Cunningham (the originator of the *Plain Meaning* group), as well as Frederick Schauer of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy and Robert Bennett, Dean of Northwestern's Law School.

For the remaining slots, we knew we wanted to find scholars who were active researchers in the area we had chosen to concentrate on, interpreta-

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17. Our third source of funding was Dean Robert Bennett of Northwestern University School of Law, who generously contributed some of his own research funds to the project.

18. We were actually thirteen for a small part of the conference; Cass Sunstein of the University of Chicago was able to join us on Friday, but had to leave for a speaking engagement on Saturday, and was unexpectedly prevented from returning on Sunday.

tion of language (in and beyond legal texts); who would be both good teachers and good listeners in an extended cross-disciplinary conversation; who might be persuaded to continue the collaborative effort in both research and mutual education beyond the weekend conference; and who represented a variety of institutions and scholarly circles so that each one could bring news of the dialogue back to his or her own colleagues, thereby spreading the word through a ripple effect. For the law professors in particular, we looked for people who would be new to working with linguists, but whose history provided evidence of openness to interdisciplinary dialogue. For the linguists, we wanted specialists in semantics and pragmatics (the two subfields of linguistics focused on meaning) who had some prior experience in bridging law and linguistics, through research and/or consulting.

The number of legal scholars interested in interpretation far exceeds the number of linguistic scholars known to be interested in law, so we knew that choosing from the first group especially would necessarily exclude many qualified participants. But given the experimental nature of our gathering, we felt that it would not be such a bad result if it turned out that even *more* people wished they had been invited to this event than we could manage to include. And so we proceeded, and were very happy to add to the roster of law professors William N. Eskridge, Jr., Kent Greenawalt, Michael Moore, and (for a limited time) Cass Sunstein; and to the roster of linguistics professors Charles Fillmore, Michael L. Geis, and Jerrold M. Sadock.[19]

III. DESIGNING A STRUCTURE FOR CREATIVE INTERACTION

Having established a conference venue, conference funding, and a full roster of conference participants, we now had to face these new questions: In the absence of formal presentations, what shall we do with these people for three whole days? How can we hold fruitful discussions across the knowledge gap between the two professions? More generally, how can we create a format that will provide enough structure to keep discussions focused and productive, yet enough freedom to foster creativity and innovation?

Pooling our own past conference experiences, both positive and negative, and drawing on the (sometimes contradictory) advice of three experts

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19. For biographical information on each of the participants, see *Law and Linguistics Conference*, 73 WASH. U. L.Q. 785, 785-89 (1995).

whom I consulted on organizing small brainstorming workshops, we chose to prepare for the conference by relying on these organizing features:

1.   We assembled two tutorial reading packets (one with introductory readings in semantics and pragmatics for the law professors, one with introductory readings on legal interpretation for the linguists) of approximately 200 pages each, and requested that each participant read the appropriate packet before the conference.

The packets were designed to create some common intellectual ground and to educate each side on some fundamental notions from the other, thus enabling us to avoid wasting precious conference time on Law 101 and Linguistics 101 lectures.[20]

2.   We elicited suggestions for agenda topics from all participants, to give the conference co-organizers some sense of direction for further planning. Following the expert advice, however, no firm agenda was fixed prior to the conference itself, and the meetings were planned on a day-to-day basis, with continuing input from all participants.

3.   We chose to have two co-moderators to share the burden and vary the pacing of moderating the discussions, while freeing the other participants from this administrative responsibility.

4.   Following an introductory session in which we elicited suggestions for discussion topics, we devoted most of our first full day to a series of three small group discussions focused on specific legal cases or hypotheticals, materials for which had been prepared by Professor Cunningham and sent to all participants to read before arrival. Each group was composed of two linguists and two lawyers, with composition of the groups rotating so as to introduce all participants by the end of the day.

These small-group discussions served three purposes: to "warm up" for the full-group discussions to follow, to help participants get acquainted with each other and with the other discipline's approach to interpretive analysis, and to provide very focused discussions out of which more general principles and issues would emerge.

5.   Following the collective will (and our initial plans), we devoted all of the remaining time to full-group discussions, inspired by the issues that arose in the small groups. These sessions were recorded by court reporters for later publication.

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20. We also designated two linguists and two law professors as resources to whom anyone could turn with questions for clarification on the readings.

6.   Meals were taken together at local restaurants to permit participants
      to continue informal discussion in less structured settings.
   The combination of the above features provided for a highly structured
first day (with topics and discussion groups preassigned), followed by a
more fluid interactional dynamic among the entire group for the balance of
the conference.

IV.   A READER'S GUIDE TO THE SCORE

   The Annotated Table of Contents, to which the reader is referred,[21]
provides headings to indicate the range of specific topics covered during
the conference, and convenient summaries of the comments made by
participants speaking in each of those sections. The reader will readily
observe that the range of discussion topics proposed by participants in the
Friday morning session, and returned to in the Friday evening session, is
much broader than the set of topics actually addressed during the
conference. This should not be surprising, given that the agenda topics
suggested on Friday would suffice for a dozen comparable conferences (and
we do hope that ours is not the last of its genre). However, the rapid flow
and intense heat of the full-group discussions on Saturday and Sunday
indicated that the participants had become fully engaged in one initial set
of topics of greatest shared interest, which proved to be plenty for one
single weekend.
   It will be helpful in reading the transcript to remember that its discourse
structure reflects both the excitement and the complex entanglements
inherent in an active twelve-way discussion. Thus, a participant keen to
respond to one speaker might have to wait a number of turns before
gaining the floor to comment on a point made several turns back.
Alternatively, a pertinent topic introduced at one point by one participant
might not always be picked up and expanded upon by any of the eleven
others. However, despite such minor discontinuities, the following three
major topics gained the largest share of the discussion throughout the
conference:
1.   How do the two disciplines differ in their use of the key words
      meaning, *interpretation*, *text*, and even *statute*? What are the
      implications of these differences for understanding the process of
      legal interpretation (or construction) of, say, statutory language?
      (This subject was addressed throughout most of the Saturday

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21. *Law and Linguistics Conference, supra* note 19, at 790-94.

discussions, but see especially "A Vehicle in the Park by Any Other Name . . ." where the differences between the two professions became most apparent.)[22]

2.   What makes linguistics a science?[23] What does linguistics have to offer to the legal world that is different, say, from what literary criticism or philosophy of language has to offer? What understandings does it have to offer that are not available to competent speakers of English like lawyers and judges, or for that matter, jurors?

3.   What, if anything, can linguistics contribute to an understanding of interpretation that changes over time, as in the case of statutory or constitutional interpretation? Can the concept of "regulatory variables" (a term created in a small group discussion on Friday to characterize how legal interpreters may go *beyond* the conventional meaning of the language to arrive at a satisfactory *application* of it) permit us to make more precise our understanding of the different roles played in legal interpretation by (a) the language itself, and (b) the legal tradition itself?[24]

Additional topics that received more limited attention included:

4.   What is the legal status of documents, such as contracts, that are so "incompetent" that one or more signing parties cannot understand them? What are the legal, ethical, and linguistic issues raised by documents that laypeople cannot be expected to understand but by which they are legally bound, as in the case of many if not most contracts?[25]

5.   What can linguistics contribute to improving comprehensibility of jury instructions?

6.   What can linguistics, especially linguistic pragmatics, contribute to areas of the law that focus on audience understanding, such as contract law, defamation law, and jury instructions?

7.   What does linguistics have to offer in the domain of word meaning

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22. *Law and Linguistics Conference, supra* note 19, at 839-74. This topic is also the focus of two articles in this volume. *See* Michael L. Geis, *The "Meaning" of Meaning in Law*, 73 WASH. U. L.Q. 1125 (1995); Peter M. Tiersma, *The Ambiguity of Interpretation: Distinguishing Interpretation from Construction*, 73 WASH. U. L.Q. 1095 (1995).

23. *Law and Linguistics Conference, supra* note 19, at 898-919.

24. The concept of regulatory variables is explored in detail in William N. Eskridge, Jr. & Judith N. Levi, *Regulatory Variables in Statutory Interpretation*, 73 WASH. U. L.Q. 1103 (1995).

25. *Law and Linguistics Conference, supra* note 19, at 922-39.

that judges might want to assist them in decisionmaking? What can empirical research into word meaning offer that is superior to the judge's traditional reliance on dictionaries?

8.   What parallels exist between the principles of legal interpretation that go beyond the words on the page (e.g., look to speaker intent, avoid absurd results), and the principles of linguistic interpretation analyzed within linguistic pragmatics? Is there something unique to the process of legal interpretation, or is legal interpretation a special case of the more comprehensive pragmatic competence of all speakers of natural languages?

V. LOOKING AHEAD

Since the audience for this journal is primarily a legal one, and is certain to be made up predominantly of people who have *not* worked with linguists before, it might be helpful for this linguist author to specify just why it is that she *enjoys* this kind of interdisciplinary dialogue, and why she seeks it out. It is not that we linguists have any intent to "take over" some central function of the legal profession. Not only are we far too few to do so, but we are basically just not interested in undertaking such an impossible and delusional project. We know full well that the legal profession can manage to function, as it has for virtually all its history, without any solid or systematic connection with linguistics. We also know that linguistics does not need law to carry out *its* professional interests; after all, we linguists will never run out of language to study since it is all around us. So there is no essential, desperately-experienced need—either unilateral or mutual—that *compels* us to seek interactions like those at this conference.

In the absence of compulsions, however, there remain many attractions for linguists in such meetings, and in collaborative projects like that leading to the *Plain Meaning* article and the two lawyer-linguist essays in this volume.[26] For one thing, it's very exciting for linguists to encounter other professionals whose work also immerses them in the puzzles and challenges of language (our favorite subject), but from an entirely different perspective. By focusing on some language issue that intrigues us both and exploring our respective views of it, we each can learn from the other. Moreover, the new perspective provided by one side can introduce

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26. *See* Clark D. Cunningham & Charles Fillmore, *Using Common Sense: A Linguistic Perspective on Judicial Interpretations of 'Using a Firearm'*, 73 WASH. U. L.Q. 1159 (1995); Eskridge & Levi, *supra* note 24.

wonderful new questions, and often satisfying answers, for the other that would not have otherwise emerged. An example from the *Plain Meaning* project is the fact that the linguists were challenged by the facts of the *National Organization for Women v. Scheidler* case[27] to devise an empirical test for discovering the conventional meaning of the word *enterprise*. In so doing, we discovered that there were *two* primary conventional meanings, a pattern we had not suspected before but which turned out to provide one plausible explanation for the contradictory circuit court rulings that preceded the case.[28] The legal context thus engendered a linguistic challenge whose exploration led in turn to an insight of legal significance.[29]

More generally, the richness and complexity of the institutional context in which legal interpretation takes place provide a highly tempting subject for linguistic exploration, especially in the areas of semantics and pragmatics. As noted above, one recurring theme in the conference was the relation of pragmatics (as studied by philosophers of language as well as by linguists) to legal interpretation, while another was the potential contributions that linguistics could make in the area of determining word meaning by empirical means. Both of these topics have great potential for future research, especially if conducted by collaborative law-linguistics teams.

Another reason that linguists can profit from collaborating with legal scholars in exploring law-related language issues is that we are forced by the critical eye and probing questions of the nonlinguist to re-examine our assumptions (both acknowledged and unconscious) about language *and* about linguistics. In this way we are led to distinguish more carefully between what we can confidently assert to be scientifically valid, and what we must rethink in the light of the challenges brought by the specific legal context. For example, the conference raised the fascinating question of the degree to which pragmatic analyses based on Gricean implicatures apply to the understanding of a statute with multiple authors over a period of time

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27. 114 S. Ct. 798 (1994).

28. *See* Cunningham et al., *supra* note 12, at 1610-13. In the same project, it was the linguists' analysis of the puzzling phrase *the original sentence* in United States v. Granderson, 114 S. Ct. 1259 (1994), that led Cunningham to research the relevant legislative history. In so doing, he discovered that the use of the word *sentence* in the statutory provision in question in *Granderson* was inconsistent with its use in the rest of the chapter on sentencing in the United States Code. *See* Cunningham et al., *supra* note 12, at 1580-1582. This one collaborative project, then, provided the linguists with a fruitful challenge from the legal side, and the law professor with a productive lead from the linguistic side.

29. For a report of a similar experience, see Cunningham & Fillmore, *supra* note 26.

by a multiple, diverse, and ever-evolving audience (including both citizens and judges, and across one or more generations).[30] A collaborative exploration of this topic too promises great rewards for both linguistic and legal scholarship.

Lastly, although linguists qua linguists take no normative position on the degree to which the language facts alone should influence a judicial interpretation (i.e., linguists are neither a priori textualists nor the opposite), still we who have been trained in the world of linguistic theory find it very refreshing to bring that theory out into a real-world context like the law. Here, our claims and our discoveries can be tested and, if found valuable, have a significant impact on the lives of real people. This is a satisfaction that linguists who do not reach across to other disciplines may have to forego.

These, then, are some of the reasons why linguists *enjoy* working with legal scholars on questions of mutual interest. Those of us already engaged in such an enterprise look forward to welcoming additional colleagues from the legal world (and from linguistics, for that matter) to this mutually edifying and exciting enterprise.

<p align="center">* * *</p>

Our primary purpose in organizing this conference was to expand the circle of scholars from *both* law and linguistics interested in exploring shared intellectual concerns and possible intellectual connections. Put more simply, we wanted to get more people talking about law and linguistics. As both the transcript and the size of this volume make evident, we appear to have satisfied this initial objective. We will be listening eagerly for the ways in which additional voices will expand and enrich this first dialogue between law and linguistics.

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30. *See Law and Linguistics Conference, supra* note 19, at 825-38.