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Discourse traditions and the historicity of language: discourse traditional knowledge and discourse universes

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Abstract: This chapter has a strongly theoretical focus and is divided into three sections. The first section tackles the relationship between discourse traditions (DTs) and the general question of language historicity; the second section is dedicated to the definition and classification of DTs; and the final section addresses the notion of "universe of discourse" and its possible relationship with DTs or discursive traditionality in general. As regards the first matter, a variety of proposals have been made to situate DTs within a coherent theory of language. Koch (1997) and Oesterreicher (1997) suggest a duplicated "historical level" departing from Eugenio Coseriu s distinction between a universal, a historical, and an individual level of language (see Coseriu 1985). Other scholars (Lebsanft 2006) have criticized this approach: we will argue here that as early the 1950s Coseriu (s.a.) advocated for a historicity of the individual level (Kabatek 2018; 2021). The second section presents the similarities and differences of the various proposals and offers a classification of DTs based on both form and content. Finally, the notion of *universe of discourse* and its relationship to DTs will be addressed: a more general and more traditional view on universes of discourse (Urban 1939; Coseriu 1955–1956) considers these as bundles of DTs, whereas an alternative, more recent view (Coseriu 2002) limits the notion to only four universes based on the semiotic relationship between subjects and objects.

Keywords: discourse traditions, Eugenio Coseriu, historicity, Peter Koch, universe of discourse, Wulf Oesterreicher

1 Introduction

The notion of discourse tradition has been one of the most widely used in Romance variational linguistics over recent decades (see   2 Discourse traditions and variation linguistics). However, the exact understanding of the concept seems to be far from uniform, and although numerous attempts have been made to clarify it since it was introduced by Peter Koch in 1987, it is frequently used in a somewhat loose and spontaneous way, where the term is employed without adopting the framework to which it originally belonged (for further discussion cf. Kabatek/López Serena in press). The aim of the following pages is a) to shed light on the relationship between the concept of DT and the wider notion of linguistic historicity; b) to explain the historical evolu-

tion of the concept; c) to present a definition and a classification, and d) to discuss its relation to other concepts like "universe of discourse".

2 Coseriu s language theory, DTs, immediacy and distance

2.1 Peter Koch introduced the term "discourse traditions" in his habilitation thesis on the Italian tradition of the *Ars dictaminis* in 1987, which unfortunately remains unpublished. Two years earlier, he and Wulf Oesterreicher had presented their conception of "language of immediacy" and "language of distance" in a paper which would for many years be the most cited study in the Germanophone context of Romance linguistics, as well as beyond (Koch/Oesterreicher 1985; 2012; Kabatek 2000; Feilke/Hennig 2016; Gruber/Grübl/Scharinger 2020). In parallel, Koch and Oesterreicher both mention the term in their respective contributions to the *Festschrift* dedicated to Coseriu in 1988 (Koch 1988; Oesterreicher 1988), yet the real development of the concept was presented publicly a few years later in yet another two papers by each of the authors (Koch 1997; Oesterreicher 1997). From that moment onwards, the concept was widely received in the scholarly community, with numerous publications explicitly taking it into account. In the Spanish-speaking world, its reception was boosted by its explicit combination with the notions of *immediacy* and *distance* in Koch/Oesterreicher (2007), the revised Spanish translation of Koch/Oesterreicher s (1990) book on spoken Romance languages, which served as a basis for the second German edition in 2011. Both the notions of immediacy/distance and that of DT were developed from and refer explicitly to Eugenio Coseriu s theory of language; they are considered to be elaborations of or additions to this theory without radically modifying it. In order to understand exactly what this entails, I will first present some aspects of Coseriu s conception and then discuss the points where Koch and Oesterreicher introduce their modifications.

2.2.1 Koch and Oesterreicher refer to Coseriu s three-level-/three-aspect-distinction of the dimensions of language, an apparently "simple distinction" which Coseriu himself considered to be his most important contribution to linguistics:

> "if I were asked what I consider to be my main contribution to the understanding of language and consequently to the foundation of linguistics or, to put it in other words, what constitutes my permanent frame of reference, the very often implicit fundamental principle underlying my treatment of the different, general, or particular linguistic problems, I would answer that it is a relatively simple distinction, one also made intuitively by the speakers of any language, which became entirely clear to me only around 1955; in any case, it was only in 1955 that I formulated it explicitly and undertook to justify it" (Coseriu 1985, XXVI).

The distinction was first presented in Spanish in the paper *Determinación y entorno* (Coseriu 1955–1956). In several of his later publications, Coseriu returns to and comments on this distinction. In Coseriu (1985), it is visualized by the scheme in Table 1.

Table 1: Three levels and three points of view in considering language (Coseriu 1985, XXIX).

Levels	Points of view		
	νέργεια	ύναμις	ἔργον
	Activity	Knowledge	Product
Universal	Speaking in general	Elocutional knowledge	Totality of utterances
Historical	Concrete particular language	Idiomatic knowledge	(Abstracted particular language)
Individual	Discourse	Expressive knowledge	Text

Human language is *universal* in the sense that all humans communicate by means of linguistic signs. It is *historical* in the sense that to speak is always to use the signs of a particular language and in that any language is part of a historically grown community. And it is *individual* in the sense that linguistic communication takes place in individual, unique communicative settings and consists of unique utterances. The three levels can, in the vein of Humboldt and Aristotle, be considered from different points of view: as activity, as competence (or knowledge) and as a product; in this sense, the combination of the two dimensions (levels and points of view) leads to a nine-field distinction.

Why is this apparently simple distinction so important for Coseriu s view on language? A consideration of linguistics in the 1950s might help contextualize this. Coseriu is often associated with a structuralist view on language. He was indeed a structuralist, and published notable work within this framework, mainly contributions to the discipline he called *lexematics*, his version of structural lexical semantics. He believed in the need to explore structural aspects of a language on all levels, including syntax and the lexicon, and one of the tasks of linguistics in the 1950s was, in his view, to apply the achievements of structuralism, above all those from the field of phonology, to the other levels of linguistic structure. In this manner, Coseriu was a follower of Saussure s proposals. However, the aforementioned scheme appears in the context of a severe critique of the absolutist view found in the *Cours de linguistique générale* (probably not due to Saussure himself, cf. e. g. Bouquet 2012). In the *Cours* (Saussure 1916) as we know it, *langue* (i.e. the structured, abstract, communitarian language system) is postulated as the starting point for any kind of linguistic analysis. Coseriu proposes instead a radical change to this view, claiming that linguistic analysis should always depart from what in Spanish he calls *el hablar*, i.e. 'speaking as an activity. It is in this sense that he recalls Humboldt s dogma of language as *energeia*, not *ergon*. If *el hablar* is taken as a starting point, the structuralist view on language,

although not excluded, clearly becomes limited as well, as it focuses on an abstraction of language as a system located at the historical level. However, the other dimensions open the way to considering other possible aspects of human language, namely those that are universal and have to do with language as such (and not with one particular language, i.e. with *langage* and not with *langue*) and those that are individual and have to do with concrete utterances, their situation, context, and concrete 'sense (*sentido*). The individual level, the level of the concrete utterance, of 'text or 'discourse in Coseriu s terminology, anticipates aspects of language later picked up on within Pragmatics and Text Linguistics.

The scheme above thus offered a much more comprehensive conception of language than that restricted to structural analysis. In the following decades, Coseriu s three-level conception was cited by himself and by his followers on numerous occasions. It was the basis for the defense of an "integral" approach to language studies, and served as a critical instrument when new tendencies arose, presenting certain partial aspects of linguistic reality as the central ones, or when issues were discussed without separating the levels that Coseriu had distinguished. In Coseriu s Tübingen school, the scheme was generally not questioned or modified.

2.2.2 Before presenting his modification of Coseriu s conception, Peter Koch had studied and worked at Freiburg University. At the beginning of the 1970s, Freiburg had a well-known tradition in Romance philology due to scholars specializing in literature, such as Hugo Friedrich and Erich Köhler. With the appointments of Hans Martin Gauger (1969) and Wolfgang Raible (1978), the focus began to shift towards linguistics, and in the following decades the university became a flourishing center for Romance linguistics studies. Gauger came from Tübingen but was not a disciple of Coseriu, even though he knew his work quite well. As for Raible, he had a completely different outlook, shaped by Harald Weinrich s textual approach to grammar and by a classical philological background. In the early 1970s, Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, at that time an assistant to Gauger s chair who had studied in Tübingen with Coseriu, "discovered" Peter Koch as a very talented young student. Koch was marked by this environment: in addition to Gauger s view, closely related to what would later be known as a "cognitive" approach, and Raible s focus on the textual level (with all its implications), he gained a close knowledge of Coseriu s famed theory (without being too close to Coseriu himself). For the specific issue of what follows, it is important to mention Schlieben-Lange s influence, in particular her 1983 book *Traditionen des Sprechens* (Schlieben-Lange 1983), in which a theory of historical pragmatics based on a Coserian background is outlined, and where the central importance of 'textual traditions (*Texttraditionen*) as something distinct from the historical rules of a given grammar is one of the main subjects. Koch himself always claimed that he essentially adopted his own conception from Brigitte Schlieben-Lange s proposals.

In 1985, the collaborative research center "Übergänge und Spannungsfelder zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit" ('Transitions and tensions between orality

and literacy) was founded at Freiburg while Koch was preparing his habilitation thesis on the art of dictating letters in medieval Italy. A characteristic of the Tübingen and Freiburg schools was a rejection of merely empirical and descriptive studies. Rather, work always had to relate to general principles and theoretical concepts. Koch (1987) thus discusses Coseriu s framework and proposes a modification of Coseriu s conception with reference, on the one hand, to a need that emerged from his empirical study and, on the other hand, to general discussions during those years mainly within the Freiburg group. The modified view is presented in two complementary schemes with two different directions, the first one indicating the way from the utterance to universality, and the second one looking at the direction from universality into individuality. According to Koch, any individual utterance is shaped by the following factors: in communicating something, the individual has an aim, which is determined by universal principles of coherence and directed towards someone. In order to formulate it, signs of a particular language must be employed according to the rules of that language. But this is not enough: the utterance will also be organized according to traditional ways of doing so that go beyond grammatical rules. Moreover, beyond the particular language and the common textual tradition, there will be particularities due to the individual speaker. The result (the discourse) is a unique utterance determined not only by universality, grammar, tradition and individuality, but also by its singularity, as profiled by the particular historical moment and the specific situational contexts or 'surrounding fields of the text (cf. Coseriu 1955–1956).[1]
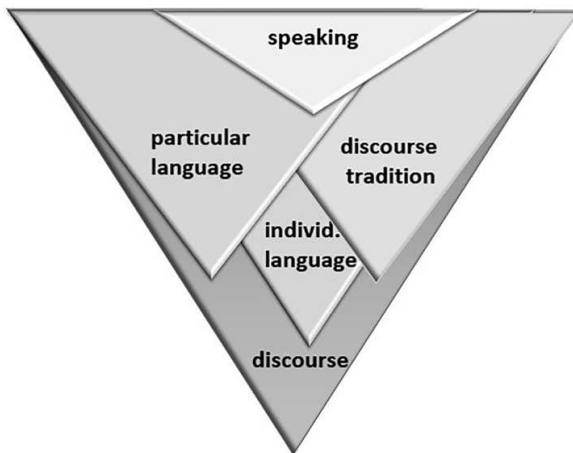

Figure 1: From the activity of speaking to discourse (Koch 1987, 22).

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1 The term 'surrounding fields (German *Umfelder*) commonly appears in English translations of Karl Bühler, who adopted the term from chromatic theory (Coseriu, in turn, took it from Bühler either in the original German or as Sp. *entornos*). Klaas Willems (p.c.) recently proposed replacing it with 'setting , a notion very close to the broad idea of *Umfelder* and far more idiomatic than 'surrounding fields .
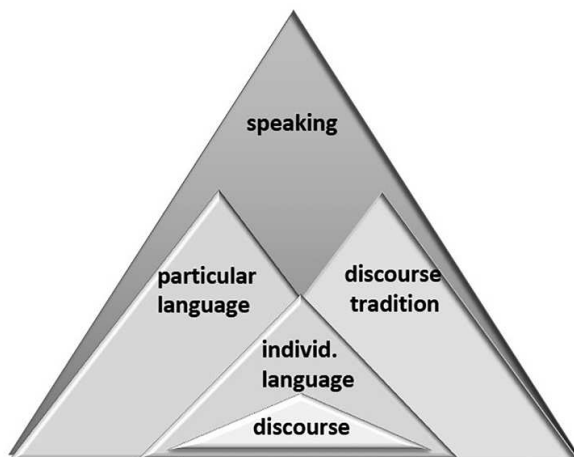
Figure 2: From discourse to the activity of speaking (Koch 1987, 23).

There are two main differences with regard to Coseriu s scheme. The first concerns the introduction of a twofold distinction on the historical level between language and DT, and the second concerns the introduction of the 'individual language or idiolect. What apparently seems to be a third difference, the reduction to the vertical dimension without reference to the horizontal dimension (the difference between *energeia*, *ergon* and *dynamis*), is discussed exhaustively in another section of Koch s thesis.

I will not go here into the issue of the possible existence of an "individual language", a concept criticized by Coseriu (Coseriu 1988, 40; Kabatek 1996, 31–37), but will restrict the discussion to the issue of the manual, i. e. the notion of DTs and their theoretical *locus*.

2.2.3 Coseriu repeatedly insisted that a language is a historical object. This is not only the case for what he calls a "historical language" like French, German, or Spanish in the sense of a *diasystem* (Weinreich 1954) including diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic varieties as well as possibly an 'exemplary or standard language (Coseriu 1980). It also holds for any syntopic, synstractic and symphasic language system, for any *langue* in Saussure s sense. A language system is always a shared system common to the members of the same language community. It cannot be shared without historicity: the members of the community do not invent it, they recreate it on the basis of what they have acquired during their childhood; it is, then, a system with a historical foundation.

In our view, the essential message of the division of the historical level proposed by Koch is that this historicity is twofold and that it does not only include the historically shared language system (including its common realizations, or what Coseriu 1952 calls its "norm"). To speak or to write is not only to produce utterances according to the grammar and the lexicon of a given language, but also to do so according to es-

tablished traditions, *text traditions* in terms of Schlieben-Lange or DTs according to Koch's newly coined term. In Koch (1987), the traditional rhetorical structure of letters serves to illustrate this double historicity: the rhetorical rules that determine the different sections of a letter, its order and content, are not part of the grammar of a particular language; they are part of cultural knowledge linked to the realization of a certain linguistic practice. These rules are not even dependent on a particular language: they may apply to different languages or, on the contrary, very locally within one language community. This means that they have a historicity on their own, parallel to "grammatical" and "lexical" historicity.

In his seminal 1997 paper, Koch further exemplifies what he considers to be part of this historicity: 'From the perspective of discourse tradition, we are looking at text types, genres, styles, rhetorical *genera*, forms of conversation, speech acts etc. such as the medication package insert, the sonnet, Mannerism, panegyrica, talk shows, feudal oaths and so on' (Koch 1997, 45/this volume).[2] This consciously heterogeneous list seeks to show the wide range of possible DTs. However, Koch also avoids giving a clear definition of his concept beyond the theoretical statement that it is about the historical dimension of texts. Yet it seems clear that by focusing on the traditionality of texts he touches upon an undeniable reality. His claim for the necessity of doubling Coseriu's historical level derives from his understanding of Coseriu's individual level: in Koch's view, there seems to be no place for the omnipresent historicity of texts. A text or discourse is a unique event and 'by definition', as Koch himself states, it only has a history in the sense that it is a unique event anchored in a particular place and moment. This is why he postulates the addition of DTs parallel to linguistic historicity on the same level (cf. also Kabatek 2018, 14–18). He refers to the impossibility of locating the competence of textual traditions on the individual level and to the need for a parallelism between text traditions and grammar/lexicon on the historical level:

> 'On the other hand, expressive competence is neither actual nor individual. The [...] rules of discourse [...] offer patterns to the speaker for adequately designing the actual discourse. They indicate *discourse traditions*: styles, genres, text types, discourse universes, speech acts, etc., each of them gathering together classes of discourses. Given that this knowledge is historically marked all the way through, expressive knowledge must be part of the same level as idiomatic knowledge' (Koch 1987, 31; emphasis in the original; translation JK).[3]

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2 "unter diskurstraditionellem Aspekt beschäftigen wir uns mit Textsorten, Gattungen, Stilen, rhetorischen Genera, Gesprächsformen, Sprechakten usw. wie z.B. Beipackzettel, Sonett, Manierismus, Prunkrede, Talkshow, Lehnseid usw.".

3 "Was nun andererseits das expressive Wissen betrifft, so ist es weder aktuell noch auch individuell. Die [...] Diskursregeln geben [...] dem Sprecher Muster an die Hand, um den aktuellen, individuellen Diskurs angemessen zu gestalten. Sie verweisen auf *Diskurstraditionen*, nämlich auf bestimmte Stile, Gattungen, Textsorten, Diskursuniversen, Sprechakte usw., die jeweils Klassen von Diskursen zusammenfassen. Insofern als es sich hier um ein durch und durch historisches Wissen handelt, gehört das expressive Wissen auf dieselbe Ebene wie das idiomatische Wissen".

But is it really possible that Coseriu ignored the traditionality of texts and that he "forgot" to take into account a phenomenon as obvious as the traditionality of texts? Let us turn to Coseriu s own conception and then get back to the discussion of Koch s modification of his theory.

2.3.1 The concept of historicity is fundamental in Coseriu s language theory, and as such it is far from being a simple and spontaneous notion. He defines historicity as one of the universals of human language, the others being creativity, semanticity, alterity and materiality.
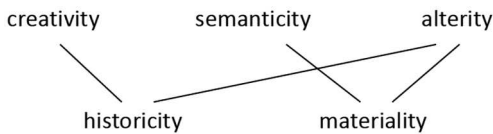
creativity   semanticity   alterity

historicity   materiality

Figure 3: Language universals according to Coseriu (2001, 80).

Together with materiality, historicity is a "derived" universal. It stems from the combination of creativity and alterity, while materiality stems from semanticity and alterity: a linguistic sign must become physical in order to be shared with others, and language must be historical since it constitutes commonly shared individual creativity. Language is in essence historical, in that linguistic sign systems are historical entities: to speak a language is to be part of a historically given community. Moreover, if it is indeed our language faculty that makes us human, this faculty is always realized in a specific historical language, and never just "universally". And it is only in exchange with other members of the shared language community that linguistic signs are recognized as the means of communicating about things and reflecting ourselves in the other. From this fundamental historicity derives the notion that Linguistics, along the lines of Hermann Paul ([5]1920), is a historical discipline, though not in the strict sense of being nothing but Historical Linguistics: in a broad and general sense, synchronic linguistics is also by definition historical in that a synchronic system is always a historically generated one. Saussure s claim that only synchronic linguistics reflects the real speakers competence is thus not opposed to a historical understanding of language in Coseriu s sense: even leaving aside the discussion about the degree of diachronic knowledge a speaker might have, Saussure s postulate that the speaker is 'in front of a state [of language] ("devant un état", Saussure 1916, 117) by no means entails that speaking is not a historical activity. The acquisition of a language is the acquisition of a historical system, but it also makes the speaker independent from history: to assume a language system is an act of "synchronization", of liberation, with the consequence that the language is thereupon freely managed without depending on its historical background anymore. But this, of course, is only true for linguistic historicity in what we could call its primary sense, and not for "tradition" in the sense of repetition (and in the sense of DT). This essential idiomatic historicity might be

called the *primary historicity of language*, as it defines language as something completely different from all other historical objects; in this primary sense, the language-producing subject and the particular language as an object merge into one.

2.3.2 Apart from this primary, essential and assumed historicity, Coseriu distinguishes in several works a "secondary historicity" of *repetition* (cf. e.g. in Schlieben-Lange/ Weydt 1979, 77). In the case of language, this historicity refers to the repetition of texts, that is, to a text or texts previously uttered, and to the "traditionality" to which Koch refers with the term "DT". If we take a closer look at Coseriu s work, above all at a still unpublished and exhaustive manuscript on linguistic correctness written in Montevideo in the 1950s,[4] it becomes clear that he was wholly aware of the historicity of texts, and that he took it into account in his general view on language. Coseriu explicitly refers to textual tradition and introduces the notion of "expressive historicity", the historicity of the individual level, alongside the "expressive universality". Recall that "expressive" is the term used (see Table 1) for the type of knowledge, the *dynamis*, at the individual (or textual) level. An example of textual traditionality offered by Coseriu is formulaic language (see also 34 Discourse traditions and formulaic language studies), such as Eng. *good morning*, *good evening*, Sp. *buenos días*, *buenas tardes*, Fr. *bonjour* etc. The translation of these forms, he argues, it is not a problem of language but rather of texts: Sp. *buenos días* is not 'good day in English but rather 'good morning (cf. Coseriu 1985, XXX). The following quote from this unpublished manuscript explains that competence on the individual level is not restricted to the utterance itself, and that there is also a historicity on the individual level:[5]

> 'At the same time, we must observe that – even if it s true that the level of language to which expressive competence belongs is 'particular in the sense that it deals with individual, concrete and occasional realizations of linguistic activity – this does not imply that such competence is particular in its content and its sphere of application. It is not even necessarily individual in its extension within linguistic communities.
> The content of the individual competence applies to *types* of circumstances and of discourses. It does not refer, for example, to 'how to talk to this child, here and now , but rather to how to talk to children in general, or at least to 'how to talk to this child in several situations : otherwise, it would not be a competence. In its extension, too, this competence may in some aspects belong to very limited communities and even to one single individual, but it also presents aspects of a much larger extension. For example, only the best friends of Juan Pérez Alonso might know how you have to speak with him when he is angry after having lost a bet, and maybe only his best

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4 When discussing the need to add the term "DT" to Coseriu s conception, Koch refers to Coseriu (1973; [2]1981). But he must have been aware of the (unfortunately still) unpublished manuscript on linguistic correction, since he refers to it in Koch (1987). Some of the relevant passages of the manuscript were published in German translation in the 1988 *Festschrift* for Coseriu (cf. Coseriu 1988). For further criticism of Koch s restricted view on the individual level, cf. Lebsanft (2005; 2006; 2015); Lebsanft/ Schrott (2015).

5 For the following, cf. also Kabatek (2021).

friend José Sánchez knows how, but to know how to speak with a friend is a competence of an indefinite number of individuals. However, apart from some special cases, the interesting aspects of expressive competence are those that in both senses present a certain degree of generality. Such aspects may be 'historical or 'universal . They are universal if they have to do with the nature of humans or with human experience in general, and they are historical if they depend on historically determined spheres of experience or culture. *This means that expressive competence has its own universality and its own historicity.* There are, in fact, universal (non-idiomatic) ways of speaking in certain circumstances and universal ways of structuring certain types of discourse (e.g. narrative discourse) [...], and, by analogy, historical modes of both species (Coseriu s.a.; emphasis added; translation JK).[6]

In this context, we may conclude that what Koch calls "discourse tradition" is part of Coseriu s three-level distinction: it is the level of the historicity of texts (cf. Kabatek 2021).[7] Given that Coseriu not only mentions the historicity of texts but also the universality of texts, in Kabatek (2021) we inferred that there are aspects of each higher level on each lower level, and that there must also be universality pertaining to the historical level. This means that a more complete scheme of the three-level distinction would be as shown in Figure 4.[8]

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6 "Hay que observar, asimismo, que – si bien es cierto que el escalón del lenguaje al que corresponde el saber expresivo es 'particular , en el sentido de que se trata de realizaciones concretas, individuales y ocasionales de la actividad lingüística – ello no implica que ese saber sea particular en cuanto a su contenido y a su esfera de aplicación, ni que sea necesariamente individual en cuanto a su extensión en las comunidades lingüísticas.

Por su contenido, el saber expresivo se aplica a *tipos* de circunstancias y, por ende, de discursos; no se refiere, por ej., a *cómo hablar con este niño, aquí y ahora*, sino a cómo hablar con los niños o, por lo menos, a cómo hablar con este niño en varias situaciones: de otro modo, no sería un saber. Y en cuanto a su extensión, este saber puede, por ciertos aspectos, pertenecer a comunidades muy limitadas, y hasta a un solo individuo, pero presenta también aspectos de extensión mucho más amplia. Así, cómo hay que hablar con Juan Pérez Alonso cuando está enfadado porque acaba de perder una apuesta, lo sabrán los íntimos de Juan Pérez Alonso, y quizás solo lo sepa su buen amigo José Sánchez; pero el saber cómo hablar con un amigo pertenece a un número indefinido de individuos. De todos modos, salvo casos especiales, los aspectos interesantes del saber expresivo son los que presentan, en ambos sentidos, cierto grado de generalidad. Tales aspectos pueden ser 'universales o 'históricos . Son universales los que se relacionan con la naturaleza propia del hombre y con la experiencia humana general; son históricos los que dependen de ámbitos históricamente determinados de experiencia o de cultura. Es decir que el saber expresivo posee su propia universalidad y su propia historicidad. Existen, en efecto, modos universales (no-idiomáticos) de hablar en tipos de circunstancias y modos universales de estructurar ciertos tipos de discursos (por ej., discursos narrativos) [...], y, análogamente, modos históricos de ambas especies".

7 This view is also clearly expressed in Coseriu s theory of text linguistics (Coseriu [2]1981, [1]1980). In the introduction to the Spanish edition of this book (Coseriu 2007), Óscar Loureda Lamas emphasizes the three-level distinction of the individual level. Other scholars have also argued for the need to locate the traditionality of texts on the individual level (see Lebsanft/Schrott 2015, 22).

8 Schlieben-Lange (1990, 115), Loureda Lamas (2005; 2008) and López Serena (2012, 270; see also López Serena 2021) offer similar schemes for the individual level derived from Coseriu s observations
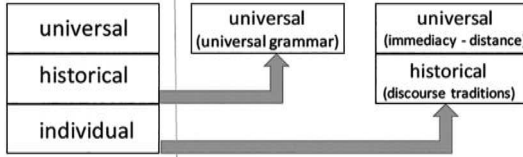
Figure 4: Coseriu s three-level distinction according to Kabatek (2021, 238).

2.3.3 A third type of historicity distinguished by Coseriu is the historicity of the unique event. The Trojan War, the first man on the moon, and the fall of the Berlin Wall are unique historical events located in history. This "third historicity", in the case of language, refers to the uniqueness of every utterance or text, determined not only by a particular sequence of linguistic signs but also by the 'setting or the 'surrounding fields (Coseriu 1955–1956), the unique constellation of the concrete utterance.

2.4 The "three historicities" (primary idiomatic historicity, tradition, and historical uniqueness) are very different in nature, and only the first, idiomatic historicity, is restricted to human language. We can find non-linguistic secondary historicities (traditions) in human behavior (in fashion, architecture, art etc.), and we find historical uniqueness in culture as well as in nature (an eruption of a volcano is a historical event just as much as any uttered text).

Koch s criticism of Coseriu s theory refers to the lack of historicity of individual facts: in his view, Coseriu s model only takes into account the first and third historicity, but not the second. In turn, Coseriu, taking a more genetic view, considers tertiary historicity to have the potential to become secondary: by repetition, a unique fact is no longer unique but enters into the realm of secondary historicity or tradition. However, the fact that Coseriu did not ignore secondary historicity and the phenomena subsumed under the label of DTs by Koch, should not obscure Koch s enormous merit in giving primordial importance to discursive traditionality, thus opening up a perspective on language largely ignored or only marginally taken into account by linguistics throughout the second half of the 20th century.

3 Discourse traditions: definition and classification

Once the fundamental importance of DTs as a theoretical concept for the description of language is accepted intuitively, it seems that we must offer a definition. Several more or less precise definitions in fact exist (e. g. Oesterreicher 1997, 24; Octavio de Toledo y Huerta 2018, 119). I have myself proposed the following:

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in his book on text linguistics, as well as from the unpublished *El problema de la corrección idiomática*.

> 'We define *discourse tradition* (DT) as the repetition of a text or a textual form or a particular way of writing or speaking that acquires the value of a sign of its own (and is hence signifiable). A DT may emerge in relation to any expressive finality or to any element of content whose repetition establishes a link between actualization and tradition, i.e., any relation that may be established between two elements of tradition (acts of communication or referential elements) and evocates a particular textual form or a particular use of linguistic elements (Kabatek 2005a, 157; translation JK).[9]

There is still a lot to be discussed regarding this definition (for a simpler version, cf. e.g. Kabatek/Pusch [2]2011, 172), but it will suffice for our present purposes. However, a general definition can only build a starting point if the concept is meant to be useful and applicable in practice. It thus makes sense to ask for a classification of DTs, even if I have claimed in several works that the strength of the concept (in contrast to similar notions like *genre*, *text type* etc.) lies precisely in the change of perspective it implies. DTs or discursive traditionality (for this distinction, cf. Octavio de Toledo y Huerta 2018) should not be considered as something pre-categorized and previously established, but rather as a part of a process of establishing traditional links:

> 'The whole discussion on DTs suffers, in my opinion, from a problem of perspective: it is usual to start from certain categories concerning repetition or what is repeatable and subsequently inquire which DT is present in each case. However, from the moment that we depart from those categories, we are distracted from the process of categorization itself (Kabatek 2015a, 56; translation JK).[10]

This inversion of perspective seems to demand further clarification. The first one concerns a differentiation already established by Peter Koch himself, then further discussed in detail by other authors, namely the difference between *discourse tradition* and *discursive traditionality*. It would be too simple to claim that everything that can be identified as a repetition is a DT. The tradition-based link between two events always implies some kind of construction, which might operate collectively and "objectively", as in the case of certain well-established forms or formulae – but it may also be less openly recognizable. Moreover, there may exist asymmetries between speaker and hearer in the sense that something may be traditional for one of the two but not

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9 "Entendemos por *tradición discursiva* (TD) la repetición de un texto o de una forma textual o de una manera particular de escribir o de hablar que adquiere valor de signo propio (por lo tanto, es significable). Se puede formar en relación con cualquier finalidad de expresión o con cualquier elemento de contenido cuya repetición establece un lazo entre actualización y tradición, es decir, cualquier relación que se puede establecer semióticamente entre dos elementos de tradición (actos de enunciación o elementos referenciales) que evocan una determinada forma textual o determinados elementos lingüísticos empleados".

1 "Die ganze Diskussion um die Diskurstraditionen krankt m.E. an einem Perspektivenproblem: Es wird von bestimmten Kategorisierungen des Wiederholten oder Wiederholbaren ausgegangen und dann gefragt, welche Diskurstradition jeweils vorliegt. Ab dem Moment jedoch, wo wir vom Terrain der Kategorien ausgehen, versperren wir uns dem Prozess des Kategorisierens selbst".

for the other (these asymmetries, however, are not particular to DT but to communication in general and they might occur on all levels).

In Kabatek (2015b; cf. also Kabatek 2018; Kabatek/López Serena in press; for a different approach, Wilhelm 2001) I put forth a proposal to further classify DT. This should not be considered in contradiction with the "bottom-up" principle of searching for traditionality in texts; rather, it identifies a series of general principles of classification. These can be based on the form (repetition of a form or some formal elements) or on the content (partial or total repetition of content) of the utterance. On the side of the form, we distinguish what we call the discursive *form*, the discursive *zone*, and the discursive *formula*; on the side of content, the discursive *domain*, the discursive *theme*, and the discursive *motif*. This categorization is not a closed one and perhaps further categories may be found, yet it will always be important to stick to the principle of categorization from the perspective of elements that can be identified in the texts.

The discursive *form* refers to combinations of elements in texts. A sonnet, an official letter, the lead story in a newspaper, but also oral conversations, all follow certain regularities that serve in their construction and help in their recognition. The discursive *zone* refers to different sections of a text: the introduction of an essay versus the central part or the concluding remarks, the central part of a letter versus the initial or the final section, etc. This distinction is necessary since the traditionality of different sections of a text is frequently not uniform, and innovation might penetrate some sections while others remain more conservative. The discursive *formula* refers to formulaic elements of different kinds, like greeting formulae in everyday communication such as *good morning* and *have a nice day*, or text identifiers such as *once upon a time*.

On the side of content, the discursive *domain* is the "macro-context" that determines the sense of a text, e.g. the term "root" (an example used by Coseriu, see Coseriu ²1981) means something different in mathematics than in botany (as for the ambiguous terms discursive universe and universe of discourse, see the following section).

The discursive *theme* or topic is the principal subject of a text ("Textthema" in the sense of Brinker ⁷2010): the principal subject of a lead story in a newspaper is usually the central event that the story is about. There may be one dominating discursive topic and several subtopics with a hierarchical or a linear organization. Topics may also be projected and combined, as in Francis Ford Coppola s 1979 movie *Apocalypse Now* that projects Joseph Conrad s *Heart of Darkness* into a completely new environment and a new story.

On a lower level, we can distinguish the discursive *motif*. In the tradition of European literature and its medieval Latin background, Ernst Robert Curtius (¹¹1993, ¹1948, 522) showed in his well-known masterpiece how certain metaphors were transmitted from one literary tradition to another, such as the monkey as a metaphor for imitation or falsity. However, this kind of traditionality is by no means limited to literature, and is also part of colloquial conversation.

This is not a complete list, and it is tempting to look for continuations. For example, there might also be different types of combinations or co-occurrences. There can be traditions of content associated with forms or formulae, and there can also be dynamic transformations of different types of DTs.

The separation of form and content is possibly a critical point, difficult to be maintained in practice. In some cases, there are traditional links between form and content while in other cases both are more independent. But the critical observation does not eliminate the principle of traditionality as such, and it does not invalidate the attempt to classify different types of DT.

4 Discourse traditions and universe(s) of discourse

What we have just called "discourse domain" touches on the important question of the relationship between DTs and universality. We can assume that the existence of DTs as such is a universal fact. Within a classification of DTs, however, where is the limit between universality and culture? Is a discourse domain such as the domain of legal texts culturally determined or is there a universal need to express normativity? This issue is similar to that of the universality of speech acts: are speech acts universal or culturally determined? The answer, in both cases, is difficult to provide, and the easiest way to avoid unnecessary discussion is to invert the argument: anything that is not universal is not a speech act, and anything not clearly traditional is not a DT. This does not really resolve the issue, however. The limit between universal principles and widespread generalities can also be seen in the ambiguity of the terms *universe of discourse* (Urban 1939, 194–195) and *discourse universe*. For several authors, the discourse universe is the most general type of DT (Wilhelm 2001; cf. also Schlieben-Lange 1983). Koch (1997) names speech acts in a list of phenomena to be investigated from a discourse traditional perspective. Others claim that speech acts are universal (Weydt in Schlieben-Lange/Weydt 1979). If we prefer to exclude speech acts from the list of DTs, this implies that speech acts do not have a history: they are universal possibilities of acting linguistically, and if we observe an apparent historicity of speech acts, this historicity is the historically shaped outcome of these universal possibilities. In different communities, this outcome may adopt very different forms, from non-linguistic symbolic forms to language traditions, whenever there exist particular DTs for the expression of certain acts. The historicity of universal acts can even become a grammatical one (if a particular language has particular devices for the expression of universal acts).

As already noted, the term *universe of discourse*, like the term *speech act*, is not used in a completely unambiguous way. It was introduced into Romance linguistics in 1955 by Coseriu (Coseriu 1955–1956) with reference to Urban (1939; cf. also Schlieben-Lange 1983; Aschenberg 1999; Wilhelm 2001; Kabatek 2005b). Urban himself had adopted the term from De Morgan (1847, 41), and he refers to a wide context, distin-

guishable from the concrete situational context, a "universe or systematic context in which the propositions alone have meaning" (Urban 1939, 198). In Urban s view, there exist different universes of discourse and they are discursively constructed by means of linguistic signs. The universe of discourse is defined by shared suppositions that make communication possible: "[a] universe of discourse is then conditioned by its supposition and that supposition is the assumption of the reality of the universe in which the discourse takes place" (Urban 1939, 201). He exemplifies this with the example "marriage is a sacrament", a statement which only makes sense in a "universe of discourse where sacraments have reality" (Urban 1939, 201). This means that a "universe" is not conceived as "universal" in a general sense, but it is rather historically constructed by a culture. In this sense, a "universe of discourse" is clearly a form of DT, and the illustration with the example of "marriage" as used by a priest, a judge or an anthropologist indicates what is meant here. In his early works, Coseriu initially adopts the term in the Urbanian sense, and this is also how it is adopted by his disciples (cf. Schlieben-Lange 1983, 19–20; Aschenberg 1999). In his lectures on text linguistics, he defined the universe of discourse as 'the universal system of meanings of which a text is part and by which it receives its validity and its sense (Coseriu ²1981, 134; translation JK),[11] and he exemplified this definition with "universes" like mathematics, mythology, literature, science and the practical everyday world, universes that must clearly be considered historical and not universal.

However, even though Coseriu was generally very consistent in the use of his terminology over the course of his career, claiming this to be a characteristic that distinguished him from other contemporary linguists (often with implicit, and sometimes even explicit, allusions to Chomsky), he offers a different view on universes of discourse in one of his final works (Coseriu 2002). The most significant modification has to do with to the limitation of the universes of discourse to only four 'fundamental modes of human knowledge (Coseriu 2002, 38).[12] He argues for a semiotic relationship between subject and object, distinguishing: a) the universe of everyday current usage, where subjects talk subjectively about objects; b) the universe of science, where subjects talk objectively about objects; c) the universe of fiction (subjective creation of "imagined" objects) and, finally, d) the universe of faith, involving the intersubjective creation of "imagined" objects that are considered to exist.

Even after this radical reduction, we might debate the question of whether such "universes" are really "universal" or are in reality "historical". Their basically semiotic definition seems largely independent from history. Specific religions have their historical evolution, but the universe of faith, we might suppose, is something universally human, at least as a possibility, and probably all human cultures have de-

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11 "das universelle System von Bedeutungen, zu dem ein Text gehört und durch das er seine Gültigkeit und seinen Sinn erhält".

12 "modi fondamentali del conoscere umano".

veloped some form of religion due to a universal psychological disposition. As for science, its modern form is due to an evolution over the last millennium, with the move from Scholasticism to Empiricism and the consolidation of modern science from the 19th century onwards. But this is already a historical argumentation, and "objectivity" is probably an almost universal dimension, one perceived and sought long before the birth of modern science: if Pontius Pilate asks for the truth (*quid est veritas?*), an objective truth beyond subjective construction is supposed to exist; and the only satisfying answer, also in Pilate s context, could only be a "scientific" or objectively verifiable one.

There is thus a clear shift in Coseriu s conception from a "historical" understanding of the term universe of discourse to a (more) universal one, a conception that is also in harmony with his terminological principle of using terms that exist in everyday language and defining them without creating too much distance from common usage.

There are, then, two arguments, in my opinion, for not including the term *discourse universe* as a form of DTs: first, the modification by the author who introduced it into Romance linguistics and thus the creation of a certain ambiguity; second (and probably more importantly) the fact that these "universes" are not universal, an argument in favor of the proposed alternative "discourse domain".

5 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter has been to show that the relationship between the concept of DT and historicity is not a simple one. After presenting Koch s modification of Coseriu s three-level-/three-aspect-model, we introduced Coseriu s distinction between a primary linguistic historicity, a secondary historicity or "tradition", and a tertiary historicity. The most difficult of the three notions is probably that of primary historicity, since it makes a language in its synchrony appear as a-historic in Foucault s sense (Foucault 1969, 260). However, it is precisely this primary historicity that is exclusive to language and thus also "prior" to the conceptualization of the other two notions in the Hegelian sense of *Voreiligkeit*. The relationship between secondary and primary historicity is crucial not only for historical issues, but also for synchronic studies, as the different types of DTs and discourse traditionality affect the production and the understanding of texts or utterances and are relevant for any linguistic analysis. To have insisted on the importance of this relationship is to my mind the main merit of Koch s proposal, together with its background in the work of Brigitte Schlieben-Lange and its relation to the continuum between a "language of immediacy" and a "language of distance" jointly developed with Wulf Oesterreicher. In this sense, the concept of DT is not simply just another notion in linguistics with a limited relevance, but rather a fundamental concept for understanding language: language is thrice historical, as the primary device that makes us human and allows us the access to the world, as tradition and repetition, and in its concrete materialization in unique events.

6 References

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