THE NOTTINGHAM LINGUISTIC CIRCULAR

Edited on behalf of the Nottingham Linguistic Circle

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E D I T O R I A L

This pilot issue of The Nottingham Linguistic Circular (NLC) should make its own exposition of the aims and proposed content of our bulletin; yet may require, if only in obedience to tradition, an introductory statement of editorial policy.

We hope to serve two useful purposes. One is to provide members of the Nottingham Linguistic Circle with an almanac and report of their activities. In this connection, we feel that we can perform an acceptable service by printing abstracts of talks given to the Circle during the course of the academic year. Members will thus have a permanent and accessible record of matters which must otherwise be half-lost in the shifty ways of memory.

Our second purpose is to create a small market for writings which merit at least a passing notice, but which may not be germane to the big business of the learned journals. In considering such writings for publication we shall not impose limitations of doctrine or theme. Our editorial posture is one of non-commitment, the only requirement being that contributions should be of moderate length and have a clear bearing on linguistics or language. This is virtually an invitation to all comers, and since there are obviously many topics which lie beyond the scope of our arbitration, we have asked colleagues in various fields to help us by serving on an advisory panel.

We propose to publish the NLC twice a year, in Autumn and in Spring. The first issue is being circulated to everyone on our mailing lists. Subsequent issues will be supplied free to paid up members of the Nottingham Linguistic Circle; additional copies will be available at a reasonable charge. Since we dare not hope for more than a modest and mainly parochial circulation, we are

presenting the bulletin in the simplest possible format, limiting the cost of production to a sum that can be met largely from the subscribed funds of the Circle. Should the work prosper as we hope it will, it may be that our ambitions will outgrow our finances; but that is not yet a problem.

As editors, we are of course convinced of the value and desirability of our undertaking. However, it must be obvious that the strength of a 'little magazine' - its whole character and potential for growth - lies very largely with its readership. We would accordingly remind our readers of our editorial need to be pestered. We invite suggestions, criticisms, information, matter for debate. In short, we call for a participant audience to help in creating a lively magazine; of which, as we are well aware, our pilot issue must be the merest token.

        R. Hartmann   W. Nash

Dear Reader,
    If you are not a paid-up member of the Nottingham Linguistic Circle and want to receive future issues of the NLC at a charge of £0.20 per copy, would you please return the slip below duly signed.

                           (detach here)

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To: Dr. R. R. K. Hartmann,
     Language Centre,
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     NG7 2RD.

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NOTICES AND PROSPECTS

(1) The Nottingham Linguistic Circle (c/o Miss H. M. Berry,

School of English Studies, University of Nottingham, NG7 2RD)

announces the following events for the session 1971/72:

Mr. C. N. Candlin (University of Lancaster) will give a talk
entitled Field Methods in Sociolinguistics on Friday,
3rd December.

Professor J. McH. Sinclair (University of Birmingham) has
offered to come and lead a further discussion of
language study and the creative process later in the
session.

Miss R. M. Kempson (London School of Oriental and African
Studies) will talk on the dichotomy between test
data and a formal linguistic theory, probably in
January.

Mr. David Evans (Nottingham) will lead a discussion between
local linguists and members of the University
Philosophy Department. Probable date: February 1972.

Mr. K. Albrow (until recently with University College, London
Linguistics and English Teaching Project) will speak
on the English writing system. Probably February or
March.

Dr. D. A. Reibel (University of York) will give a talk, in
May, on some aspect of language and learning.

All meetings will be held in the Audio-Visual Room of the

University Language Centre; further details will be sent to

paid-up members of the Circle.

(2) The British Association for Applied Linguistics announces its

Seminar on German Applied Linguistics which will take place at

the University of Nottingham from 24th-26th March, 1972. The

speakers will be L. Seiffert (Birmingham), J. Trim (Cambridge),

B. Engelen (Heidelberg), P. Strauch (York), G. Wahrig

(Wiesbaden-Mainz), N. Denison (LSE), B. Gomes da Costa (NE.

London Polytechnic). Topics include German intonation, syntax,

lexicography, contrastive analysis and language teaching methods.

Further details from Dr. R. R. K. Hartmann, Lecturer in

Applied Linguistics, University of Nottingham, NG7 2RD.

(3) The annual conference of the <u>Joint Council of Language</u>

<u>Associations</u> will be held at the University of Nottingham

from 28th to 30th December, 1971.

The two main themes of the conference will be the

teaching of modern languages to pupils with a wide range

of ability in secondary schools and the aims of modern

language teaching in tertiary education. Further details

from Mr. W. Grauberg, The Language, Centre, University of

Nottingham, NG7 2RD.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN'S

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

(On 12th November, 1970 Professor emeritus M. M. Lewis
gave a talk to the Nottingham Linguistic Circle on the topic of
child language development. We reproduce the following short
extract not as new information on an old subject, but as a
faithful transcription of Prof. Lewis's engaging style of
lecturing. Members of the Circle will by now be aware of Prof.
Lewis's recent death; we gladly use this opportunity of paying
tribute to his memory. We are also venturing to append a basic
bibliography of works on children's language acquisition, the
life-long interest of M. M. Lewis.)

... The broad facts (we have much to learn still) are known, have been known since the beginning of time, since Eve heard the infant cry on the very first day of life. And so you have at once the basis: vocal utterance by the child to which somebody responds. On the first day, too, the child begins to respond to vocal sounds, the sound of the human voice. The one he responds to more and more will be his mother (or whoever attends to him).

As time goes on we begin to get a differentiation of the child's utterance - this varies with the child -, the crying in states of distress and discomfort, the 'cooing' when the child is comfortable and satiated, and 'babbling' (which is not an expression in the Darwinian sense, but playing with sound), one of the most characteristic forms of utterance of the infant.

As time goes on we get what some American linguists are fond of calling 'feedback', when the child begins to be aware of his own utterance and responds to the responses to his utterances. As time goes on, very rapidly indeed, the child begins to use more and more 'forms' which are those of the society in which he had been brought up. By the age of about 3, most of them have reached an astonishingly high level of achievement.

It looks as though by and large children in normal circumstances, by the time they are 8 years of age, are using indeed the broad range of structures of the mother tongue (of the linguistic community of which they are a member) to a very high degree of correctness ....

Some basic works on child language acquisition
         (all except No. (3) in the Nottingham University Library)

(1) An introductory survey:
    M. M. Lewis (1969) Language and the Child Slough: NFER

(2) An early classic:
    C. & W. Stern (1907) Die Kindersprache Leipzig: Barth

(3) A record of early bilingualism:
    W. Leopold (1939-49) Speech Development of a Bilingual Child
                    4 vols. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern U.P.

(4) An analysis of tape-recorded monologues:
    R. H. Weir (1962) Language in the Crib The Hague: Mouton

(5) A study in transformational-generative terms:
    C. Chomsky (1969) The Acquisition of Syntax in Children from
                    5 to 10 Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press

(6) A statistical count:
    D. G. Burns (no date) Vocabulary of the Secondary Modern School
                    Child Occasional Publication Slough: NFER

(7) A recent psycholinguistic summary:
    R. Campbell, R. Wales (1970) "The Study of Language Acquisition"
                    in New Horizons in Linguistics ed. by
                    J. Lyons, Penguin Books

AMERICAN LINGUISTICS 1971

Impressions from a fact-finding tour

What are the dominating problems and practices in North

American linguistics, how do linguists approach their field, how

is it organised in institutions of higher learning, private and

state-controlled, at college and postgraduate level? These are

some of the questions which I hoped to get answered when I was in

the fortunate position last spring of being invited to lecture at

a number of colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada. Of

the 21 teaching and research establishments that I visited, 16 have

active programmes in linguistics, 11 of which are carried out in

autonomous departmental units; most may be said to be representative

of American linguistics in general.

The characteristic frankness and hospitality of American and Canadian academics allowed me to gain insights into 'what other people are doing'. While the conclusions which I draw from conversations and interviews are not free from personal bias, I feel justified in passing on this information to colleagues and friends at Nottingham.

The first thing that struck me was that the 'Chomskyan revolution' has made a strong impact on North American linguists, who are once again assessing the fundamental assumptions about objects and methods of their enquiry. Is language to be regarded as a speaker's ability to communicate or as the result of a particular speech act? Is it the linguist's job to account for all potential utterances in the language, or should he concern himself with the observation of communicative events? What are the relationships between the communicating individual and the colingual community or 'ecology' in which he lives? Is linguistics a conceptual science like philosophy and mathematics or an empirical science like sociology and biology? Should linguistic analysis be based on intuition and universal categories or on textual data and specific contexts? Is eclecticism possible, or must there be an all-embracing theory? There is some evidence that new appointments and future developments (which in any case are restricted by the present economic slump and anti-academic public opinion) will depend on the individual linguist's answers to these questions.

The next observation I made concerns the relative autonomy and interdependence of linguistics vis-a-vis other disciplines. Typically, the subject breaks away from the unit(s) which initially sponsored it, e.g. English, anthropology or modern

languages, a process which is sometimes intensified on the retirement of the original pioneer. Once independent, it may find itself exposed to the unfounded criticism or exaggerated hopes of outsiders, and may be forced to set up special committees to ensure collaboration. (There is a lesson to be learnt from this!) Nevertheless, some institutions manage to develop healthy contacts between linguists and representatives of other fields, e.g. anthropology, psychology, sociology, education, literary criticism and the numerate sciences, while being aware of the tentative results of such explorations. Evidence of the interdisciplinary trend is this year's Linguistic Institute of the Linguistic Society of America, which was held during the months of July and August at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

I was impressed by the quality and quantity of work done at the established centres of linguistic science e.g. Indiana University, University of Michigan/Ann Arbor, University of Chicago, and Yale University. The range of interests among the staff, the options available to students, the wide research coverage of numbers of languages, the library facilities, teaching aids and equipment are staggering (which makes the fact that many Ph.D.'s cannot find appropriate positions all the more deplorable). Several alternative theoretical models are vigorously pursued, the main focus having shifted from phonetics and phonology through grammar to semantics (Chafe 1970, Stainberg-Jakobovits 1971). There has also been a revival of interest in historical-comparative studies (Cardona et al. 1970).

Departments of linguistics are often entrusted with responsibilities which one may not regard as falling within their

academic and administrative duties, but which are accepted by

staff members as a necessary adjunct. Among these functions are,

with great variation from one institution to another, the super-

vision of language laboratories, service teaching and testing

for non-language department, the teaching of neglected or

'critical' languages of America, Africa, Europe and Asia,

instruction in English to speakers of other languages, and

research into Black or 'Urban' English and dialectology.

Involvement in such 'relevant' practical activities colours

the attitudes of linguists to problem-oriented teaching and

research. Consequently, 'applied linguistics' is defined in

those institutions where it is deemed academically respectable in

several different ways. Just as the Linguistic Society of

America has helped, through its journal Language (1925-) and the

above-mentioned Linguistic Institutes, to create a professional

image of the theoretical linguist, so the government-financed

Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington D.C. has sponsored

many useful documentation services (The Linguistic Reporter 1959-

Language and Automation 1970-), conferences (Linguistics in the

1970's) and research projects (Urban Language Series). While

some linguists remain sceptical of practical applications of

linguistic knowledge, especially in such areas as speech therapy,

elocution and the 'language arts', progress must be reported in

several fields: the teaching of reading (Wardhaugh 1969), language

testing (cf. the activities of the Educational Testing Services

at Princeton N.J.), educational problems in bilingual and

bidialectal regions (OISE Sel. Bibliography 1971), instruction in

the major foreign languages (Moulton 1970[2]), the analysis of body

motion and other non-verbal communication (Birdwhistell 1970),

the compilation of dictionaries, etc.

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        Harcourt.

R. R. K. Hartmann

THE LANGUAGE GERMAN CHEMISTS USE

Some preliminary observations on the grammar of chemical texts

In recent years, some attention has been given to the

characteristics of the technical registers of a language (which

the Germans term 'Fachsprachen'), whose comprehension is the main

aim of special-purpose language courses for chemists, engineers

and other specialists. A considerable amount of material is now

available on scientific registers of English. The reader

interested in this area is referred to the work of Barber (1962)

and Huddleston et al. (1968) for information on some of the
approaches used. For German, with which this article is largely
concerned, some work has been published by Benes (1968; 1969a;
1969b).

It is fairly widely agreed that while a given technical
register certainly uses lexical items and collocations not found
in other registers, it is not likely to use any completely novel
grammatical features. For this reason, and because of greater
ease of automation, lexical frequency counts have so far taken
precedence over grammatical investigations. A list of verb
frequencies for a corpus of German scientific writing has been
published by Kopps and Münster (1971), and will be referred to
later in the present paper.

We should not, however, dismiss grammatical considerations
in attempting to characterise technical registers. Although we
expect no new grammatical features, it is likely that the
frequency of usage of such features will vary among the registers
of a language, and that certain combinations of features may
occur more frequently in a given technical register than in
others. Frequency studies of grammatical items are, then,
necessary for the principled construction of a basic course in a
language for special purposes. Unfortunately, very little work
has appeared in this field for German. Benes (1966; in press) has
made studies of the general 'Wissenschaftliche Fachsprache' and
some work has appeared on verbals (Ortmann, 1969) and adverbials.
(Wüsteneck, 1969) in medical texts. Kempler (1969a; 1969b) has
made a detailed study of the prepositional group in German chemistry
and physics texts.

The work reported here was undertaken as a first step towards the construction of a short course in German for chemists at university level. The sample analysed was taken from ten articles which have appeared in recent numbers of the more important German chemical journals. Six articles were concerned with organic chemistry topics, two with inorganic, and two with physical chemistry. It is hoped that further material from inorganic and physical chemistry texts will be analysed later in the research programme. Wherever possible, the first fifty clauses were taken from each section (theoretical, experimental discussion etc.) of each paper.

The grammatical areas investigated were chosen partly with a view to checking the appropriateness of some of the grammatical features included in most current courses, and partly on the basis of the difficulties which certain constructions appear to present to the student, either because they differ widely from English usage, or because of internal complexities. The features examined included clause types, various aspects of the verbal group, prepositions and the expanded adjectival phrase.

The subordination index (defined as the ratio of subordinate to main clauses) was 0.22 for organic, 0.32 for inorganic and 0.48 for physical chemistry texts. The most frequent types of subordinate clause in all texts were found to be relative and noun clauses. Conditional sentences were rare in the organic texts, but more frequent in material from inorganic and physical chemistry, the most usual type of construction being that in which the conditional element is realised through the inversion of subject and verb, although clauses with wenn, plus either indicative or subjunctive, were also represented.

An analysis of voice options in the verb revealed that (as

is indeed apparent from cursory observation) the passive was
used very frequently, particularly in organic and inorganic
texts. Substitutes for the passive were also important, and
included five major types: the man construction; reflexive verbs
used with passive meaning (e.g. Sich bilder = to be formed);
constructions with sich lassen + infinitive (usually translatable
as can be + passive participle); the sein + zu + infinitive
construction (usually translatable as must be + passive participle
or is to be + passive participle); and sein + passive participle
(equivalent to the English is (etc.) + passive participle).
It is likely that some of these pseudopassive constructions will
prove difficult for many students. The distribution of voice
options in the three types of text is shown in Table 1.

VOICE	PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY		
	ORGANIC	INORGANIC	PHYSICAL
ACTIVE	36	55	66
PSEUDOPASSIVE	20	10	13
PASSIVE	44	35	20

(Table 1)

The distribution of voice options

The use of the subjunctive was very rare in the organic and
inorganic texts, but more common in the physical texts, particularly
in association with certain modals and conditionals. Imperatives
were rare in all texts. All the texts showed an overwhelming
preponderance of present and simple past tense forms, compound
tenses being rare.

In addition to the accepted modals sollen, dürfen, können, müssen, (mögen was not found in any of the tests), three more verbs were recognised as having modal force: sichlassen (= can be ...), lassen (= allow to ....), sein ... zu (must be..., is to be ...). The frequency of clauses containing modals was higher for physical (13%) than for inorganic (7%) or organic (9%) texts. Können was the commonest modal in all three types of test, accounting for up to 45% of the total. Sollen was rare (2%) in organic texts, but more frequent in inorganic (18%) and physical (28%) texts. Lassen and sichlassen, on the other hand, were less common in physical chemistry material.

For the organic chemistry texts, certain other features of the verbal group were also investigated. Reflexive verbs, other than sichlassen, made up only 5% of the total. Weak verbs were rather more numerous than strong, and 12% of all the verbs were of the -ieren type, which are often of foreign derivation, and so are in many cases more easily recognised by the student. 58% of all verbs were compound, with approximately equal proportions of separable and inseparable prefixes. Of the separable prefixes, um was the most common, accounting for 18% of the separable verb occurrences, while ab-, auf-, aus-, ein-, zu- and durch-were also frequent. Of the inseparable prefixes, er- represented 48% of the occurrences (largely through the high frequency of the word eshalten), and be-, est-, ver- were also quite common. Comparison with the verb list of Kopps and Münster (1971), based on a much larger but more general corpus of scientific material, showed that er- and um-, in particular, were more frequent in our sample.

The expanded adjectival phrase was used once in every seven clauses for organic, and once in every fifteen clauses for inorganic

and physical texts. Analysis of the errors made in past examinations has shown that this construction, as well as being quite common in chemical writing, is a source of considerable difficulty for the student.

The number of prepositions per clause is remarkably constant over the range of text types. In (+ dative) was the most frequent, followed by mit and von. Bei and aus were also common in all texts. It is interesting, and significant for teaching purposes, that all the most common prepositions take the dative case. Since some prepositions are used with somewhat specialised meanings in scientific texts, it will be important to categorise the various uses in our teaching scheme.

Some preliminary generalisations may be hazarded on the basis of the work outlined here. A detailed comparison of frequencies for the various grammatical features in theoretical and experimental sections of the organic chemistry texts showed that the language of the experimental sections was much simpler than that of the theoretical sections, as evidenced by a lower subordination index and a statistically significant reduction in the use of modals and expanded adjectival phrases. This result, if confirmed by further analysis, is clearly of importance when we are considering the choice of material for illustration or testing purposes.

A second point of considerable interest is the increase in grammatical complexity as we pass from organic, through inorganic, to physical texts, as reflected in the subordination index, the proportion of conditional clauses, the frequency and variety of modals and the frequency of subjunctive forms. This progression correlates well with the types of subject matter treated in the

three kinds of text. Organic chemistry texts are often concerned largely with descriptions and discussions of preparative procedures: inorganic chemistry texts, while often describing preparations and other experiments, sometimes also contain discussions of a strongly theoretical nature; papers in physical chemistry often consist largely of theoretical arguments, many of which require mathematical symbolisation. Again, if later work confirms the preliminary suggestions made on the basis of our present small sample, the relationship between subject matter and complexity of language must be considered when material is selected for use in the course.

Our preliminary investigations have been discussed here in the hope that the reader will share the author's view that every detailed analysis of even a small corpus is at least of some methodological interest. It cannot be stressed too strongly that the conclusions drawn are at best tentative, and that a considerable amount of further analysis, on a much bigger corpus, must be undertaken before we can justifiably claim a sound linguistic foundation on which to build.

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        ibid. pp. 387-392.

C. S. Butler

LANGUAGE AND THE STUDENT TEACHER

(This is a modified version of part of a lecture given to the
Nottingham Linguistic Circle on 20th October, 1970 under the
title "Linguistics and the Colleges of Education")

Considering the number of conferences and articles that have

been devoted to the subject of linguistics in the college of

education, it might be supposed that it would be fairly easy to

draw up a syllabus for the language element in an English course,

and certainly there are a number of well-designed language syllabuses

already in use. But, as those of us who attend the conferences
or have to draw up the syllabuses know, there is nothing like
confident unanimity among English lecturers about what such
syllabuses should contain: sooner or later, after it has been
conceded that there is an obvious place for some inculcation
of desirable attitudes towards language, some seeding out of
ill-informed prejudices, the question is going to arise of
'the hard stuff'. How much 'real' linguistics is it necessary,
desirable, and possible to teach, and by and to whom?

It is the assumption underlying this brief article that it
can help any teacher faced with the task of drawing up a syllabus
(and hence, in this case, with the problem of answering such a
question) to have before him a checklist of what could be called
Stage Two aims. Armed with such a list, he may find it slightly
less daunting to draft a syllabus in the first place and to
modify it thereafter. By 'Stage Two' is meant something that most
of our students would still regard as 'theoretical', but that would
call for a scrutiny of our specific practices more directly than
the Stage One type of statement of aims that affects our teaching
in more general ways only. Thus, confronted by a passage like the
following, for example, my own impulse would be 'to admire and do
otherwise', that is, to agree with the sentiments perhaps but to
try to be more specific:

> "Whatever the organisation of the colleges, the teaching
>
> profession can reasonably expect its entrants to pass
>
> muster in certain fundamentals. For instance, they
>
> ought to have read and enjoyed a number of books of prose
>
> and poetry and to have studied some of them closely. They
>
> should know how to read and to help and encourage others
>
> to read. They should have caught some glimpse of an

assured style .... they should respect words and use them
in and out of school with a scrupulous care for meaning
and decency (in the old sense of the word)." (Language:
Some suggestions for teachers of English (1954) London:
H.M.S.O.)

If students in training can profit from the attempt to list their
teaching targets, unencumbered by such practical considerations
as time, rooms and materials, perhaps we can do likewise. Here
is one such attempt.

Ideally, one would hope to be able to say of the teacher
starting his career that, as far as his language teaching is
concerned:

(1) He has some 'aims in general' that he has appraised critically,

    discussed with others, seen as relevant, and accepted as

    (within limits) attainable.

(2) He has more specific aims and targets, based on the above, but

    worked out in detail.

(3) He has consciously-formulated attitudes to linguistic questions.

(4) He has sufficient command of the so-called 'four skills' of

    language (and their subdivisions and permutations) to (a)

    provide an adequate model, (b) appraise the needs of a given

    child, (c) give appropriate help.

(5) He has a clear understanding of what language is, some general

    idea of how it works, some experience of discussing it, and

    the minimum terminology to make this possible.

(6) He is aware of the equipment and materials available for

    developing interest and skill in language, and can use them.

(7) He knows something of current thinking about how the child

    acquires his native language and how linguistic resource

    develops thereafter.

(8) He can, in the light of (7), look critically at time-honoured practices such as slot-filling, 'corrections', comprehension exercises and various forms of testing.

(9) He knows something of the history of his own language, of the existence of various 'Englishes', and of language varieties, dialects, and accents.

(10) He is aware of the uses and abuses of language and has had the opportunity of looking criticallv at some popular misconceptions about language.

(11) He has practical notions on how to structure a svllabus or a situation so that, irrespective of the degree of formality obtaining in a particular school, individual children can be seen to develop in areas itemised on a checklist.

(12) He has thought out the implications of some currently popular teaching methods for language development, so that the child, while progressing via the medium of instruction, may also progress in his command of the medium itself.

(13) He has considered critically the use of 'course books' in language teaching; he has had the chance to discuss particular examples; he has some criteria for the evaluation of materials; and he can develoo textbook hints along his own lines.

(14) He knows the 'authorities' in the field of language and their credentials.

(15) He can relate his linguistic knowledge to his study of literature, and his respect for literature does not lead him to undervalue other uses of language.

The trouble about such a list, of course, is that it

immediately raises many more questions than the one it is
supposed to be helping to answer, but it would be interesting
to know to what extent the suggested aims seem reasonable to
other people. What I should like to do in another article,
unrestricted by pressure on space, would be to scrutinise this
list in the light of what I have been doing with various groups
in language study since it was drawn up, and with closer
reference to the related question: "What goes on, or could or
should go on, in colleges of education, to which some study of
linguistics is relevant?". This could lead, in turn, to the
specification of necessary elements in syllabuses and of such
things as the books and other materials needed to support them.
There would still be nothing like a detailed blueprint offered,
but at least this next list would be based on more recent
experience.of the practical difficulties involved.

J. G. Williamson

PERSONAL VIEW: THE CONTINUING DILEMMA OF LINGUISTICS

Elsewhere in this issue we reproduce extracts from a talk
given to the Nottingham Linguistic Circle by the late Professor
M. M. Lewis. We may thus claim the sad distinction of having been
entrusted with the last of Professor Lewis's publications on a
subject which he did much to advance and illuminate. I for one find
some irony in the circumstance that the most eminent contributor
to this, our new venture, should have been a scholar whose
reputation was established upwards of thirty years ago, and whose
field was not primarily that of linguistics. It is hardly amiss
to be reminded that the serious study of language is neither the
glory of a decade nor the exclusive property of professional

linguists.

Professor Lewis's book Infant Speech; A Study of the Beginnings of Language was published in 1936. In the following year it was reviewed in the periodical Nature, by no less a person than Bronislaw Malinowski. Malinowski entitled his review "The Dilemma of Contemporary Linguistics"; and in it he raised issues which, I feel, are still before us, and which must determine our attitudes towards the status and proper scope of linguistic science. What was a contemporary dilemma in the 1930's is no less a dilemma, and a challenge, in the 1970's.

The general assumptions of Malinowski's review are expressed in a question which must have a familiar ring to all who have been raised in the 'Firthian' tradition of linguistics. "Can we treat language as an independent study?" he asks - this being the very essence of the 'dilemma'. Within three sentences of this, we find him appealing to that familiar principle, the 'context of situation': "If the earliest and most fundamental function of speech is pragmatic - to direct, control, and correlate human activities - then obviously no study of speech except with the 'context of situation' is legitimate." He then proceeds to formulate an assertion which serenely bombards one of those orthodox positions which we have learned to revere as bastions of modern theory. "The distinction between language and speech", says Malinowski, "still supported by such writers as Bühler and Gardiner, but dating back to de Saussure and Wegener, will have to be dropped." Bemused as we are by the cross-talk of type and token, or competence and performance, and other dual eminences of our contemporary scene, it is a little startling to be confronted with evidence that thirty years ago a very distinguished scholar

not only regarded such dichotomies as outmoded, but proposed to abolish them, in the best interests of linguistics.

Malinowski argues that language is "only the general norm of human speech activities", and that consequently it "cannot remain an independent and self-contained subject of study." The dilemma of linguistics, he states, "means the decision as to whether the science of language will become primarily an empirical study, carried out on living beings within the context of their practical activities, or whether it will remain confined to deductive arguments, consisting of speculation based on written and printed evidence alone." Although he does not make explicit connections, it is fairly obvious that 'empirical study' relates to the de Saussurean parole, while 'deductive arguments' and 'speculation' relate to langue. There is no doubt where Malinowski's sympathies lie, or what his programme for linguistics would be. For him, the epistemological figure-and-ground is not represented by 'speech' and 'language', but rather by 'utterance' and 'situation'. This emphasis in linguistics is familiar to us through the work of J. R. Firth, who constantly insisted on the importance of treating language as a form of social behaviour. For example, in his book The Tongues of Men, he remarks that "the force and cogency of most language behaviour derives from the firm grip it has on the ever-recurrent typical situations in the life of social groups and the normal social behaviour of the human animals living in those groups." He goes on to observe that "Speech is the telephone network, the nervous system of our society much more than the vehicle for the lyrical outbursts of the individual soul."

This insistence on the empirical and the social has been maintained among Firth's disciples, and the 'context of

situation' is still a concept of major importance in the
procedures of 'British' linguistics. Pragmatism has its defects,
however; it leaves unsatisfied the intellectual craving for
systematic and complete explanations. For a Lewis or a
Malinowski a situational account of linguistic phenomena may
serve very well. There is, however, another kind of linguist
who will rest satisfied with nothing less than an elegant,
specific, and comprehensive general theory, capable of enumerating
and classifying all the facts of language with near-mathematical
conciseness and precision. For such a linguist, 'parole' must of
a necessity shrink before the greater dominance of 'langue'.
Indeed, there may be times when he will hardly seem to be
interested in the common experience of language in ordinary
situations.

The two horns of Malinowski's 'dilemma' thus remain very
much in evidence; echoing his own terms, we may characterise them
as 'empiricism' on the one hand, and 'speculation' on the other.
Common good-will of course reacts impatiently to the absurdity of
the dilemma. There is no reason, after all, why 'empiricism' should
mean the compiling of uncoordinate facts; or why 'speculation'
should lack a sound basis of observation and inference. Why, we
may ask, cannot linguistic theory provide cohesive principles
for an empirical practice which may in its turn serve theory with
necessary data?

Unfortunately, this question begs a number of others. Apart
from anything else, it ignores the possibility (to put it no
higher) that a theoretical model will tend to select only 'model'
facts and to ignore those that prove unamenable to well-structured
explanations. It also (by implication) accords to theory a

superior and dominant status, and incidentally reasserts the
spiritual ascendancy of 'langue' over 'parole'. This is reflected
in common attitudes to 'pure' and 'applied' linguistics. I am
aware, of course, of the derivative analogy with 'pure and
applied mathematics'. I know that 'pure' in this context is
not supposed to have evaluative implications, and that in any
case many linguists prefer to speak of 'theoretical linguistics'.
Nevertheless, I would venture to say that the term 'pure' is
often used in such a way as to convey the suggestion of a
qualitatively higher order of activity. Furthermore, it not
infrequently implies purity of system, logic, method. In this
latter respect, the 'applied' linguist is often cheerfully
impure; being interested in some task over and above the analysis
of language, he tends to use whatever methods or models offer
themselves. Progress in his work may depend on a resolute
eclecticism, or at least on the principle of avoiding total
commitment to any one theoretical system. The likelihood is,
therefore, that he will disrupt that convenient circularity
whereby a theory informs a practical programme which then
reinforms the theory. The eclecticism of folk in field and
classroom is one of the factors which cause many theoreticians to
adopt a dismissive, condescending, faintly distrustful attitude
towards applied linguistics. Officially, pure and applied
linguistics are complementary domains in a unified field of study.
Unofficially, a common position - which it is perhaps not good
form to state openly - is that they represent opposing camps. This
opposition is a consequence of the dilemma with which my note is
concerned.

The dilemma continues. Does 'linguistics' really constitute a

disciplined way of studying language, or is it, rather, an
exercise in philosophical method which happens to take language
as its field of reference? Is it a science of language, or only
a species of language-based science? There is great
disillusionment with linguistics among those who are most
ready and willing to take practical profit from what it has to
offer. To many, it seems as though this 'science' merely uses
language as a convenient ground for intellectual display, and has
no real interest in its use and significance in human affairs.
Such people are beginning to avoid the term 'linguistics' and to
speak of 'language studies', or something of the kind. Perhaps if
this distinction were generally understood and accepted, the whole
dilemma would fall away. But then linguistics would be left to
subsist as a pensioner in the gaunt abode of philosophy; and I
doubt if that would afford any real satisfaction to linguists, to
philosophers, or to those of us whose professional concerns
include some form of enquiry into the phenomenon of language.

Bibliographical note

Malinowski's review paper "The Dilemma of Contemporary Linguistics"
is reprinted in Dell Hymes (ed.) Language in Culture and Society,
1964, New York & Tokyo: Harper & Row and John Weatherall, Inc.,
pp. 63-64. J.R. Firth's paper "On Sociological Linguistics" is
reprinted in the same volume (pp. 65-70), and is an excellent
concise representation of Firth's general approach to language.
This approach is also trenchantly expounded in The Tongues of
Men (first published 1937, recently republished together with the
earlier Speech in J. R. Firth, The Tongues of Men and Speech,
1964, London: OUP, LLL series). J. R. Firth's evaluation of
Malinowski's views appears in the article "Ethnographic Analysis
and Language with Reference to Malinowski's Views", in Firth, R.
(ed.) Man and Culture, 1957, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
There is a competent summary of Firth's linguistic doctrines in

Francis B. Dineen, An Introduction to General Linguistics,
1967, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, pp. 299-324.
Malinowski's pragmatism obviously has its limitations (they
are analysed in an article by Edmund Leach in the collection Man
and Culture), but it may be of interest to add here that his
proposal to 'drop' the distinction between 'language' and
'speech' is not without partial support, at least, in current
linguistic thought.   See, for example, M. A. K. Halliday,
"Language in a Social Perspective" in A. M. Wilkinson (ed.) ·
The Context of Language, Educational Review, School of Education,
University of Birmingham, Vol. 23, June 1971.

                         Walter Nash