

The Role of Intercultural Studies in the Development of Linguistics

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Historians of linguistics, like Jespersen in his book *Language* (1922:93-99), find its earliest practice in theological questions concerning the lexicon, such as the origin of names as presented in Genesis 1. In time attention was devoted to grammar, as by the Greek philosophers. Then until the eighteenth century virtually all attention in the western world was given to Latin and its grammar. Through a brief comment in 1786 by Jones in his annual lectures on ancient Indian culture that Sanskrit, Greek and Latin "had sprung from some common source," and possibly also Gothic and Celtic, attention was widened to the Indo-European languages in general, leading to fuller treatments of phonology and morphology, especially historical. Those treatments took into account features not found in Latin, such as those in Sanskrit and Greek, also with some attention to Hebrew and Arabic. But the core of the presentation, and of the terminology, continued to be centered on Latin.

As Gleason put it, "for generations, Latin grammar supplied the pattern ... for the description of a language." Many school grammars of English presented paradigms reflecting the Latin declensional pattern of nominative, genitive, dative, and so on, such as "the boy, of the boy, to the boy" and so on. Similarly, some grammars of Japanese at the time identified cases as in Latin and illustrated them with combinations of nouns and particles, such as *hito ga* 'the man', *hito no*, *hito ni*, and so on. Such presentations would hardly be expected today. As Gleason put it, "the bondage of English grammar to Latin patterns is being broken" (1955:126).

The aim to describe a language in terms of its own structure is also apparent in specialized handbooks. For example, Speijer states in "the first complete syntax of classical Sanskrit" that he "preferred following ... the nature and spirit of the language rather than clinging too closely to the classification familiar to us by the Syntax of Latin and Greek" (1886:iv, viii). But the first section of his chapter on "periphrastic expression of case-relations" deals with prepositions, though he states that "Sanskrit prepositions should rather be styled 'postpositions'" (1886:113-134). In this way statements based on general linguistic principles were gradually introduced in treatments of the Indo-European languages and in linguistics. Yet fundamental treatments of linguistics like Bloomfield's *Language* still dealt chiefly with the Indo-European languages. His chapter on the Comparative Method (1933:297-320) is entirely devoted to the family except for one brief example from Indonesian. But he recognized, stating specifically in his only use of the term in *Language*, that "Linguistics, the study of language is only in its beginnings" (1933:3). Sapir, in what he calls his "little book" refers to many languages in his aim "to give a certain perspective on the subject of language rather than to assemble facts about it" (1921:iii), yet he has more references to Latin than to any other language than English.

The view that linguistics was based almost entirely on examination of the Indo-European languages is also clear from the establishment of the Linguistic Society of America in 1925 and its publication, *Language*. Of its first twenty presidents only Franz Boas (1928), Edward Sapir (1933) and A. L. Kroeber (1940) might not be considered Indo-Europeanists. And virtually all the articles in the first five volumes of *Language* deal with Indo-European languages.

The heavy hand of Latin is also apparent in regard to the presentation of culture in introductory textbooks. In the European schools those for Latin were designed for students in their seventh year of study, corresponding to the first year of Junior High School. The early lessons consisted of individual sentences, constructed to teach the grammar. The first sentences of a long used introductory text are as follows: *Europa est terra. Asia est terra. Europa et Asia sunt terrae. Italia est terra.* (Michaelis 1925:1). The aim of the chapter was to teach the first declension, the nominative singular of which ends in *-a*, its plural in *-ae*.

Modeled on these, the first lesson of a widely used textbook of German has as headings in its 18th printing of 1945: "the nominative case; gender; the present of *sein*". The first sentences of the "reading", which is entitled "the school-room", are as follows: "*Das ist der Tisch; dies ist der Stuhl. Das ist die Wandtafel* [blackboard]; *dies ist die Wand* [wall]", sentences with meanings that could apply in any language regardless of the culture of their speakers. As late as the tenth lesson the "reading" consists of a text entitled 'the body of humans', which requires no information on the culture of its speakers (Evans and Roeseler 1945: 83).

The situation was changed by the demands of World War II. It was recognized that members of the armed forces needed command of languages spoken in the areas in which they would be located. Under the general direction of the Linguistic Society of America and the American Council of Learned Societies a group of linguists was brought together in Washington with the aim of producing the desired materials. Linguists not otherwise involved in military affairs were involved, Leonard Bloomfield for Russian, Bernard Bloch for Japanese, Charles Hockett for Chinese, William Moulton for German, Henry Lee Smith as coordinator, and so on. The linguist was paired with a native speaker. A general pattern of the books was devised. Conversational units with designated titles were produced, ten in the first part, fifteen in the second. The first five topics were: "Getting Around; Meeting People; What's Your Job?; Family and Friends; Let's Talk About the Weather"; the topic of the twenty-fifth and last unit was "Culture". The 'conversations' from the first represent situations in the native language and culture, with sentences like 'How is this said in Turkish?' Similarly, final stories in each lesson, after statements on grammar and exercises, equip students for further situations in the culture. The undertaking had an effect on subsequent textbooks. No longer were essentially meaningless sentences illustrating grammatical features arrayed in the materials designed to introduce the language. Cultural features rather than patterns of language now determined presentation of the language. The books were first published by the Army, and subsequently by commercial publishers.

The cultural approach gained further support through "a project of the Modern Language Association". The project led to production of a textbook in 1960 entitled *Modern Spanish* by a "working committee" of linguists and language teachers after many years of planning and wide discussion. As a basic principle underlying the book, "Spanish and Spanish-American cultural values and patterns of behavior should form a significant part of the content of the linguistic material from the beginning—and at every stage" (xii). After an

initial lesson on the sounds and intonation the following four have titles given in Spanish and English, as here, "Cecilia's Family, Telephone Conversation, The Saint's Day, Problems of a Housewife." Among aims of the project was production of textbooks also for other languages with comparable attention to the culture of its native speakers. It is not an over-statement to assert that through publication of the Army handbooks (cf., e.g., Cioffari 1944) and *Modern Spanish* linguists and linguistics had a great effect on elementary language textbooks and teaching; the process and the results are documented at length by Moulton (1961, subsequently revised and republished).

While the results of providing materials that represent the culture of their speakers are clear, it is the aim of this article to demonstrate that the involvement of linguists in the production of these texts with their attention to languages of different structures than the Indo-European and different cultures also had a great effect on linguistics. As early as 1955 Gleason's handbook entitled *An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics* provided a greater account of linguistic features and structures than had the established handbooks even though it was briefer (1955). For example, in contrast with Bloomfield's *Language* it provides a far more extensive treatment of phonetics. Its "partial skeleton consonant chart" includes symbols for simple, aspirated, glottalized, affricated, laterally affricated, prenasalized and implosive stops (1955:200), while *Language* has a table only for English phonemes (1933:91). Similarly, in the treatment of morphology it has detailed examples of Turkish and Cree verb forms (1955:113-122), while Bloomfield chiefly cites examples from the Indo-European languages (1933:227-246). And a few years later Hockett's more technical handbook, entitled *A Course in Modern Linguistics*, includes materials from many languages other than the Indo-European, such as Adyge, Cree, Fox, Spanish, German, Potawatomi and Turkish, concluding with chapters on literature and on man's place in nature (1958:553-586). These chapters are largely concerned with "the key properties of language" though they also discuss such matters as "special style" and "cultural transmission". Like Gleason's handbook it exhibits the results of wider concern with the culture of speakers, especially in the treatment of phonology and morphology.

That concern was soon extended to the treatment of syntax through the work of Joseph Greenberg. Stationed during World War II in Africa after having done field work there, he concerned himself with determining the relationships among the languages of the continent. But he also came to be concerned with "generalizations about language structure ... which hold true for some significant universe of languages ..." (1978:vi). This concern led to conclusions of major significance in the treatment and understanding of syntax (1963). As the term *universals* implies, the generalizations determined by study of all languages may be applied for explaining linguistic structures and their development, as exemplified below. In syntax the generalizations center about the position of the object with regard to the verb in Accusative languages. The two form a kind of entity so that modifiers of each must either precede or follow them in consistent languages, whether the entity consists of Object Verb (OV) or Verb Object (VO). Universals have been determined on the position of genitives, adjectives and relative clauses that modify nouns, and on the position of elements indicating simple tenses, moods, number and persons that modify verbs.

As I have pointed out (2002:24), the basis of these generalizations was published earlier by Pater Wilhelm Schmidt, who took the modifying relationship of genitive with noun as central entity (1926). His GN languages correspond to OV and his NG to VO languages. It is important for the central aim of this essay to point out that Schmidt's generalizations like

Greenberg's resulted from concern with a wide array of languages and the cultures of their speakers as indicated in the title of his major work on 'the language families and language spheres of the earth' (1926). What might also be noted in a discussion of cultural relationships is the lack of reference to Schmidt's generalizations in Greenberg's essays. Unfortunately there has been little interrelationship between American and European linguistic scholarship, as I have also pointed out with reference to formalization as introduced by Zellig Harris and his student Chomsky among others, who do not refer to the earlier publications on formalization by European linguists such as the essays of Koschmieder, for example his article on "The mathematization of linguistics" (1965).

While the disregard for forty years of the object-verb and genitive-noun relation for understanding syntactic structures is regrettable, its recognition is now highly important in explaining constructions that formerly were simply described. For example, Old English and the other older Germanic languages have comparative constructions of the *pattern flintum heardran* 'harder than flint', *sunnan berhtran* 'brighter than the sun' (Small 1929:41). These have been listed without explanation. After the universals of syntactic structure have come to be known, such aberrant structures can be accounted for as residues from the earlier OV stage of the language. Other such residues in Old English texts, such as postpositions, cf. *Beowulf* 19 *Scedelandum in* 'in Scandinavia, (Klaeber 1950), provide further evidence that earlier stages of the language including Proto-Germanic were OV. In this way aberrant constructions in many languages have now been explained, such as the use of postpositions in early Sanskrit. Moreover, evidence has been assembled on the basic pattern of the earlier stage of the Indo-European language family as well as others.

While attention to culture has had effects on the treatment of phonology, morphology and syntax, it is of central importance in identifying and understanding semantic constructions and their development. A straightforward example is the addition of evidentiality to grammatical features through attention to languages spoken in the jungle areas of northwest South America. Aikhenvald has described this for Tariana, an Arawak language (2003). In Tariana there are four specifications when one presents information. The speakers must indicate whether the information communicated was seen, whether it was not seen but only heard, whether it was inferred from effects, or whether it was reported to them by someone else. Speakers of English and other languages may provide such information through statements in roundabout fashion, as by expressions like "Hattie informed me that..., I heard Bill say that..." But before Tariana and other languages with grammatical expression of evidentiality were examined for their structure and representation of culture, evidentiality was not known as a grammatical device. The attention to languages throughout the world, especially those in previously unexplored areas like those in South America, Africa and Indonesia, has had a highly important effect on linguistic theory.

Languages have been demonstrated to consist of types with distinctive characteristics. Typology, determining types of language, was pursued already in the nineteenth century, culminating in Finck's book with the title: 'The principal types of language' (1909/1923), of which he determined eight. The basis was morphological. Chinese was identified as the simplest type because words correspond to syllables with no inflection, and Eskimo as the most complex because words with copious inflection correspond to sentences. Morphological typology is not without importance. It is instrumental in explaining linguistic developments such as the loss of inflections in the Romance languages as Latin was adopted by speakers of

many different languages, as well as in providing the means for principled descriptions of the morphology of any language.

But determining types based on the expression of meaning has provided more extensive explanation of the patterning of languages and its modification. Developed primarily by Soviet linguists, it has come to be known as content or contentive typology (Klimov 1983). There are four types. Related as they are to cultures, the most explicit and in this sense the simplest is found among peoples of simple cultures like the Bantu of Africa. It is also assumed to be the earliest of the four types.

Class languages sort nouns into groups in accordance with their meaning and mark them or their modifiers with specific affixes. Constructions, such as adjective-noun, subject-verb, object-verb are affixed with the marker of the class to which their noun belongs. The South American language Baniwa has forty-three classifiers (Aikhenvald 2000:229-235). For example, the numeral in the following phrase is affixed with *-kha*, a classifier used for curved objects like snakes and roads: *apa-kha aipi* '(one-curved snake) one snake'. Active or Active/Animate languages sort nouns and verbs into two classes: active/animate and stative/inanimate. In both of these types sentences and other constructions are formed by linking nouns, verbs and modifiers through their agreement in the same class. The cover term for them is accordingly Agreement languages. It may be useful to note specifically that in these languages no elements like verbs or adpositions govern other elements, that is, Agreement languages lack transitivity.

There are also two types of Government languages, Ergative and Accusative, also referred to as Nominative/Accusative, or simply Nominative. As a basic distinction between the two types Ergative languages have the same noun form for subjects of intransitive verbs and objects of transitive verbs, while Accusative languages have the same noun form for all subjects.

All the languages with large groups of speakers are Accusative, Japanese, the several Chinese languages, Arabic, Hindi and the other Indo-European languages. It is quite clear that languages have developed through the stages from Class to Accusative (Lehmann & Rinaldi, 2003). While extra-linguistic explanations for such developments may be frowned upon, I have proposed that transitivity was introduced after the development of agriculture; at this time it must have become clear to speakers of Agreement languages that success in their planting did not result from prayer, as still assumed and practiced in early societies of the Middle East, but rather from proper moisture, fertilizers and other treatment of the soil. The results of action then came to be expressed in language with verbs governing objects, and so on. At any rate, the Indo-European languages developed from Active to Accusative types, as illustrated below.

A brief sketch of the development of Indo-European linguistics may seem parenthetical but it illustrates how cultural concerns have affected the field. Making up almost the entire concern of linguistics after Jones's often cited remark on the relationship of Greek, Latin and so on with Sanskrit, it developed extensively through the nineteenth century, with its culmination in Brugmann's *Grundriss* (1897-1916). The *Grundriss* includes starred forms. Ever since its publication many Indo-Europeanists have cited these as forms in an earlier stage of the languages, and many still do. But Brugmann stated explicitly in the preface to his great work that they are not historical but rather compilations of the data. That is to say, the starred forms in the *Grundriss* represent composites of forms found in the earliest stages of primarily Sanskrit, Greek and Latin, forms assumed for approximately 2500 B.C. and earlier.

Examples published today in ignorance of Brugmann's position and his starred forms might readily be cited, but it will be left to individuals to determine the embarrassing situation of much of the publication.

Twenty years ago Gamkrelidze and Ivanov published their large work on Proto-Indo-European, identifying it as an Active language (1995:233-273). The significance of their identification may have been lessened by their emphasis on duality rather than on the active-stative opposition. Yet their analysis is clear, especially in their treatment of nominal elements (1995:233-254). Lexical items, nouns and verbs, represented either animate/active or inanimate/stative meaning. Lexical residues have been pointed out, such as the two words for items like fire and water that can be regarded as active elements or existing in a state. Reflexes of the active form for fire are found in Latin *ignis*, a masculine noun, Sanskrit *Agni*-also the name of the god of fire; of the stative form, Hittite *pahhur*, a neuter noun, and English *fire*, among other reflexes in other dialects. Moreover, verbal inflection indicated activity if inflected with the *-mi* endings, and state if inflected with the *-hi* endings. It had long been recognized that the perfect of Greek and Sanskrit indicated state. There then was no great step in proposing that the verbal system of these two languages consisted of a composite in which the earlier active forms developed into the present and the stative into the perfect and the middle. The earlier situation was represented more clearly in Hittite with its two inflections in *-mi* and *-hi* (1995:233-270, a position that had been proposed by Neu (1987).

It might then have been assumed that the relation of the various dialects would be reviewed with reference to the revision of Proto-Indo-European. Rather than derived from Brugmann's composite forms it could have been viewed as a reflex of the Active language assumed in great part on the basis of the Anatolian languages. The stage for such a position was set by Prokosch in 1939 in his treatment of the Germanic strong verb system. He pointed out that the sixth and seventh classes of strong verbs, e.g. 'stand', had stative meaning. Moreover, their base form was maintained in the preterite tense rather than in the present tense like the verbs of the first five classes. Verbs with active/animate meaning like those in the first five classes of Germanic strong verbs made up their present system with the base form; their preterite was constructed from forms with different vowel grades. But verbs with stative/inanimate meaning like those in the sixth and seventh classes fell into the preterite with their base form, and new present forms were constructed, such as *stand*. An explanation for the difference between the two groups of strong verbs is clear. Verbs with stative meanings conformed to the meaning of the preterite and accordingly their base forms made up the Germanic preterite, while verbs with active meaning made up the Germanic present system. The recognition that early Proto-Indo-European was an Active language and that Germanic branched away from the family at that stage has clarified long standing problems in the Germanic verb system.

Among the other dialects the evidence is most explicit in Hittite. The declension of nouns in Hittite consists of two categories, Common and Neuter. It is obvious that the distinction is maintained from the Active stage of Proto-Indo-European where it is referred to as an Active/Animate and Stative/inanimate distinction. Similarly in the verb system Hittite has a basic distinction between two inflections, one with first singular ending in *-mi*, the other in *-hi*. The inflection in *-mi* expresses incomplete action, that in *-hi* completed or 'perfect' action, also reflecting the Proto-Indo-European Active and Stative distinction. As noted above, the distinction is also the basis of the Germanic verb inflection. Recognition that the present tense is based on the Active inflection and the preterite on the Stative has clarified the

situation in the sixth and seventh strong verb classes, in which the base form made up the past tense because their meaning was one of state. It has also finally settled the basis of the *-d-* marker (from PIE *-dh-*) of the preterite in the weak verbs, which was adopted as marker because it indicated state. (For other evidence see Lehmann 2002:54-61, 64-85, 130-133.)

The understanding of Active and Class languages gained from attention to linguistic and cultural investigations of speakers only recently of concern has in this way expanded our understanding of languages generally, though many patterns and their development remain to be explored. It has also expanded our understanding of cultural matters, which may assist us in reconstructing the cultures of speakers like those of Pre-Indo-European when the language was consistently Active. Linguistics in the future will in this way continue to achieve understanding of and explanations for specific characteristics and developments of languages of the present and the past through intercultural studies.

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