Meaning and Form

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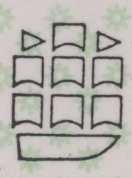

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to LOUISE

Foreword

Few linguists have made so many original and insightful contributions to the study of contemporary English (prosody, grammar, lexicology) as Dwight Bolinger. His work is all the more impressive in proceeding from one who throughout his academic career was employed primarily not as a teacher of English, nor even of linguistics, but of Spanish. Not least within the uniqueness of Bolinger's scholarship has been his ability to keep up with the twists and turns and (at times) genuine revolutions in linguistic theory. And specifically, since he was until recently a doyen among Harvard professors, he was on the spot to absorb the ideas flowing up and down Massachusetts Avenue. But, as a man both deeply cultivated in literatures and languages and imbued with an outstanding intellect, he has been big enough – like Roman Jakobson, whose urbanities he also shares – to preserve a discriminating independence from rival schools to which lesser scholars have felt impelled to give wholeheartedly enthusiastic (if temporary) allegiance. And big enough too, of course, to give the fullest and most sympathetic credit on all sides.

William Labov has said that 'Speakers do not readily accept the fact that two different expressions actually "mean the same"' (*Studium Generale*, 23.77). Dwight Bolinger would presumably not merely associate himself with such speakers but would wish to go further and assert that linguists themselves should not 'readily accept' such a 'fact'. Certainly, the theme of this book is that there is no difference in form without some difference in meaning: and that certain forms have 'a meaning, from which certain aspects of syntax can be predicted, and not the reverse'.

Though content to describe himself as merely 'a diligent native speaker', he combines clinical skill and data-rich experience with the scientific intellect of the inquiring theorist. In consequence, working always in the spirit of 'Omnia probate – quod bonum est tenete', he challenges

strongly and fashionably held views by confronting them with the incontrovertible data of usage, analysed with subtle perception.

The result is a disciplined body of studies which no grammarian of English can possibly afford to ignore and which constitutes a distinguished addition to this series. As English has increasingly come into world-wide use, there has arisen an acute need for more information on the language and the ways in which it is used. The English Language Series seeks to meet this need and to play a part in further stimulating the study and teaching of English by providing up-to-date and scholarly treatments of topics most relevant to present-day English – including its history and traditions, its sound patterns, its grammar, its lexicology, its rich variety in speech and writing, and its standards in Britain, the USA, and other principal areas where the language is used.

University College London
February 1977

RANDOLPH QUIRK

Preface

Despite a number of skirmishes over the past few years in which the troops arrayed on the side of meaninglessness have come off rather worse for the encounter, there has been no frontal attack on the theory that it is normal for a language to establish a lunacy ward in its grammar or lexicon where mindless morphs stare vacantly with no purpose other than to be where they are. The idea has been around for a good while. Traditional grammar recorded such things as *it* (*It is hard to decide*), *that* (*I know* [*that*] *it happened*), and *there* (*Across the street* [*there*] *is a candy store*) as having at most a grammatical function, with no meaning of their own. But contemporary linguistics has carried the fantasy to new heights, and expanded it with a new version of an old vision, that of synonymy: not only are there mindless morphs, but there are mindless differences between one construction and another. The transformation of that old vision is, literally, transformations: in its original form, one construction could be converted into another; in its newer form, an abstract structure could be converted into *x* number of surface structures – in either case without gain or loss of meaning. The resulting structures were the same; only the guise was different.

Though the full realization did not come till later, operations of this kind would not have been possible without heavy reliance on logic. The 'same meaning' (or zero meaning) that linguists were talking about was truth value. *I put on my coat* and *I put my coat on* report the same event. Nothing that is factually true or false about one can fail to be true or false about the other. But linguists are not logicians, and we surrender our birthright if we turn away from the very kinds of meaning that we are best equipped to deal with.

This book is a challenge to the fallacy of meaninglessness. It attempts to prove, by case studies, that any word which a language permits to survive must make its semantic contribution; and that the same holds for any

construction that is physically distinct from any other construction. It reaffirms the old principle that the natural condition of a language is to preserve one form for one meaning, and one meaning for one form.

Palo Alto, California
February 1977

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Every so often the scientific theorist finds it politic to climb down from the heights and appeal to common sense. Those of us who were parents in the 1930s well remember the theories of child-rearing that prevailed – asepsis was the ideal, the more untouched by human hands an infant was the better, and if some enterprising dealer in plastics could have found a way to wrap a fetus in cellophane it probably would have been done. Psychologists since then have well-nigh totally faced about, and a mother's love and kisses are again respectable as well as natural. Linguistics has seen more than one such retreat from artificiality. It was common sense that showed the mindlessness of twenty years ago, and that spurred the return to 'naturalness' a decade later.

This preamble is by way of saying that the thesis[1] I am going to sustain is not one that would surprise the man on the street. Tell him that if two ways of saying something differ in their words or their arrangement they will also differ in meaning, and he will show as much surprise as if you told him that walking in the rain is conducive to getting wet. Only a scientist can wrap himself up in enough sophistication to keep dry under these circumstances.

Here is how I mean to define my target. One of the principles – I could almost say fetiches – of current formal linguistics is the notion that underlying whatever communication one human being transmits to another is a deep structure in which every relationship relevant to meaning is set forth. The communication that gets transmitted is subject to all the accidents of transmission and is therefore a distortion of the bedrock structure. Among the possible distortions are actual bifurcations – two different ways of saying the same thing, two different surface structures, mapped onto a single underlying structure by means of different transformations. For instance, it has been claimed that the *to* of the infinitive and the *-ing* of the gerund were merely alternate complementizers and when you said *He likes to*

write and *He enjoys writing* any difference there was existed only between the verbs *like* and *enjoy*, not between *to write* and *writing* – the two main verbs merely selected different complementizers. The difference between *to write* and *writing* became part of the automatism of language.

The other side of the picture – two things the same in form but different in meaning rather than the same in meaning but different in form – is better known because it appeals more to our sense of the unusual. It is the basis of most puns, the funeral home that advertises a lay-away plan, the athletic girl who loves the sun and air (son and heir), and any number of more professional curiosities that have been invented, such as Chomsky's *The shooting of the hunters was terrible*. Obviously if the accidents that strike the surface can produce two different things stemming from the same deep structure, they can also produce two same things stemming from different deep structures. The differences are of two kinds, constructional and homonymic, both of which result in ambiguity. The sentence *John said he was tired* can be taken to mean that John was referring to himself or to someone else. It is not that there are two words both spelled *he* that leads to the fork in the path, but that the grammar of *he* allows for reflexive or non-reflexive reference. This is constructional ambiguity, and linguistic literature abounds with examples, such as the Chomsky one just quoted. With homonyms, ambiguity arises because of a convergence of word forms (or, as with *metal* and *mettle*, sometimes because of a split). *He's an* [ˈænələst] can be taken as either *He's an analyst* or *He's an annalist. It's a fine grind* may refer to a desirable grind or to a pulverized one. Both kinds of ambiguity are commonplace: cases of more than one meaning attached to a single form far outnumber cases of more than one form attached to a single meaning (if indeed the latter exist at all) for the simple reason that the mind is freer than the tongue. Constructional ambiguity will concern us only incidentally, but homonymy will need our attention because in recent years it has frequently been assumed as a way of simplifying some complexity of syntax, without a proper semantic justification for saying that the form in question is 'really two (or more) different words'. *It's easy to play* is constructionally ambiguous like *John said he was tired;* but unlike *he, it* has been called two different words – very likely an unnecessary dissection.

It would be hard to quarrel with the doctrine of sameness and difference as an abstract scientific principle. The idea that things can be the same but different or different but the same is prerequisite to science – only by shutting our eyes to differences can we see that all legumes are a single family or that the gravitation of an apple hitting the earth is the same as

that of a moon revolving about a planet. The problem is not in the principle but in the way linguists have sometimes interpreted it. I question whether any botanist would define his field so as to say that the variation among legumes has nothing to do with it; but linguists have tended to define linguistics so as to say that variation in surface structures that have the same deep structure is irrelevant to the one thing that matters most in language, namely meaning. They have insisted on absolute identity, with any difference defined out of the way.

This attitude has a peculiar fascination. It characterized much of the work in phonology until very recently. In dealing with the sound system of a language it is useful to think of an underlying system of contrastive units, phonemes or features, where a speaker, in two utterances of the same word, say, necessarily deviates within a certain range of tolerance without his hearer even being aware of it. Similarly one may find an identical system being used by another speaker, but with the physical traits of each signal differing slightly in ways that mark him as an individual or as the speaker of a different dialect, but with each unit still having the same communicative value as before. It is not too far-fetched to claim that cases like these are identical linguistically but different sociologically. The deviations can reasonably be defined out of the field.

What happens when these notions of systemic identity and irrelevant difference are carried up the ladder into morphology and syntax? With morphology it still makes sense to think of the plurality of *geese* and the plurality of *hens* as the same entity despite the difference in ways for forming the plural. Also, in describing the differences between speakers we would allow that if one says *eether* and another says *eyether* they are still using the same word; we know the origin of both and we can see the identity of usage. We may learn something of the speakers – their social group or their individual psychology – by observing the differences, but these can be ignored linguistically, in at least some contexts, since they do not affect the content of a communication. They may even be beyond the control of the speaker. He does not manipulate them to ring changes on his message.

Where the mischief begins is in syntax. Differences in the arrangement of words and in the presence or absence of certain elements are often assumed not to count. What is supposed to matter is the underlying deep structure, which is capable of producing, through transformations, divergent structures that mean exactly the same thing. The motive for assuming this is not only the search for simplicity, for ways of stating rules or laws just once instead of again and again, but also the yen that our modern

linguist has for being a psychologist. If there is such a thing as a universal deep structure, it must reflect something about the human psyche, and many conjectures have been made about the human infant springing from the womb with his noun phrases and relative clauses all ready to light up as soon as they are plugged into a particular language.

Obviously the idea that even in syntax one could have identity within difference could not have gained currency without some empirical support. The classical case is that of the passive voice. If some differences of meaning are ignored, it is possible to say that *John ate the spinach* and *The spinach was eaten by John* are the same. They report the same event in the real world. The same entities are present and they are in the same relationship of actor and patient. But if truth value were the only criterion of identity in syntax we would have to say – as some have recently been trying to say – that *John sold the house to Mary* and *Mary bought the house from John* are just as much the same as the active-passive pair, and to seek some way of deriving them from a common base. Linguistic meaning covers a great deal more than reports of events in the real world. It expresses, sometimes in very obvious ways, other times in ways that are hard to ferret out, such things as what is the central part of the message as against the peripheral part, what our attitudes are toward the person we are speaking to, how we feel about the reliability of our message, how we situate ourselves in the events we report, and many other things that make our messages not merely a recital of facts but a complex of facts and comments about facts and situations. As William Haas remarks in his critique of attempts to spread the umbrella of logic over natural language,

> The undoubted meaningfulness of fictions and of deceptive or mistaken references is in fact meaningfulness of the *most general* kind. It extends over all sentences. It is, on the contrary, the sense of the standard type of propositions that represents a more specific kind of meaningfulness: they fulfil the *additional* condition of true-or-false reference (Haas 1975, 158–9).

The linguist cannot expect the logician, the anthropologist, or the psychologist to do his work for him, though he owes to them, and they to him, a recurring debt payable in mutual understanding.

If one wants to believe, as I do, that in syntax there is no such thing as two different surface structures with the same deep structure (that is, with the same meaning), how does one come to grips with the idea? Nobody has counted how many of these imagined cases of identity exist, so if you vanquish one there is always another one waiting for you. The only

answer I know is to find the cases that have the greatest inherent plausibility, and on which the strongest claims of identity have been staked, and to take them on one by one. Each of the chapters that follow attacks a particular assumed equivalence or difference. The significance of the outcome will hardly be lost on generative grammarians, who of all recent theorists have made the most of exact paraphrase and its assumption of underlying identity. Yet others, including the author of this volume, have been equally guilty. After all, it was traditional grammar that first proclaimed the equivalence between active and passive and between attributive adjectives and reduced clauses. Always one's first impulse, on encountering two highly similar things, is to ignore their differences in order to get them into a system of relationships where they can be stored, retrieved, and otherwise made manageable. The sin consists in stopping there. And also in creating an apparatus that depends on the signs of absolute equality and absolute inequality, and uses the latter only when the unlikeness that it represents is so gross that it bowls you over.

Not all distinctions are quite so easy to prove as most of those covered in the separate chapters. One area is especially insensitive to SYSTEMATIC differences in meaning: that of the 'surface transformations', in particular deletion and pronominalization. I suspect that the reason is the fact that here the processes of transformation are a psychological reality. They intrude upon us whenever we echo anything in speech. Echoes may be distorted, but they tend to have one-to-one relationships to their sources. When a speaker replies to *Would you like to have some tea?* with *Yes I wóuld*, and is asked (by a third party, say) *Would what?*, we can observe him supplying the missing elements: *like to have some tea, of course*. One can almost say that *Yes I wóuld*, *Yes I wóuld like to*, *Yes I wóuld like to have some*, and *Yes I wóuld like to have some tea* are identical. No native speaker of English would be shocked at the use of 'same' to describe them (with a 'difference', of course, that 'does not count'). Yet there are functional differences. *Yes I wóuld like to have some*, unlike *Yes I wóuld*, is normal after a first refusal and then a change of mind, but not as a first response. The differences that one can detect in this kind of shortening and lengthening appear to be unpredictable from the inner structure of the sentence and to depend on some larger discourse relationship. The prosody may be involved, as in the successive truncations of the answer to *Who might have cut my hair better than John might have cut it?*

[1] Joe might have cut it better than John might have cut it.
[2] Joe might have cut it better than John might have.

[3] Joe might have cut it better than John might.
[4] Joe might have cut it better than John.
[5] Joe might have cut it better.
[6] Joe might have.
[7] Joe might.
[8] Joe.

All the answers use the same intonation curve, and when the answer is reduced to the monosyllable *Joe* it becomes a little awkward; the three-word answer *Joe might have* is about the lowest one can go in syllabic weight to accommodate the intonation comfortably. To continue with the matter of intonation for a moment, one can see a clear functional difference in two replies to the invitation *Why don't you go shopping with me?* One,

[9] I'd l i k e t o.

is polite and wistful. The other,

[10] I don't want to go shopping with you.

is unmistakably rude. If the full answer is used on the first intonation,

[11] I'd l i k e to go shopping with y o u.

one is more strongly impelled to finish with *but I can't*, and the whole reply sounds a bit brusque. I believe that the effect of repeating the full sentence in a case like this is one either of mocking the original speaker or pretending that he is so dense that it is necessary to repeat all words to make him understand. Combining the mockery with the low terminal pitch, which is normal intonationally because with no new information there are no pitch rises, gives a scornful finality just right for repudiation. Of course, if what is repeated does not echo another person's actual words, one has unadulterated finality. Compare the wistful intonation of

[12] I wish mine were as nice as Ma ry's.

with the finality of

[13] I have to work it so that mine will be every bit as nice as Ma ry's is.

in which the addition of *is* is more appropriate. The effect of finality can be seen when complements are retained at the final low pitch: *He needs money and he means to have money; You'll accept what I tell you to do and you'll do what I tell you to do.*

There are other effects that can be got by repetition besides the extra bulk for intonational purposes and the mocking echo. One is the ancient device of plurality. If I say *She bought a red dress, a green one, and a blue one*, I give you a mere list of her purchases. But if I say *She bought a red dress, she bought a green dress, and she bought a blue dress*, you will infer that she bought excessively. One difference in form here comes from pronominalization, not deletion; but the two are the same in their main effects, namely in shortening and in not repeating the same words.[2] Another effect is that of separation. This is found when the element to be removed is not deleted but pronominalized. If I say *George came in the room and turned off the lights*, ordinarily I would be taken to mean that George performed the actions in sequence, as two parts of a complex plan. But if I say *George came in the room and he turned off the lights*, it is probably either two separate events that are conjoined or two linked events conceptually separated (for example, his coming into the room is reported, but his turning off the lights is complained about). As in so many other places, the *to* of the infinitive behaves in this same way, much like a pronoun. The phrase *the ability to read and write letters* is more likely to be interpreted as 'a letter-reading-and-writing ability' than as 'a reading ability plus a letter-writing ability'. But if the *to* is retained, *the ability to read and to write letters*, the probabilities are reversed – the *to* helps to divide *read* from *write-letters* and sets it up as an intransitive verb. Still another effect of repetition is admonitory, when used with someone's name, as in *Mary wants to eat my soup but Mary isn't going to get the chance.* I suspect that this is a side effect of the repetition of a personal name as a kind of reproof.

Except for the admonitory use, the effects of repetition mentioned thus far show a certain consistency. That is, we regularly have the option of repeating something in full to get extra intonational weight, to suggest plurality, or to indicate that a conjunction applies to a whole sentence rather than part of one. But admonitory repetition picks up a meaning through casual association – we repeat a person's name as a form of reproof in direct address, and manage to carry a suggestion of it over into indirect

address. There are other such casual associations in our repeating or not repeating an element of a sentence. At the time that Dwight Eisenhower was suffering from heart attacks, a cynical cartoon of Richard Nixon was published which pictured the two men standing at the foot of a stairway and Nixon saying to Eisenhower, *Race you to the top of the stairs.* The omission of the subject *I* and the auxiliary is common in such invitations. I suspect that it comes by way of a blend with the imperative, which might also be used as an invitation in such a context, *Race me to the top of the stairs.* In any case, *Race you to the top of the stairs* is unambiguously an invitation; *I'll race you to the top of the stairs* is not. The regular deletion of the subject in the imperative gives, by reversal, an admonitory effect similar to the one just mentioned in connection with proper names, when the subject *you* is included: *You do as I say* is stronger than *Do as I say*, and *Come here, you* is stronger still than *Come here.* (Of course when the *you* is a vocative it merely contrasts with some other *you*, for example *You sit here, Jane, and you sit here, Mary.*) There are similar deletions in questions which have picked up special meanings. If I am sampling a food and say to you *Like a taste?* you are apt to interpret my invitation as less ceremonious and hence more sincere than if I said *Would you like a taste?*

It is obvious from these examples that deletions and pronominalizations may be specialized in function. An instance of particular specialization is the use of answers with deleted main verbs as strong affirmations or denials. In answer to *Do you claim that you were there on the night of August 22?* one may say, naturally, just *Yes*, or *Yes, I claim* etc, but the answer *I do* is the most positive. The KINDS of differences in meaning that one finds with structures that differ only by deletion or pronominalization may not be the same, or may not be as striking, as those involving change of order or change of lexical material. But these contrasts are obviously being exploited and it is not too far-fetched to suppose that even here there is some potential difference in function whenever there is a difference in form. And since deletion and pronominalization as processes of reduction imply a kind of identity with the original from which certain elements have been dropped, we can divorce ourselves from the transformationalists and join J. R. Firth (1966, 174) in questioning the validity of the concept. A reduction is a loss, yet *Mary says so but Mary is wrong* is marked by comparison with *Mary says so but she is wrong;* it is not the same, or less, but more. In the commonsense view, *Shut up* does not delete *you;* rather, *You shut up* adds it. The subjectless imperative has become a structure in its own right, and other 'deletions' may well have been firmed up in much the same way, or be somewhere along the road to it.

This says nothing of the sporadic occasions when a supposed deletion becomes a carrier for a totally different meaning – different in its truth value. Conditional tags using the verbs *want* and *wish* make little distinction between using or omitting the *to* of the infinitive – the differences, if any, are like the ones just discussed: *Do it if you want (to), Do it if you wish (to).* But with the verb *like*, dropping *to* changes the meaning radically: *Do it if you like to; Do it if you like* – the first refers to a liking or fondness, the second to a choice. Adding *would* merges the two again: *Do it if you would like (to);* now both forms express choice. (These verbs are hobbled with strange restrictions: *I'll do it if I want*, but not **when I want*, though *I'll do it when I wish* is normal. On the other hand, *I'll do it if I like*, but not **I'll do it supposing I like.* All instances are normal when *to* is added.)

Where transformations have been set up at supposedly deeper levels the claim of identity-despite-difference is easier to disprove. And also the claim of difference-despite-identity (where the supposed difference overrides a genuine semantic relationship and true homonymy is not involved), which is the companion fallacy. The two go hand in hand, for an artificial identity in syntax may depend on an artificial difference in lexicon. These are two sides of a single universal, the Janus-faced one-form-one-meaning. It has exceptions, but as with all universals the exceptions are imbalances that a language tends to eliminate; we can no more live comfortably with precise synonymy than with the conflict of homonyms. So the chapters that follow will look equally at spurious identities and spurious differences.

As a foretaste of the fuller treatments I offer a few summaries of some other studies that have focused on the same problem.

1 The underlying identity of active and passive. Even the most ardent advocates of perfect paraphrase have retreated from their front-line position on this question, and now concede that there is some kind of difference in emphasis, a way of highlighting certain elements so that the two are not always interchangeable; or even admit – in a recent cross-linguistic study (Langacker and Munro 1975) – that elements such as *be* and *by* are not transformationally introduced particles but are meaningful in their own right. But as far as the English passive is concerned, the difference goes deeper. It involves the markedness of the passive voice with respect to the feature of transitivity (see Bolinger 1975). Why is it that one can say both *The dog walked under the bridge* and *Generations of lovers have walked under the bridge* but *The bridge has been walked under by generations of lovers* strikes us as at least tolerable while **The bridge was walked under by the dog* seems absurd? Or why is it that the passive of

Nobody is to camp beside this lake, This lake is not to be camped beside by anybody! seems acceptable, but the passive of *My sister camped beside the lake,* **The lake was camped beside by my sister,* is peculiar? After giving a set of examples like these to a class of seventy first-year college students, I found that when I had thrown out all the random responses there was a ten per cent consistent agreement on what the students felt was the reason for their willingness to accept a passive sentence with a prepositional verb – it had to represent something actually DONE TO something. The speaker has to be thinking of a patient that is somehow affected by the action. For generations of lovers to pass beneath a bridge makes it romantic. For a dog to walk under it is just that – you have a spatial relationship between dog and bridge, and nothing more. If a rancher warns that his lake is not to be camped beside by anybody he obviously has in mind the potential damage to the lake. But for someone's sister to camp there merely tells where she is. A little investigation shows that simple verbs are subject to the same restriction. We can say *George turned the pages* or *The pages were turned by George;* something happens to the pages in the process. But while we can say *George turned the corner* we cannot say **The corner was turned by George* – the corner is not affected, it is only where George was at the time. On the other hand, if one were speaking of some kind of marathon or race or a game in which a particular corner is thought of as an objective to be taken, then one might say *That corner hasn't been turned yet.* I can say *The stranger approached me* or *I was approached by the stranger* because I am thinking of how his approach may affect me – perhaps he is a panhandler. But if a train approaches me I do not say **I was approached by the train,* because all I am talking about is the geometry of two positions. There are also power relationships involved. Though we can say both *Private Smith deserted the army* and *The generals deserted the army,* to say that *The army was deserted by Private Smith* is comical while *The army was deserted by all its generals* is normal. This shows, I think, that passivization cannot be defined on a particular set of verbs. It demands access to the speaker's intentions, to the meaning of whether or not an effect is produced.

2 The identity between *that* and zero and between *that* and *which* (or, the DIFFERENCE between demonstrative *that* and relative *that*). As far as I know, there has never been any doubt in any grammarian's mind about the absolute equivalence between sentences having and sentences omitting the relative word *that.* My way of wording this prejudices the case somewhat – to say that the word *that* has been omitted implies that it was there in the first place, and accordingly some semantic trace of it

may be left. The question is, does a sentence such as *I noticed you were there* mean the same as one such as *I noticed that you were there?* For traditionalist and transformationalist alike, they have been regarded as in free variation. I will not go into the various restrictions on this supposed variation, which are a long story, more than just to say that there do exist environments where a *that* is required and others where a *that* is excluded (see Bolinger 1972*a*). The most conspicuous instance of required *that* is one serving as subject in its own clause, in the case of adjective clauses: **They arrested the man shot the policeman* requires an added *that,* but *They arrested the man the policeman shot,* where the *that* would be an object in its own clause, can do without it. That is the kind of restriction that can be stated nicely in transformational terms. The question is whether the process is merely one of introducing a *that* transformationally under set grammatical conditions, or one of meaning from which the grammatical restrictions flow as corollaries. One way of helping to decide the question – it is too complex for me to say that it will thereby truly be decided – is to look for minimally distinct pairs, one member of which contains a *that* while the other lacks it. The theory I am going on is that the word *that* is still – in very subtle ways – the same word that it was when it first began to be used to head subordinate clauses, namely a demonstrative. If we look at situations where speakers are volunteering information, where no question has been asked and no answer is implied, but what is being said comes out of the blue, it is unnatural for the word *that* to be used. If I step into a room and want to drop a casual remark about the weather I may say *The forecast says it's going to rain.* It would be odd for me to say **The forecast says that it is going to rain.* But if you ask me *What's the weather for tomorrow?* I have a choice; *The forecast says that it is going to rain* is normal. If we think of *that* in its fundamental deictic or anaphoric use as a demonstrative, we see that it is appropriate when the clause in question does not represent a disconnected fact but something tied in with a previous matter to which *that* can point back, just as it does in *That man insulted me,* meaning the man referred to before. If I see you at the side of the road struggling with a tire and feel charitable I may go over and say to you, by way of an opener, *I thought you might need some help.* To say *I thought that you might need some help* suggests a question already brought up – if you were a huffy sort of fellow and looked up at me as if wondering what business it was of mine, then I might shrug my shoulders and say by way of answer to the implied question, *I just thought that you might need some help.* Look at it another way. Suppose the clause is used without

its subordinating verb – the distinction between old and new crops up again. Take an exchange like

[14] I didn't know that. – Know what? – That Jack's held down six jobs at the same time.

Try leaving off the *that* in this case where a *that* anaphora has already been introduced. On the other hand, suppose no *that* anaphora is possible and the speaker is offering something new:

[15] You want to know something? –What? – Jack's held down six jobs at the same time.

The use of *that* here is just as odd as its omission in the other case. You will notice that the main verbs I used, *know* and *tell*, are both verbs that are perfectly free to take a clause introduced by *that*.

The other side of the problem of *that* and its omission is the supposedly suppletive relationship between *that* and the set comprising *who*, *whose*, and *which*. Just as *that* can be seen as basically demonstrative, so the other relatives can be seen as basically interrogative, and as lexemes in their own right, whose interrogative origin of course is a historical fact. The contrast between *that* and *which* shows up in a minimal pair such as the following:

[16] This letter that came yesterday, that you remember had no stamps on it, was postmarked four weeks ago.
[17] *This letter that came yesterday, that incidentally had no stamps on it, was . . .

The normal use of *incidentally* is to call a hearer's attention to a side topic which is new to the discourse. It is incompatible with anaphoric *that*, but quite compatible with a word that raises a new 'question'. We could if we wished use *which* in the first example, to refresh the hearer's memory, bringing the topic up anew; but there is hardly any choice in the second. The same contrast may be seen between *that* and *who*, for example in relation to intonation. In the example *I want to get word to him as soon as possible about someone else that (who) I knew was available*, the most compatible intonations are the following:

[18] . . . someone else that I knew was available.

[19] . . . someone else who I knew was a vail able.

In the first, availability is not at issue; it has been brought up before. In the second, the hearer is informed of it.

The independent meaning of a *that* or a *which* is a tough point to get across because of its very subtlety and the infrequency with which using one or the other or neither is a matter of life and death. Unfortunately we have tended too often to see the importance of a question of language in terms of the importance of the message. The two are not related.

3 Identity of the infinitive and the gerund. I have already mentioned this point. For a long time transformationalists held that the infinitive and gerund were automatic variants whose only claim to a difference was that they were selected by different governing verbs. That notion has now been given up, perhaps in part because of the evidence cited in Bolinger 1968*a*, including examples such as the following:

[20] To wait would have been a mistake.
[21] *To wait has been a mistake.
[22] Waiting would have been a mistake.
[23] Waiting has been a mistake.

There is evidently some such feature as 'hypothetical' attaching to the infinitive. Kempson–Quirk (1971, 551–6) confirm this in a series of test sentences. But like other old articles of faith the notion of a suppletive relationship between the two verb forms dies hard, and one indirect manifestation of it was still lurking around as recently as 1971 (Dingwall 1971; see Bolinger 1977). I refer to the idea that there need not be any feature present in the verbs that take infinitive complements that causes them to do so, and similarly with the verbs that take gerunds. Whatever features may distinguish the infinitive from the gerund are not matched by compatible features in the respective governing verbs. Proof of this is supposed to be found in the fact that there are pairs of synonyms one member of which takes infinitive complements and the other gerund complements. An example of such a pair is *refuse* and *spurn*. Since there seems to be no relevant difference in meaning between them, the choice of different complements must be arbitrary, so the reasoning goes:

[24] He refused to accept the job.
[25] *He spurned to accept the job.
[26] He spurned my helping him.
[27] ?He refused my helping him.

The problem here is to show that the minimal pair *He refused to accept*

the job and **He spurned to accept the job* once more embodies a difference in meaning, only now the difference produces an anomaly in one of the sentences. More precisely, there is something about the meaning of the verb *spurn* that is incompatible with the meaning of the infinitive. Suppose we try to get a fix on *spurn* and *refuse* by looking at some of the other complements that go with them. We can say *He refused the offer, He refused the invitation . . . bid, advice.* We cannot say **He refused the idea,* **He refused the solution,* **He refused the truth* – but with *spurn* these are all right. We can say *After having it on trial he refused it,* but we cannot say **After owning it for years he refused it.* Again, *spurn* is all right. There is obviously something about the meaning of *refuse* that faces somehow in a different direction from that of *spurn.* I hypothesize that it is a feature (if you like to call such things features) that might be called 'future orientation'. One can refuse an offer, and accordingly refuse a gift, a car, a dog, or even an idea if it is thought of as something offered. But one may not refuse something that one already possesses. The feature of future orientation fits the hypothetical meaning of the infinitive. There are other pairs like *refuse* and *spurn* that show this same contrast of orientation. Take *remember* and *recall.* They are synonyms in sentences like *I remembered my adventure* and *I recalled my adventure;* but whereas *Remember to phone me* is normal, **Recall to phone me* is not. *Remember,* like *refuse,* embodies that future orientation. It brings things AHEAD OF one's mind, not back of it. If I say *At that moment I remembered my wife, remember* may well suggest something to be done. But in *At that moment I recalled my wife* all we have is a backward look. The companion pair of *remember–recall* is *forget–overlook: He forgot his sister when he went* tells us that an action he was supposed to carry out in the future was left undone. *He overlooked his sister when he went* merely tells us that she failed to get his attention. The picture of language as an automaton in which you punch the button reading *refuse* and an infinitive pops into the slot is false to the facts. The infinitive has a meaning and *refuse* has a compatible meaning. There is nothing more mysterious about the harmony between *refuse* and the infinitive than there is between *to drink* and *coffee.*

4 The identity of *-one* and *-body.* Rather than suppletion this is a case of assumed free variation: the authors of the handbooks, including Jespersen, could see no difference, for example, between *someone* and *somebody.* The willingness to probe no further probably reflects the supposed status of these indefinites as function words. Since the same disregard, as we have seen, was bestowed on *that* (and also, as we shall see in Chapter 4, on *it*), we can profit by one more demonstration that grammaticization may make meaning more abstract, but does not obliterate it.

To test the use of *-one* and *-body* I gave a series of tests (Bolinger 1976) of which the simplest was the following, using thirteen graduate students who were presented with two different situations and asked to choose the more suitable indefinite.

First situation:

[28] 'Who's the present for?' I asked.

He gave me an intimate look. {'Somebody / 'Someone} very special, very dear to me,' he said. Of course it had to be me, but I concealed my blushes.

Second situation:

[29] 'Who's the present for?' I asked.

'Oh, {somebody,' / someone,'} he said, as if meaning it was none of my business. 'You don't know him. Her. Them.'

The vote was unanimous, with *someone* for the first and *somebody* for the second. Knowing what we know about pronouns it should not surprise us that meanings having to do with distance, intimacy, and the relationships between the speaker and others should be built into them, and that appears to be what has happened with the indefinites. My hypothesis about *-one* is that it is marked for nearness, in both a spatial and a psychological sense. After a more elaborate test another group was asked to comment on their own reactions. Several did so, and the gist of the answers conformed to the hypothesis. As one worded it, '[*-one*] intimacy, definiteness, individuality; [*-body*] distance, indefinite reference, collectivity'. It should go without saying that the *-one* of the indefinite compounds has unmistakable semantic ties to the word *one* as an independent indefinite pronoun, as in *What can one say?*

5 The difference between *remind* and *remind.* Most of the older morphemic splits – $that_1$ and $that_2$, it_1 and it_2, etc – were perpetrated on relatively defenseless grammatical morphemes, in order to accommodate some hypothesis about syntax (such as that relative clauses were the same whether a $that_2$ was present or absent, a claim that no one dared make about $that_1$). But with the advent of generative semantics, other parts of

the lexicon have been exposed to attack. Now it is paraphrase relationships between the underlying structures of individual words that must be accounted for. If *Mary reminds me of Joe* is viewed as essentially the same as *Mary strikes me as being like Joe*, then we have a basis for deriving both *remind* and *strike like* from the same 'remote structure'. What then happens to the other senses of *remind?* Well, they have to be dismissed as irrelevant: 'there are really several verbs in English whose phonological shape is *remind*' (Postal 1970, 38).

The potential for mischief is now multiplied, for the range of possible remote structures for a word is as wide as the linguist's ingenuity in contriving them and making a plausible case, given semantic facts that are very difficult to define. With the standard paraphrases in SYNTAX, there was at first always a relationship to an existing kernel sentence, and later to a deep structure that at least bore SOME resemblance to an existing sentence. When a given string is made up of elements (words mostly) it is rather difficult to analyse it without coming out with the same elements, more or less, that you start with; but when the analyst supplies the elements, objective safeguards tend to break down. So it is with *remind*. We can approach the question in two ways. (i) The form of the word is a more or less empty shell, with a potentially indefinite number of meanings – therefore the word is really as many words as there are meanings: if this can be done with *draw* 'sketch' and *draw* 'pull', why not with *remind* and *remind?* (As in *He reminded me of my brother; He reminded me of my appointment.*) (ii) The form of the word is an indication that all the senses may be related, and this possibility should yield only to the strongest proofs to the contrary. If we assign *remind* the meaning 'A causes Z to think of B, where B has some connection to A' (Bolinger 1971*a*, 524) the various senses are pulled together and differences are relegated to another level, that of INFERENCE. Given a context in which nothing obstructs our taking 'connection' in as strong a sense as we please, the connection between A and B extends to 'resemblance'. It is no accident that English is not the only language embodying the same variety of subsenses in its word for 'remind'.

6 The identity of active and pseudo-passive. It has been claimed (Mihailović 1967) that there is no difference in meaning between the types *He accidentally drowned in the river* and *He was accidentally drowned in the river*. But there is a difference, even without an agent expressed or implied. If we say *He stupidly drowned* we view him as an actor in the causal chain, even though he may not have been a willing or even a conscious one – we can add *He stupidly drowned; why couldn't he have been more careful?* But to say *He was stupidly drowned; why couldn't he have been more careful?* is odd – we are more apt to say *why couldn't they have fenced off the safe area so he could have told how far to venture out?* The pseudo-passive, like the real passive, puts the responsibility on other shoulders than those of the victim.

7 The identity of verb+particle+NP and verb+NP+particle. This brings us to the 'movement transformations' and the supposed lack of any difference in meaning after the movement has occurred. Specifically, *She threw away the key* and *She threw the key away* are taken to reflect the same deep structure and to have the same meaning. Two theoretical preconceptions here combine to yield a false conclusion. The first is the fondness for switchyard solutions: for the linguist who likes mechanical ways of dealing with data, movement transformations are irresistible. The second is the aversion to categorizing a word in more than one way at the same time. An adverb is an adverb and has adverbial functions, an adjective is an adjective and has adjectival functions. But functions and categories are not always so happily wedded to each other. In *She threw away the key, away* is purely adverbial; but in *She threw the key away* it becomes somewhat adjectival, modifying *key* as to location. There is a partial change in the constituents of the sentence (Bolinger 1971*b*, especially Chapter 7). This can be seen in a pair of sentences that John Beatty tried on a number of sailors: *They hauled in the lines but didn't get them in* and **They hauled the lines in but didn't get them in.* The informants agreed that the first was possible, the second not. Obviously, assuming that *lines in* means that they were in, to say they were not got in is contradictory. What is true of adverbs, adjectivalizing them so to speak, is equally true of adjectives, which can be adverbialized: *They cut open the melon* ('opened the melon by cutting'), *They cut the melon open* ('cut it so that it was open'). True, these are subtle differences, but who says that semantic distinctions have to be gross?

8 The identity of adjective+noun and noun+*be*+adjective. There is a natural logic in the concluding line of an exchange such as the following:

[30] I'm not going to clean your *dirty floors.*–Who says my *floors are dirty?*

Given the discourse equivalence of the predicative and attributive uses of the adjective, one can understand why a grammarian should be tempted to find a grammatical equivalence as well. This is another movement transformation, with the predicative construction regarded

as more basic than the attributive. But it has been clear for some time that the relationship between these two structures is not as obvious as it once appeared (see especially Bolinger 1967). In fact, the supposed deep structure actually gives us less information than the surface structure; one can see this by the behavior of a great many adjectives. Take one such as *loose*. I may say *The dog is loose*, meaning that he is not tied up. I can say *Where is the dog that's loose?* but I am not apt to say **Where is the loose dog?* On the other hand I can say *A loose dog is apt to be a danger to the neighborhood.* Or take an adjective such as *handy*. *The tools are handy* is ambiguous – it may mean tools that are made in such a way that they are very useful, or it may mean just that the tools happen to be easy to reach. But if we say *the handy tools* we select just one of these meanings, the one that refers to how the tools are made, the way they really are. An adjective that is placed before the noun is not just any adjective that can occur after the verb *be*, but is one that can be used to do more than describe a temporary state – it has to be able to characterize the noun. **Where is the loose dog?* is an unlikely sentence because it refers to a temporary state. *A loose dog is apt to be a danger to the neighborhood* is normal because we are making a generalization in which it is necessary to characterize certain dogs AS IF they formed a class. We can say *the people asleep* but not **the asleep people* because we are not characterizing them, only telling how they are at the moment. But when the adjective *aware* began to be used as a synonym of *alert*, it was able to move before the noun: *He's a very aware person.* An adjective that can only refer to a temporary state has to follow the noun: *money galore.* Even if we play with the deep structure so as to set up more than one source for the obvious differences, it still does not follow that *an empty house* means the same as *a house that's empty*. Sometimes they are interchangeable, but other times they are not, for the simple reason that the explicit predication in one makes a difference in the way the information is presented to the hearer.

If the cases I have cited are truly the examples of fallacy that I believe they are, what is at the root of them? I would say that the cause is a confusion of competence and performance, exactly the reverse of the kind that has been claimed by many transformationalists. Instead of there being an underlying sameness in active and passive, with the differences being relegated to style, focus, or whatnot, there is an underlying difference with the samenesses being due to performance variables. If you are asked *What happened to the train?* and you answer *It was wrecked by the engineer*, you could just as well have answered *The engineer wrecked it.* There is nothing in the performance situation that cannot be satisfied by one answer as well as by the other. But in the series

[31] The train was wrecked. – Did they arrest the conductor?

. . . . . .

you are going to prefer *It was wrecked by the engineer* to *The engineer wrecked it.* The fact that a contrast that we carry in our competence is relevant does not mean that it is relevant all the time. It only means that it is there when we need it. If a language permits a contrast in form to survive, it ought to be for a purpose. When we look at what has happened historically to the accidental contrasts that have popped up, at the avidity with which speakers seize upon them to squeeze in a difference of meaning, come what may, we should form a proper appreciation of linguistic economy. It is not normal for a language to waste its resources.

False difference stems from the same confusion of competence and performance as false identity. Now we find a single overarching meaning which performance variables imbue with local tinges that pass for distinct senses. The deception is like what happens when we meet an acquaintance in an unexpected setting: we may not recognize him. Take the perfect tense. It is a single form using a single auxiliary *have*. Does it have a single meaning? Context may fool us into thinking it does not, that it must be assigned separate senses including 'hot news' and 'there are occasions on which *x* happened' (McCawley 1969, 9). Thus *Max has been fired, and so has Fred* would not be used to report Max's recent firing and Fred's repeated experience of being fired, or vice versa, but only one of the two kinds of firing for both persons. But the fact is that the senses CAN be mixed:

[32] *Edith:* Max has been fired!
Ethel: So have I. Many times.
[33] *Arthur:* I've been arrested!
Adam: Who hasn't? The cops don't like beards.
[34] I've never been arrested but Ray just has.[3]

This tells us that the perfect has a meaning that covers both apparent subsenses and that performance variables cue us to the speaker's intention. *Max has been fired* is as neutral to the distinction in question as the nominalized *the firing of Max*.

This book is about the principle of one meaning, one form, which Raimo Anttila has been re-emphasizing as the 'seeing' half of linguistic change. The blind half, including manifestations of phonetic adaptation

and inertia, may continuously cause us to stumble into allowing two meanings for a single form or two forms for a single meaning, but we do not live happily with either accident and only tolerate the one while moving immediately to repair the other. We shall understand this more clearly as we come to appreciate the work on lexical invariance and related matters in the tradition of Roman Jakobson, William Diver, Anna Hatcher, and Erica García, and carried on by Robert Kirsner, Sandra Thompson, Joan Hooper, Talmy Givón, Linda Waugh, and others of their generation.

Notes

1 Adapted from 'Meaning and Form', in Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences, Series II, Volume 36, No 2, February 1974.

2 In other respects as well. Certain quantifier pronouns are the same as quantifier adjectives, and appear to be the result of deletion, *eg, He has some money* reduced to *He has some*. The syntax of the *to* of the infinitive, when the lexical infinitive itself is dropped, is quite similar to that of the personal pronouns, *eg, I hated IT but I had TO*.

3 One thing that does need explaining is why the perfect has to be truncated differently depending on whether the more inclusive 'continuous' subsense precedes the 'point action' one:

I've never been arrested but Ray just has.
Ray's just been arrested but I've never been.
*Ray's just been arrested but I never have.

Chapter 2

Any and *some*

1 Introduction

In this chapter I take a fresh look at 'Linguistic Science and Linguistic Engineering', *Word* 16 (1960) 374–91, which was a rejoinder to Lees 1960*a*. The grammar of *any* and *some* was the prime example in Lees's criticism. As the skirmishing paragraphs in the original are no longer of any interest, I omit them. I have made a few other changes to smooth out the text, but without modernizing it to the extent of substituting terms that have recently come into favor; part of the value of the original, I think, is that it identified a few things that are considered important now but were not much in the wind back then when sentence grammar was the linguist's cynosure: presuppositions (called 'suppositions'), factivity (the 'factual *know*'), higher sentences (*Isn't it true that* versus *Is it true that not*), and lexical invariance.

The evidence I gave (not much of it was new – it would have sufficed to cite Jespersen and Poutsma) dealt effectively enough with Lees's particular objections, but syntax, though beaten, has refused to die. I argued that Lees's syntactic *some-any* rule would not work. Two recent studies agree with that conclusion but offer syntactic explanations of a more subtle kind. The first is Lakoff 1969, which applies the syntactic notion of higher sentences. It correctly points out that sentences of the type *If you eat some* (**any*) *spinach I'll give you* $10 and *If you eat any* (**some*) *candy I'll whip you* prove that the choice between *any* and *some* hinges on a kind of positive or negative expectation. But the expectation is given a material form: underlyingly the two sentences have abstract performative verbs, and are related to *I warn you that if you eat any candy I'll whip you* and *I promise you that if you eat some spinach I'll give you* $10. This is an interesting proposal, and the speaker who has a warning or a promise in mind is certainly apt to make the choices indicated. But to say that 'the choice of which sentence