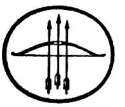
SIMEON POTTER

Modern Linguistics



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PREFACE

It is my aim in this book to present a straightforward introduction to general linguistics so clear in its main outlines that any intelligent reader may understand it. I have therefore steered my course circumspectly, and I trust successfully, between the Scylla of oversimplification and the Charybdis of obscurity. Never for one moment have I doubted that 'language is more wonderful than linguistics' and that 'what can be said at all can be said clearly'. Even the most abstruse principles of a living science are surely amenable to lucid exposition.

I had seriously considered the desirability of including a full glossary of technical terms, but to have done this satisfactorily would have meant throwing the book out of proportion and swelling its size unduly. In any case, the revised edition of Jules Marouzeau's quadrilingual *Lexique de la Terminologie Linguistique* (Paris, Paul Geuthner, 1951), in French, German, English and Italian, sponsored by the Permanent International Committee of Linguists, is easily procurable. Indeed, I have generally followed Marouzeau faithfully in this matter of nomenclature, and, to help the reader, I have italicized every new term on its first appearance in the text, at once defining it simply and unambiguously and giving this initial definition as the first page reference in the index.

Whereas in the first six chapters I have adhered fairly closely to accepted opinion in stating the main facts relating to phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary, and have not gone very far out of my way to introduce discussions on controversial topics, in the last two chapters I have ventured to offer more personal views on the omnipresence in utterances, and segments of utterances, of the form-meaning complementary relationship (like two sides of a coin), and on the future of world communication. In the section devoted to bibliography I have done my best to guide the reader, chapter by chapter, to the most useful books for further study and, with this practical end always in view, I have not refrained from expressing my personal

judgements quite frankly in order to give the reader some idea of the relative values for him of the books concerned.

I began writing this book while attending the Seventh International Congress of Linguists held in the Senate House of the University of London in the late summer of 1952, and I should like to take this opportunity of thanking the many members of that memorable assembly who gave me the benefit of their friendly help and encouragement both then and afterwards, as well as fellow-members of the Philological Society and my friends in the University of Liverpool and in the sister Universities of Manchester and Leeds. I certainly owe a very special debt of gratitude to Professor W. E. Collinson, who not only read the work in typescript and eliminated some inaccuracies, but also answered the endless queries of a junior colleague with never-failing patience, urbanity and generosity over a long period of years. Dr J. Linskill most kindly checked the opening chapters on points of Romance philology, and Professor D. J. O'Connor of Liverpool and Mr William Haas of Manchester gave me invaluable aid and counsel in framing the chapter on meaning. Finally, I must say how sincerely grateful I am to Professor Harold Orton of Leeds for all the help he so willingly gave me in arranging the section on dialect and to his assistant, Dr Wilfred J. Halliday, who supplied me with maps for Figures 15 and 16.

Thus the composition of this treatise has been the means of renewing old friendships and creating new ones. I am glad that Mr Eric Partridge has found a place for it in his now flourishing *Language Library*. As a discipline, to be sure, linguistics is still very young. There is every reason to expect that it will advance by leaps and bounds in the second half of the twentieth century.

S. P.

ABBREVIATIONS

adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
CG	Common Germanic
Cz.	Czech
E	English
F	French
G	German
Gk	Classical Greek
ibid.	in the same book
ind.	indicative
IE	Indo-European
interj.	interjection
IPA	International Phonetic Association
Ital.	Italian
Lat.	Latin
ME	Middle English
O	object
OE	Old English
OED	The Oxford English Dictionary
OF	Old French
OHG	Old High German
ON	Old Norse
ONF	Old Northern French
p.	page(s)
P	predicate
Pol.	Polish
Port.	Portuguese
pp.	past participle
pron.	pronoun
R	indirect object
Russ.	Russian
S	subject
sb.	substantive
Skr.	Sanskrit
Sp.	Spanish
TPS	Transactions of the Philological Society
v	auxiliary verb
V	verb

SYMBOLS

<	'changed from' or 'derived from'
>	'changed to' or 'becomes'
[ ]	enclose *phonetic symbols*
/ /	enclose *phonemic symbols*
:	after phonetic symbols denotes *length*: between forms denotes *opposition*
/	between forms denotes *alternation*
*	indicates a *reconstructed* or *hypothetical form*

PHONETIC SYMBOLS

The consonant-letters p, b, t, d, k, g; l, r, m, n; f, v, s, z, h, w have their usual English values. Below are given the key-words for other sounds appearing in this book:

CONSONANTS

tʃ	*ch*urch	n	F. ag*n*eau
dʒ	*j*udge	ʃ	*sh*ip
ŋ	si*ng*	ʒ	mea*s*ure
θ	*th*in	ç	G. i*ch*
ð	*th*en	x	G. a*ch*
ʍ	*wh*y	j	*y*es

See p. 25 for other foreign consonant sounds.

VOWELS

i:	s*ee*	ɑ̃	F. bl*a*nc
i	s*i*t	u:	m*oo*n
e	g*e*t	u	p*u*t
a	c*a*t	ʌ	b*u*t
ɑ:	f*a*ther	ə:	b*ir*d
ɔ	h*o*t	ə	fath*er*
ɔ:	f*or*	y	F. p*ur*
œ̃	F. *un*	ø	F. cr*eux*
ɔ̃	F. b*on*	œ	F. s*eu*l
ɛ̃	F. v*in*	o	F. m*o*t

DIPHTHONGS

ei	d*ay*	ɔi	b*oy*
ou	g*o*	iə	h*ere*
ai	fl*y*	ɛə	th*ere*
au	n*ow*	uə	g*our*d

CHAPTER I

Speaking and Hearing

WHAT exactly happens when you speak? In response to some stimulus you make a noise or, more probably, a series of noises. Your brain functions first of all, sending out messages from the speech centres on the left side of your head, if you are a normal right-handed person, along the nerve tissues to those muscles whose function it is to control the movable organs of speech: diaphragm, lungs, vocal cords, tongue, soft palate and lips. Now suppose you are out rambling across country with a friend and suddenly you catch sight of a fox slinking stealthily along a hedge in the distance. 'Look!' you shout, 'there's a fox!' You utter one syllable quickly, you pause, and you then utter three syllables more. The vision of Reynard on the prowl is imprinted on the retina of your eye and instantaneously the eye nerves are set to work carrying the message back to the optic receiving area on the cortex at the back of your head, thence forward obliquely to those speech centres on the left side already mentioned, and so down to the main speech organs of throat and mouth. All this happens in a flash. You do not pick and choose your words. In carefree mood, you say just what comes into your head. Nevertheless, you make an exceedingly complicated sequence of movements for you utter as many as eleven sounds altogether, all within the space of one second. You give vent to these particular noises and no others for the simple reason that you happen to have been born and bred among English-speaking people in the twentieth century. You make all these eleven sounds by means of outgoing breath. All the time, as you stroll along, you are breathing in and out at a rate of about fifteen to twenty inspirations and expirations a minute. During that slight pause between 'Look!' and 'There's a fox!' you

actually hold your breath for a small fraction of a second before breathing out again with the rest of the utterance. Seeing something is the stimulus: articulating sounds is the response. This simple stimulus-response behaviour we call speech.

You may rightly regard this illustration as altogether too simple to account for all occasions of speech, in heated argument, for example, in answering a telephone call, or in talking to yourself. There must, however, always be some kind of stimulus evoking response, even though that stimulus is not visual. Suppose, again, that you have been called upon, with or without warning, to propose a vote of thanks to a distinguished speaker at a public meeting. That you have been called upon and not someone else is surely an adequate and effective stimulus to speak and to choose suitable words for the occasion. You have not seen a fox, but you have received an invitation. In such circumstances you have some time to think and you do not say the first thing that comes into your head. Before you rise from your seat you frame the opening sentence very carefully in your mind and, if you know the tricks of this particular trade, you decide even more carefully upon the precise form of your conclusion, choosing deftly those few emphatic words that you will rap out smartly before resuming your seat amidst applause. Provided that you have just one or two general ideas about it, you know very well that you may let the middle of your speech look after itself. You will then speak fluently and without affectation and, by thinking well ahead of articulation, you will dispense with ums and ahs and meaningless pauses.

When we refer to the organs of speech we generally mean those of the articulatory tract from larynx to lips, but in fact the whole body may be said to participate in an act of speech. We may, of course, gesticulate with face, head, arms and hands, and, in any case, the primary physical impulse comes from the diaphragm or midriff, that dome-shaped sheet of fibrous tissue which is the principal muscle of respiration. This tendinous partition separating thorax from abdomen turns its concave side downwards and it is fastened to the sternum or breastbone in front, to the lumbar vertibrae behind, and to the cartilages of the lower six ribs on either side. When its muscles contract, the

whole vault of the diaphragm is drawn downwards and the lungs are consequently filled with air. If you try timing yourself with a watch you will probably find that you breathe out slightly more quickly than you breathe in, but the difference is small, in the ratio, perhaps, of 1 to 1.1, or 1 to 1.25. When you speak, however, the speed of inspiration is greatly increased and that of expiration is correspondingly reduced so that the ratio may become 1 to 3, 1 to 10, or even, in exceedingly rapid talk, 1 to 30. You then literally gasp for breath! The chain of speech or sequence of sounds between two inspirations is known as a breath group.

In ordinary speech you utter sounds by the outgoing breath or expiration, but, by rapid intakes of air, you may easily make suction sounds or clicks, such as *tut tut*, represented thus conventionally by novelists when one of their characters expresses surprise or pity. In Zulu, Hottentot, and other African languages, such clicks form regular features of everyday speech.

As the outgoing breath stream is forced by diaphragmatic pressure upwards from the lungs through the bronchial tubes and the trachea or windpipe into the mouth, it may be checked or impeded in various ways. These checks make distinct changes in the shape of the articulatory tract proper, which, as we have seen, extends from the larynx to the lips. Four organs of speech in this tract are movable: the vocal cords, the soft palate or velum, the tongue and the lips. The vocal cords are, in fact, more like elastic bands or lips than cords and, as it passes through them, the breath may do one of four things: (*a*) it may pass through the open fissure between the bands without any obstruction as in quiet breathing or as in pronouncing voiceless sounds; or (*b*) it may pass through the half-closed fissure between the tightly-drawn bands in such a way as to make them vibrate producing a voiced sound high or low according to the speed of the vibration; or (*c*) it may pass through in such a way as to produce a grating or rasping sound as in whisper; or (*d*) it may be completely pent up for a moment by the vocal lips drawn tightly together for their whole length, and then exploded suddenly and energetically, thus making the glottal plosive

sound as in German Achtung [ˈɑxtʊŋ] 'Look out!' or dialectal English butter [bʌˈə].[1]

Of these four possible movements of the vocal cords the first two are the most important for they give rise to the division of sounds into voiceless and voiced. When you utter the voiceless consonants p, t, k, f and s, the cords are open and motionless, but when you pronounce their voiced counterparts b, d, g, v and z, or any vowel, the cords vibrate and you may feel this vibration by placing forefinger and thumb on your Adam's apple and, if you wish, you may hear a buzzing by placing your thumbs in both ears. Say 'very good indeed' [veri gud indi:d] and, by applying these very simple tests, you will observe that all twelve sounds are voiced.

The more rapidly the vocal cords vibrate, the higher becomes the pitch or musical note that they emit. For men in calm speech the normal range is from A to e, that is, from 109 to 163 cycles a second. With the aid of a laryngoscope we can actually see the vocal cords. This simple instrument consists of a small circular mirror attached obliquely to a long handle which we insert horizontally into the mouth so that the mirror itself rests against the soft palate as far back as possible. If we stand in front of a looking-glass and place the laryngoscope in such a way that a good light is reflected down the throat, the interior of the larynx can be clearly seen. The soft palate can be clearly seen without a laryngoscope as well as that curious cone-shaped appendage known as the uvula which dangles from the velum. Look in the glass as you yawn and you will see the arch of the buccal pharynx raised high and you will observe the uvula almost disappearing behind it. At other times the uvula hangs down inert and useless. In Parisian French, however, and also in some dialects of Northumberland and Durham, a uvular r- sound [ʀ] is made by vibrating the uvula rapidly against the arched back of the tongue. This uvular r, which many Englishmen have to practise anew every time they cross the Channel, arose in Paris as recently as in the seventeenth century, spread as a speech fashion through

[1]Symbols within square brackets denote transcription into the conventional alphabet of the International Phonetic Association. A list of these symbols will be found on page 11.