

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS

NEWSLETTER

No. 7 June 1979

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TRANSLATION AND THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE

(This is an extract from Professor Newmark's paper presented at the EAAI Annual Meeting in Cardiff, September 1978. The section on 'Propaganda' is the fifth section of the paper, and is not in its final form).

V. PROPAGANDA

If one excludes policy statements (where the interpreters for President Carter and Queen Elizabeth have recently been at fault) perhaps the main type of propaganda that is translated (except for information) is either religious or political. Since I am not competent to discuss the translation of religious writing (and the literature is considerable, from Schwarz, Nida and Wonderly onwards), I propose to comment on the dreary subject of Marxist translations. The main factory for translation clichés is still Prague, the seat of the periodical Problems of Peace and Socialism (now The World Marxist Review) which is published in 24 languages. The reams of "standardized language" manufactured by all pro-Soviet Communist newspapers, periodicals and textbooks can hardly be imagined except by someone who has had the ill-luck to have to read them.

The writing is a model of cohesion, the dream of a discourse analyst, since not only collocations, but phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs are predictable, anaphoric and cataphoric, an infinitely recursive variation on sentences translated say into English from German from Hungarian: "A comprehensive examination of the role which the subjective factor plays in the revolution has enriched scientific socialism with Lenin's doctrine of the revolutionary party as the leading organizing advance-guard in the proletariat's class-struggle for power and the socialist transformation of society".

Even an apparently "technical" paper such as Foreign Trade (Vneshnaya Torgovlya) published in 5 languages from Moscow is virtually unreadable. The language is so generalized so fulsome and on such a high and abstract level that it might have been translated for the fifth time or composed by a computer: "There is a stable trend towards stepping up the production of machines and equipment which determine the rates of scientific and technical progress", etc. Only occasionally something goes wrong with the living or dead translating machine: "At present we are witnessing the process of pulling (sic) and mutual

penetration of the material and spiritual potentialities of our states (USSR and GDR) in increasing degree." But at this exalted spiritual level, what does it matter? All it proves is that "public" language in the Soviet block is being used at an abysmal level - private language, (pace Steiner 1975) with his mistaken idea that the state and politics can ruin a language - may be that much better. More independent Marxist propaganda is not translated so frequently in Prague.

Marxist writing in Lenin's work is characterized by the clear and uncluttered use of key-words e.g. 'social-chauvinist,' 'hollow talking shops.' State and Revolution, written in 1917 and translated into English anonymously (authorized by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in 1933) is sparing in adjectives and intensifiers, strong on emphases, contrasts and italics. The language is however colourless and abstract in comparison with the Communist Manifesto (1848), and partly for this reason, the text 45 years later has not been revised - generally, figurative and transferred language needs more retranslating every generation than syntax and physical words. Lenin like Engels was sharply aware of translation problems, often retaining German institutional terms as well as translating them when he quoted Engels, e.g., discussing the difficulties of translating Gemeinwesen as opposed to Gemeinde into Russian, which has no such word.

A comment is called for on the Communist Manifesto, written by Marx in 1848, translated by S. Moore in 1888 and revised by Engels. For this reason, the English translation has a unique independent status as an original work, and though the Manifesto was also translated in 1930 in a little known version, I suspect it will not be translated again. In 1948, Lawrence and Wishart published a few revisions, which included the correction of one or two bad mistranslations. (Incidentally the first English translation, printed in 1850 translates Ein Gespenst geht um in Europa as "A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe. We are haunted by a ghost, the ghost of Communism") - but the remainder of the translation is pretty accurate.

Certainly both the text and the English translation illustrate the strengths of successful political propaganda: superb slogans, particularly at the beginning and end; question and answer technique; vigorous speech rhythms, consistent use of key-words; continual strong contrasts; vigorous images (eiskaltes Wasser,

egoistische Berechnung); indictments built up paragraph by paragraph; with repetition of sentence-rhythms. Further, I think the translation is, if anything an improvement on the original: the translation of heilige Hetziasd as 'holy alliance', the conversion of descriptive verbs (Zugrundegehen) to figurative language ('go to the dogs'), the omission of pedantic deictics: Die Proletarier haben nichts in ihr zu verlieren - 'the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains'. Vereinigt euch - "Working men of all countries - unite!" Here the English with its logical sequences, frequent monosyllables, shorter sentences, concrete idioms (figure of speech - rednerische Figur) appears to have the advantage.

It is particularly in the area of political writing that the translator has to be sensitive to the shifting meanings of current internationalisms and vogue words: here there is a clash not only in interpretations of 'democracy', 'freedom', 'fascism', 'socialism', 'profit', 'communism' etc., but terms such as hegemonism, revisionism, imperialism, centralism, pluralism have first to be carefully related to the ideologies (another such word) of those who use them: - in these cases, the conflicting views of three centres of thought - the Soviet-East German, the Euro-communist and the Chinese have to be particularly regarded; 'revisionism', 'conservatism', and 'normalization' have special meanings in Czech and Slovak since 1968. Again, certain doublets are used as referential synonyms for the same object freedom-fighter/terrorist; régime/government, CEMA/Comecon; Berliner Mauer/Freiheits-wall.

Communist literature is so full of platitudes and free from personalities and gossip that word-fashions have become as politically significant in Eastern Europe as elsewhere.

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SIGNING ON

(This review of John Lyons' 'Semantics', C.U.P., has been reprinted, with permission, from The New Review, February 1978. The BAAL Newsletter will gratefully receive any comments for future discussion.)

'Every sign is a construct between socially organised persons in the process of their interaction' - Volosinov.

Education, or teaching at least, is a hazardous pursuit. And it's not just the clients sitting there by the thousand with sardonic, sceptical eyes, but those sinister figures in the wings, faintly contemptuous, armed with the paraphernalia of expertise and tapping ominously their research findings. Very disconcerting. And yet when we are baffled and challenged we feel that somewhere in the enormous array of contemporary scholarship there must be wise illumination, had we the wit and leisure to find it. So it has been with linguistics, which its practitioners are at enormous pains to explain to us is a science.

Those of us in education concerned with language and how it functions in learning, or more narrowly concerned with the teaching of English, have inevitably turned to linguistics for sustenance. Not that we have been alone in this: in a relatively short time linguistics has found its place in the sun. In psychology, anthropology, philosophy, sociology, literary criticism and goodness knows what else, scholars have felt that they were under some obligation to do their linguistics homework. They will have to speak for themselves, but those of us in education who have turned to linguistics have found the experience a strange one. Beyond all question we have profited enormously, not so much because we have perhaps penetrated the mysteries of transitivity, the phoneme, and the like, but more because it has helped us to understand what it means to describe a language, it has made us give greater and more careful attention to spoken language and it has given us some guidelines for looking at language development.

But we have had our disappointments, frustrations and even provocations. Linguistics takes as its province nothing less than language. Yet again and again we have found that the central preoccupations of linguists have not been ours. Chomsky's 'ideal speaker-listener' (a battered and dejected figure nowadays) did not resemble our pupils in the least, not, it should be added, because he had been idealised but because of the way in which he had been idealised.

What were our disappointments? Firstly, we learned that overwhelmingly the active work of linguists was based on sentences or bits of sentences and even then they concentrated on the grammar and phonology of sentences. Now teachers do not deal with sentences but with texts in the sense of stretches of language, spoken or written, as we encounter them as meaningful wholes - a conversation, a poem, a speech, a novel etc. We have sought deeper illumination of texts with all their complexities and untidiness - the discourse of the classroom, the kinds of books which pupils encounter in the curriculum and all kinds of writing: notes, accounts, reports, arguments, stories and poems - and we have found the illumination at best fitful. Indeed, it was a linguist and his collaborator who found reason to complain when they set themselves the task of analysing classroom discourse:

"In our search for a starting point we found very little within linguistics, which was mainly concerned with the description of language structure up to the rank of clause. The clauses described almost never had a context or cotext and when they did this was only seen as relevant in so far as it provided information useful for the description of the clause." (J. McH. Sinclair, and R. M. Coulthard: *Towards an Analysis of Discourse*).

It is true that 'discourse analysis' (something we all have to know how to do) is now beginning to develop within linguistics but it is in its infancy. We go on hoping. When a book appears called *Cohesion in English* and its lively opening chapter reminds us that 'a text is best regarded as a SEMANTIC unit', we have high hopes, until, a few pages later, the disclaimer is made. The work will not consider discourse structure which is concerned with units higher than the sentence.

The linguists have also shied away from written language for reasons which are far from clear. John Lyons, to whom we shall return, can only manage two pages and a couple of footnotes in 500 pages on this topic. The insistence on the primacy of speech has led in practice to ignoring the written language as though it were so unimportant or so fundamentally derivative from spoken language that to study it and analyse it would yield little. Some linguists have also given their attention to something which cannot properly be called either speech or writing, i.e. sentences invented by linguists.

Lastly, for decades linguists had a self-denying ordinance about meaning, daunted by the conceptual problems and what seemed like the overwhelming difficulties of attempting to impose order on this most elusive and subterranean element of language. Strange, but not so strange perhaps as trying to reconcile this vast terra incognita of linguistics with the way in which linguists from time to time take education to be their province and irritably dismiss those who wish to talk of the study of language for not taking this to be synonymous with linguistics.

Meaning is at the heart of our business however you look at it. I.A. Richards, who with C.K. Ogden was concerned with meaning and education (see The Meaning of Meaning) forty years ago, speaks of 'the educator as being the overall student of the acquisition, development, and degeneration of meanings, their transmission, cultivation, upkeep' and '(his) duties constantly require in him a clinical, evaluative attitude towards meanings and the transactions they mediate'. As the 'overall student' any sort of teacher has to be deeply concerned with meaning. All teachers come face to face with the problem of how their pupils grasp or fail to grasp meanings delivered in language and how their pupils deliver or fail to deliver their own meanings and how they might develop in them a capacity to reach out for new meanings. These very general questions give rise to more specific ones. Here are some of them:

What are the differences between writing and speech as meaning systems?

What makes it possible for new meanings to emerge in dialogue? ('Interpretation is a conversation without an ending' C.S. Peirce).

How does the meaning of a whole text amount to more than a sum of its parts?

Do different disciplines or school subjects handle meaning in their own specific ways?

Do the languages and dialects of different ethnic and social groups mean in different ways?

What is the relationship between growth of vocabulary and the ability to mean with discrimination or more richly?

Does the mastery of a more complex grammar imply the capacity to mean in a more complex way?

Is the meaning of a literary work of art something importantly different from the meaning of discursive writing?

We could go on refining these questions endlessly, but underlying them is a preoccupation with learning, since a great deal of learning depends on language for the emergence of meaning. Teachers, like some philosophers, want to know how we can mean through words. So then, when two portentous volumes appear on the subject of semantics we should seize them with hungry enthusiasm, tempered by the scepticism born of past disappointments. We can examine Semantics by John Lyons, a linguist of established reputation, convinced that somewhere lurking in so massive a work must be part at least of the answer to our questions, and the preface, consoling thought, tells us that it will serve the needs of the general reader.

A few pages later we learn that the work contains 'very little on the structure of texts (or so-called text-linguistics) or on metaphor and style'. Why? Because, 'I should have had to make my book even longer.' Strange; how does Lyons decide his priorities? This we never discover, for the whole of this work is devoid of any clear indication of why the writer is committed to this theme and any hint of what the poor general reader is to make of it all. Chapter follows chapter and we wait for the masterly synthesis. It never comes. Instead the book ends with a chapter on 'modality' and only the beginning of the bibliography on the next page informs that we have indeed come to the end. And that is the way of it. Semantics is a meticulous compendium of a series of themes which have emerged as scholars from different disciplines have tried to clear the ground. Each theme is discussed in a peculiar manner which we are obliged to live with. It is the quintessence of the text-book style so that we might almost say that a new style emerges, the apotheosis of academic caution. Every alternative possibility is meticulously considered as though the writer had no views on the matter. When we are allowed to glimpse him stalking through the thickets of definitions and theoretical discriminations it is because he has dared to say 'it has been argued here' or 'it is as well to emphasise' or 'whether creativity ... is rule-governed and to what degree it is arbitrary rather than motivated are questions upon which no firm stand will be adopted in this book'. With enormous refinement he indicates the status of his propositions, theoretical, pre-theoretical or observational. He is as consistent as he promises to be, but consistency does not necessarily make for coherence. So in one paragraph we may be sent scuttling back and forth in the text through cross-reference. As in so many other works in linguistics the dense text is sparsely peppered with short sentences, mostly of unknown provenance. There is not a single complete

authentic text, on which the writer attempts to exercise all the erudition he has displayed to us. But then he has never suggested that he cared to do that with it or do anything else with it for that matter.

Since it is above all a text-book, it begins with typical ground-clearing defining terms and procedures and proceeds to deal with communication, semiotics, the behaviourists' view of semantics, logical semantics, sense and reference, structural semantics, semantics and grammar, lexicon and then a number of topics which must have gradually found their way to the back of the card-index. For all the scrupulous methodology and apparent orderliness of the book, Lyons never explains why it is laid out in this way nor why some crucial decisions have been taken. Thus on page 725 we are told:

'Throughout much of this book so far we have been mainly concerned with the descriptive functions of language, i.e. with the way language is used to make statements. But language also serves as an instrument for the transmission of other kinds of information.'

Why has he relegated to the end of the book a discussion which should have informed the whole work? In any case he has not been looking at language but at sentences (or less) - a very different matter. Back on page 50 this discussion was first opened in a clear though somewhat pedestrian fashion and then abandoned for most of the book. Meanwhile, such compelling matters as logical semantics and the propositional calculus have occupied intervening chapters. A chapter on the lexicon arrives long after pages of discussion of lexis in the context of structural semantics. It would be churlish to carp at such things if it were not for the air of lucid and principled progression which the vanishing author conveys through his style. Much more important than this is the consequence that the reader is left with a huge task of imposing some emphasis on all this in addition to trying to apply it to real language. Imagine the poor conscientious fellow who waits to discover, after the rigours of model-theoretic and truth-conditional semantics, that he has mainly been dealing with the descriptive not the expressive nor the social aspects of language! He will again and again be forced into the position of a spectator on the side-lines, and what is more Lyons as good as tells him so:

'In view of the confused, and at times acrimonious, discussion of the rival merits of syntactically and semantically based models of linguistic description that has been taking place among transformational grammarians, it is as well to

emphasise that the point at issue is a highly technical one that cannot even be formulated except within the framework of a particular formalisation of the structure of language systems'.

There are other difficulties. In his consideration of semantics and grammar Lyons raises some interesting issues. Let me take one example, tautology. The sentence being discussed is 'Business is business'. In principle the sentence is uninformative since it can only tell the listener what he already must know even if he doesn't know the meaning of 'business'. Lyons solves the problem as follows: 'What the addressee does ... is to say to himself, as it were ...' Never mind what he says to himself, it is the nature of Lyons's solution which is interesting. Whereas the book groans under the weight of nice discriminations, especially those which assess the status of theoretical propositions, quite suddenly we are treated to assumptions about what the addressee does ('as it were').

The same procedure is adopted for paradox ('Is he married?' 'He is and he isn't'). Lyons goes on to tell us that the addressee adopts procedures and strategies to deal with such utterances. For one so concerned about the status of his ideas, it is surprising that he does not tell us from which theoretical resources he derives such confidence. In fact, he is doing no more than any of us can do without semantic theory. However, we should perhaps be grateful that the addressee has at last appeared on the scene as someone endowed with a capacity to adopt strategies and procedures. Deeper understanding of these strategies and procedures is exactly what we need. But then Lyons never really tells us what strategies etc he adopts in this instance. I would suggest that in the case of the tautology the addressee allocates it to a class of utterances ('Boys will be boys' 'Fair is fair' 'In those days men were men' etc) which are resolved on a general principle: You must not attempt to treat things or people as though they are different from what they essentially are. The paradox can be resolved by a more interesting strategy. The addressee once again can recognise a class of utterances which we might call curate's egg utterances. Thus: 'Do you like him?' 'Yes and no'. He resolves the paradox because he knows very well that our classification system often polarises concepts or makes them mutually exclusive but we are constantly in life having to re-arrange the categories by improvisation since we cannot conventionally resolve our meaning with them. What is more, the form of the reply indicates not only the state of affairs but dramatises the coexistence of contrary elements

and compresses into three words something like, 'There are some things about him which I like and some which I do not.'

The truth is that the questions I posed at the outset are not answered by Lyons, and he might, with considerable justification, reply that it is no business of linguists to answer such questions. Yet throughout the book Lyons does from time to time say things which have a bearing on them. He constantly worries at the problem of dealing with real language as distinct from certain kinds of idealisation:

'One way of embarking upon the analysis of context is to ask what kind of knowledge a fluent speaker of a language must possess in order to produce and understand contextually appropriate and comprehensible utterances in that language ...'

It is the answer to that question which keeps eluding us in the book, and we are told why:

'As we have seen, much that is involved in language behaviour is excluded by methodological decisions from the linguist's model of the language-system and is thereby defined as non-linguistic.'

We have the right to ask what kind of science of language it is which excludes 'much that is involved in language behaviour'. Methodological decisions are invoked on several occasions to justify the exclusion of considerations which must be intrinsic to language:

'To say that there is some degree of artificiality in the process of decontextualisation whereby we arrive at a representative sub-set of the system-sentences of a language is not to say that the notion of system-sentence is completely spurious. It is a theoretical construct whose principal function is to define the concept of grammaticality ...'

Lyons does not make clear what you do with a concept of grammaticality when you have it other than to understand more profoundly contextualised utterances. Semantics has been bedevilled by approaches which rule out of court kinds of meaning which constitute some of our most powerful resources.

Lyons rules out nothing, but the unevenness of his treatment is bewildering. Take expressive language. Teachers of English are intensely aware that in the enterprise of encouraging their pupils to use to the full the resources they possess in order to express and discover what they have to say, the expressive

element in language is central. Therefore they need to understand it as fully as possible. Lyons says:

'... we can restruct the term expressive to those indexical features of an utterance by means of which a speaker or writer establishes or reveals his individuality in a particularly original manner. Expressivity, in this sense, will therefore be a part of creativity'.

Apart from the vagueness of this definition, it is singularly unhelpful. It makes expressivity a thing apart, a possession of the gifted few. It would not be difficult to show that the gifted speakers and writers do nothing with language which the rest of us do not do, if less impressively, and this is particularly true of the expressive elements in language. What the rest of us do is pushed into a jumble under the heading of 'indexical' i.e. those features which indicate group membership, characterise the individual and reveal his/her changing states. The brief discussion of these ideas occurs early in the book. We might compare this cursory treatment with three complete chapters devoted to semantics and grammar. Much more unsatisfactory is the fact that in contrast with the method of the book the very difficult though essential task of showing how the expressive features can be identified in a text is not undertaken. Had he done so we might have discovered how he distinguishes between a discursive manner of characterising oneself, i.e. one could describe one's feelings and attitudes in the manner of a psychology text-book, from the oblique, pervasive and often intermittent ways in which feelings and attitudes emerge in language; processes of which 'some linguist or other has made what he is pleased to call an analysis'.

I am persuaded that most teachers coming to this book with reasonable expectations will be dismayed by its tone, its method and its introverted linguist's preoccupations. Nevertheless, for the most persistent and, perhaps, the partially initiated, there is matter here which, given pedagogical interpretation, deserves their attention. Having looked at information theory and treated it with great respect, Lyons gives us a beautifully lucid paragraph of critique which would repay detailed study by teachers, especially those interested in reading:

'... it is certainly not the case that speaker and hearer have stored in their brain a table listing all possible messages together with appropriate signals for encoding them. Furthermore, the reception of utterances cannot be split

into two distinct processes: first the identification of the signal and then its interpretation. In the decoding of the acoustic signal, the listener draws upon his knowledge of the positional and contextual probabilities of words even for the identification of sounds: and his calculation of these conditional probabilities of words is not determined solely by his knowledge of the statistical structure of his language, if indeed he can truly be said to know the statistical structure of his language. He is influenced by more general expectations of what the speaker wants to say in the particular situation; that is to say, he decodes the signal, partly at least, in the light of what he thinks the message will be'.

This proposes to us the task of constructing for ourselves the general expectations of our pupils, i.e. what they think the message will be, the expectations which they bring to bear on particular messages, especially those they find difficult to understand. We need to discover the ways in which listeners can be discouraged from drawing on their knowledge, from making their calculations and using their general expectations and the ways in which they can be encouraged to do these things. There is also the problem of the mismatch between expectation and the message. That is the homework Lyons proposes for us.

The reader could move through this book in just this way - finding more and more homework assignments. Undoubtedly the most readily accessible and rewarding reading is chapter 14, 'Context, style and culture'. It is just possible that the book could be read by beginning with this chapter and following up all its dozens of cross references. It contains an account of Firth's profoundly influential theory of semantics based on the now familiar idea of context-of-situation. Despite Lyons's compulsive caution, I detect very faintly some real affection for Firth's seminal work. But then Lyons is not so expressive a writer as Firth and I am sure would be horrified at the idea of taking him as a model.

Finally, it could be said that there is one way of using this book which could be of some service, that is as a kind of encyclopedia of current theories and ideas. The indexes are excellent. If you want to know what structural linguists think they are doing or what deixis is you could do worse than to start here.

I have tried to show how difficult it is to bring massive but eclectic scholarship into a fruitful relationship with schools. There are linguists who with all the good will in the world make the attempt, and their efforts have not been conspicuously successful. They have tended to create either defensive animosity or servile adulation. Reading books and learning our lessons will not change the situation. It is only when linguists enter into active co-operation with teachers at the school level that each group will heighten its understanding. The study of semantics should begin with and never lose sight of dialogue. The practice of dialogue would help. We need to build 'the construct between socially organised persons in the process of their interaction' which Volosinov speaks about.

Harold Rosen

DETAILS OF NEWBURY HOUSE BOOKS (see page 14.)

- Bernard Spolsky & Robert Cooper (eds), *Frontiers of Bilingual Education*, 1977, £9.25 PB.
Jack C. Richards (ed.), *Understanding Second & Foreign Language Learning*, 1978, £5.95 PB.
Bernard Spolsky, *Educational Linguistics*, 1978, £6.50 PB.
Robert J. Di Pietro, *Language Structures in Contrast*, 1971, revised ed. 1978, £5.25 PB.
Harold S. Madsen & J. Donald Bowen, *Adaptation in Language Teaching*, 1978, £5.25 PB.

(These, and other Newbury House books may now be obtained from International Book Distributors Ltd., 66 Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 4RG, or through local bookshops.)

BOOKS FROM NEWBURY HOUSE

The Newsletter has recently received a large batch of books from Newbury House for review. Much of the most interesting work from the States in applied linguistics appears from this publishing house, so it seems worthwhile to include a few early comments on some of the most interesting books, even though there is not enough time for a full-scale review before we go to press. Two collections deserve particular mention. Spolsky & Cooper's Frontiers of Bilingual Education includes a number of most interesting and informative papers on aspects of bilingualism. E. Glyn Lewis's massive historical survey, 'Bilingualism and bilingual education - the ancient world to the renaissance' is a most useful source, and the papers on educational and psychological perspectives can also be particularly recommended. Such detailed explorations of interdisciplinary themes are rare in British applied linguistics, and in spite of some repetition and variability in quality (the paper on philosophical perspectives, for example, touches on few important philosophical questions), this book is to be highly recommended. Richards's Understanding Second and Foreign Language Learning is a more conventional survey of current interests which has the merit of enabling outsiders to update themselves easily and painlessly. Studies in interlanguage are particularly well catered for in this collection. Other recent books include Spolsky's Educational Linguistics, a collection of papers which reads like a series of discussions of linguistic ideas in relation to education, rather than the basis for an integrated new discipline - but the papers are often interesting, Di Pietro's revised edition of Language Structures in Contrast, which nods at error analysis at the end without attempting to confront it seriously, and a disappointing but interesting good idea: Madsen & Bower's Adaptation in Language Teaching which outlines ways of adapting language texts, while remaining audiolingual in basic approach and concentrating heavily on rigid and unimaginative texts at the expense of methodological innovation. (Details of books commented on here are given on page 13.)

GJB

REPORT ON THE 1978 B.A.A.L. SEMINAR ON LEXICOGRAPHY

Is lexicography making progress? This was the title of a paper I wrote in the mid-sixties; at that time I concluded that as long as there were no generally valid criteria, lexicographical progress was bound to be slow. Since then several developments have taken place which have not only accelerated, but positively advanced the processes of dictionary-making. There have been important innovations in the fields of syntax, semantics, and sociolinguistics, we have seen a number of excellent introductory text-books and survey articles on lexicography, and several large-scale projects have given us a new generation of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries.

It was not surprising then to find that time was ripe for a wide-ranging meeting to discuss present trends. Linguists are apparently no longer reluctant to turn to the solution of practical problems, lexicographers have become more open than ever to new ideas, language-teachers have begun to pay more attention to the lexical needs of their learners, and publishers are willing to consider the special requirements of different user groups. Since the BAAL Seminar had been envisaged as a forum for maximum interaction, we could not accommodate everyone who wanted to come; the 59 who did manage to get in hailed from 15 different countries (34 from the U.K., 15 from W. Europe, 5 from N. America, 2 from E. Europe, 2 from the Middle East and 1 from Australia).

23 papers were presented, grouped by subject into 8 sessions. The relationships between linguistics and lexicography were debated in terms of the different requirements of the theoretical 'lexicon' and the practical 'dictionary' of the need for sociolinguistic methods to check whether the lexicographer's data are representative, and the way in which the linguist's own lexical creations may gradually enter into general dictionaries. Linguistic approaches were also advocated in the labelling and specification of lexemes, e.g. by semantic means (as in definitions) or by syntactic criteria (as in the treatment of 'idioms'). Several speakers called for more refined procedures for dealing with metaphors, restricted collocations, and socially stigmatised expressions.

The two extremes of obsolescent words and neologisms received some attention, as did the slightly wider issues of how a historical dictionary should cope with scientific terms and whether the lexicographer has a part to play in the standardisation of vocabulary borrowed from other languages. The increased use of computer techniques was illustrated with reference to large-scale text processing and with detailed examples of grammatical analysis.

Almost half of the contributions were explicitly or indirectly concerned with lexicographical problems in foreign language learning, including those of phonetic notation, structural contrasts, and stylistic variants. It became clear that the EFL field, in particular, is producing a strong demand for user-oriented reference works, which may eventually cast doubt on the very foundations of the comprehensive all-purpose dictionary.

The atmosphere of give-and-take which pervaded the Seminar was not only due to the happy mix of theoreticians and practitioners, but to the (largely unconscious) realisation that the sessions reflected - in an intense, yet relaxed manner - current difficulties and potential improvements. We hope to share all this with a much wider circle when the proceedings are published later this year, under the title Dictionaries and Their Users.

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The first Newsletter of the AAAL (American Association for Applied Linguistics) was distributed in January 1979. It reports the 1978 Annual meeting, and includes abstracts of papers read at that meeting. The officers for 1979 will be Roger Shuy (President), Eugene Briere (Vice President), Bernard Spolsky (Secretary-Treasurer). The second annual meeting of the association will take place at the same time as the Linguistic Society of America meeting in Los Angeles, on December 27th 1979.

Please send correspondence and contributions for future issues to:
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