

Kommunikation und Kybernetik in Einzeldarstellungen  
Herausgegeben von H. Wolter und W. D. Keidel  
Band 2

# Structural Linguistics and Human Communication

An Introduction into the Mechanism  
of Language and the Methodology  
of Linguistics

By

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With 88 Figures

Second revised edition



Springer-Verlag  
Berlin · Heidelberg · New York 1967

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ISBN-13: 978-3-642-88303-3 e-ISBN-13: 978-3-642-88301-9  
DOI: 10.1007/978-3-642-88301-9

© by Springer-Verlag OHG Berlin · Göttingen · Heidelberg 1963  
© by Springer-Verlag Berlin · Heidelberg 1967

softcover reprint of the hardcover 2nd edition 1967

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 63-12931

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Titel-Nr. 6131

TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
WERNER MEYER-EPPLER

## Preface to the first edition

The point of departure of this general survey of modern structural linguistics is the place of language in human relations. Linguistics will consequently be understood as a science of communication. My book is not intended as an elementary handbook. The readers are supposed to be in the first place advanced students of linguistics and phonetics and of neighbouring fields where a real awareness of linguistic methods and problems is essential (such as psychology, phoniatrics, speech therapy, language teaching, communication engineering). The book may, however, be of some value also for the general reader who is interested in language, in language learning, or in communication processes. It might finally serve as an introduction to structural theories and practice for those linguists of traditional orientation who would like to make contact with the new trends in the study of language.

It is self-evident that, under such circumstances, any reader will find certain chapters in this book rather complicated, others irritatingly elementary. This is, however, unavoidable in a work whose aim is to cover a vast field of knowledge and to offer the reader a synthesis of what appears at first sight to be widely disparate facts and phenomena. Many of the facts brought together here may, regarded superficially, seem to have few or no mutual connections. They can, nevertheless, be combined into a wide humanistic and scientific unity within which numerous lines of relationship bind together physical and psychic, individual and social phenomena. It is this synthetic view — which covers such disparate concepts as phonemes and meaning, decibels and linguistic change, literary style and speech disturbances — rather than the mere facts referred to which is, or is meant to be the authors' personal contribution to the problems under discussion. There is no doubt that the presentation of these facts is coloured by the author's own views on language and linguistics. Even if no single idea expressed in this book is new as such, the combination of ideas and viewpoints may at least contain some originality.

My friend and colleague at Bonn, the late WERNER MEYER-EPPLER suggested that I should write a book on structural linguistics for the series "Kybernetik und Kommunikationsforschung in Einzeldarstellungen" when we met at a congress in Paris in 1959. I deeply regret that he was not permitted to supervise my work and to collaborate,

as was agreed, on giving it its final form — a collaboration from which I should have greatly profited. I have dedicated my book to his memory.

This preface has also seemed to me to be the place to express my thanks to those to whom I owe my own linguistic and phonetic orientation. I received my basic training in traditional phonetics in Paris under the guidance of PIERRE FOUCHÉ and, not least, of MARGUERITE DURAND to whose memory I do homage on this occasion. Without the stimulating teaching of ANDRÉ MARTINET, whom I met during his first term at the École des Hautes Études, this purely phonetic training would, however, have been of restricted value for future linguistic research. The insight I got under MARTINET's guidance into the then new phonological doctrine became decisive for my work as a linguist and as a phonetician. MARTINET's work has never ceased to be a source of inspiration in my own scientific efforts.

MARTINET's teaching brought me into contact with TRUBETZKOY's works. It was with this background I came to read, in 1941, JAKOBSON's "Kindersprache". It opened a new world to me and determined for ever the direction of my linguistic thinking. Every line in this book bears witness of it. Only many years later did I get the opportunity of meeting ROMAN JAKOBSON and of winning his friendship. My thanks to him are poor.

A little later, during the first years of the war, I got into contact with the Danish school of linguistics, first with VIGGO BRØNDAL's works, and then with LOUIS HJELMSLEV. It would be difficult to express here in a few words what I owe to the Glossematic school and particularly to HJELMSLEV himself. I look upon his "OSG" as one of the most important contributions to linguistic theory since SAUSSURE's "Cours". My personal friendly contacts with HJELMSLEV have been of inestimable value for my own research work. This is true also of my numerous friendly contacts with ELI FISCHER-JØRGENSEN in whom I admire the richness of ideas and the lucid intellectual analyses of complicated phenomena. I owe very much to her, scientifically and personally.

I had the luck to be invited in 1955 to the Haskins Laboratories in New York. My thanks to FRANK COOPER and to my other friends there for this valuable introduction into new analytic and synthetic methods in speech research are profound and sincere.

If the formal approach to language was SAUSSURE's first and nowadays most generally quoted thesis, the social character of human language and its role in the social and cultural context was the other. I owe stimulating ideas in this later direction to the Spanish school of linguistics and particularly to DON RAMÓN MENÉNDEZ PIDAL whose linguistic and historical analyses of the evolution of Castilian are models within this field of research. I shall always remember my visit to DON RAMÓN in

1950, and the kindly way in which he received me in his home. DON RAMÓN and LOUIS HJELMSLEV are the two extremes between which any linguistic investigation must be carried out, if it is to aim at an exhaustive description of human language. A linguist will find himself closer to one or to the other according to personal taste or to differences in his material. I fully realize the necessity of formalism as a guarantee for scientific accuracy. But I am convinced on the other hand of the importance of extending the structural approach to socio-linguistic and cultural-linguistic relations.

Finally I thank my friend EDWARD CARNEY for kindly revising my English and for valuable suggestions, and KERSTIN HADDING-KOCH who has gone through my manuscript and made numerous important remarks. I also want to thank the staff of the Institute of Phonetics of Lund for their help in the production of this book.

Lund, June 1962

BERTIL MALMBERG

In the second edition a series of mistakes and misprints have been corrected. Otherwise the text is the same. An index of names quoted in the book has been added.

Lund and Paris, January 1966

B. M.

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