The modal delimitation of the field of linguistics

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Abstract

The organisation of a university into sub-institutional entities like departments, schools, or faculties is the outcome of complex historical and other conditions and forces, that do not necessarily reflect the academic foundations on which disciplines may be identified. So language departments sometimes erroneously refer to themselves as 'disciplines'. Yet even a superficial analysis will reveal that they often harbour more than one academic field and may, across departments, house the same disciplines. A foundational analysis demonstrates that a language department may straddle three disciplines: linguistics; aesthetics, and applied linguistics (Weideman, 2011b). This paper looks at just one of the three, linguistics. How does one define its focus? The central thesis of this paper will be that the most responsible way of defining disciplines is by employing a number of foundational distinctions. These define academic disciplines as studying not concrete objects, such as language, but rather all manner of phenomena operating within a unique dimension of reality. Thus linguistics is best defined as the study of phenomena from the vantage point of the lingual aspect of experience, a definition that is wholly in line with some of the most noteworthy conceptualisations of reformational philosophy. What is often forgotten, though, is that the modal focus of a discipline also defines the concrete entities or objects that are stamped by it, as well as the functionally

characterised behaviour of human subjects within such a sphere. A responsible definition will attend to both the modal horizon and that which embraces the functioning of entities.

Opsomming

Die organisasie van 'n universiteit in sub-institusionele entiteite soos departemente, skole, fakulteite en so meer is die uitkoms van 'n komplekse stel historiese en ander kondisies en kragte, wat nie noodwendig 'n refleksie is van die akademiese onderskeidings op grond waarvan dissiplines geïdentifiseer kan word nie. Taaldepartemente verwys dus soms verkeerdelik na hulself as 'dissiplines'. Tog onthul selfs 'n oppervlakkige analise dat hulle dikwels talle dissiplines en selfs, oor departmente heen, dieselfde dissiplines huisves. 'n Verantwoordelike grondslaganalise sal aantoon dat 'n taaldepartement soms tot drie dissiplines kan huisves: taalkunde, estetika (in die studie van die letterkunde) en toegepaste linguistiek (Weideman, 2011b) Hierdie bydrae fokus slegs op een van die drie: die taalkunde. Hoe kan ons sy akademiese fokus definieer? Die sentrale argument van hierdie artikel is dat ons verantwoordelik hierop kan antwoord as ons 'n aantal grondslagonderskeidings maak. Dan blyk dit dat dissiplines soos hierdie nie konkrete fenomene soos taal bestudeer nie, maar eerder hoe hierdie fenomene werksaam is in unieke dimensies van ons bestaan. So kan linguistiek as die studie van fenomene vanuit hoek van die linguale gedefinieer word, soos wat in die gangbare analises van die reformatoriese wysbegeerte gedoen is. Wat egter verder van belang is, is dat hierdie modale fokus ook die konkrete entiteite of objekte definieer wat deur so 'n aspek gestempel word, tesame met die funksionele karakterisering van die menslike subjekte wat binne so 'n sfeer optree. 'n Verantwoordelike definisie sal aandag skenk aan sowel die modale as aan die entiteitshorison.

1. The modal foci of disciplines

How do new entrants into the business of science make sense of what is on offer to them? How do they experience, and subsequently come to understand, the academic enterprise which they have joined? Though there are many introductory courses on offer for those who arrive in academia every year, this remains a potentially highly confusing environment for someone to encounter for the first time, even after 12 or more years of preparatory

education. If one is already a practising academic, the overriding, virtually unavoidable impression is that the disciplinary offerings to initiates are piecemeal and incoherent. There is little evidence of any encyclopaedic perspective of how the academic disciplines that they are exposed to, cohere. Surely confusion is not what a responsible university would want to offer to its graduates? Taking the analytical foci of so-called language departments at universities as an illustration, this paper will examine one way of making sense of an academic discipline housed within such departments. By focussing on a single discipline traditionally housed within a language department, the analysis will attempt to remain both theoretically defensible and responsive to the norms for theoretical endeavour.

One of the conventionally accepted strong points of reformational philosophy has been its persuasive identification of the fields of study of various disciplines or 'sciences' with reference to the modal horizon of our experience. In this manner, mathematics has been defined as being circumscribed by the study of the numerical and spatial dimensions of experience (Strauss, 2011), biology as being delimited by the aspect of organic life, history by the formative mode, sociology by the social, jurisprudence with reference to the juridical aspect, and so forth. When it is further articulated, this delimitation has the additional advantage of offering us insight into the coherence of the encyclopaedia of science (Strauss, 2006). It illustrates not only how fields differ, but also how they cohere. The idea of such a delimitation or demarcation criterion (cf. Coletto, 2011) is evident not only in some of the earliest material in reformational philosophy, such as Spier's groundbreaking introduction (Spier, 1940), as well as Dooyeweerd's narrative of how early he hit upon the idea of a modal horizon (Van Dunne, Boeles & Heerma van Voss, 1977:38), but figures equally prominently in more recent discussions. Thus Strauss (2009:47; emphases in the original) explains, in an exposition of the foundational tenets of reformational philosophy, that the definitive moment of an area of study, a discipline, derives from the distinctive perspective of each special science, and adds, significantly:

> … the cardinal question is not: with what **object** (natural or social entity) or event does *this* or *that* science engage … but rather: from what *perspective* (*aspect*, *way of being*, *mode*,

> *modality*, *function*, *facet*, *mode of explanation*) of reality are certain things, events and societal relationships studied by a particular *academic discipline* …

Viewed thus, the modal delimitation of a field of study therefore appears to be a fairly straightforward distinction. What has not always been easy is, first, to relate this foundational insight to the way that disciplines are actually organised within academic institutions such as universities, and, second, to clarify that science indeed studies entities (subjects and objects), but then considered from a disciplinary angle or perspective, in the sense intended by Strauss (2009). Moreover, one must not misunderstand this statement to mean that the critically important question is not "what object" is being studied. Objects, events, phenomena and states are indeed being analysed in the special sciences. The philosophical argument here is aimed against those who think they can adequately define the field of study with reference to an object, phenomenon, process, event or state. I shall return below to a more thorough consideration of this additional difficulty, and suggest what might perhaps be an additional, but nevertheless appropriate way of communicating the distinctions at play, and do so even more clearly.

2. Organisational forms may house, but do not define disciplines

With reference to the first difficulty, one should note that historically, at least in South African universities, disciplines and the way they are organised institutionally do not necessarily coincide with, or even conform to an organisational structure in which they are individually recognised or acknowledged. Phrased differently: the organisation in our time of the university into departments, programmes devoted to particular themes of study ('governance', 'gender', or "cultural/film/poverty studies", to name just a few), or into schools, faculties, and so on does not and may not reflect, or even be aligned with foundational insight into what distinguishes disciplines. This observation, incidentally, is applicable not only to the foundational insight yielded by reformational philosophy; it is probably true of all foundational perspectives and all manner of philosophical insights, because organisational structures, the factual administrative entities and structures within an institution of tertiary education, may not necessarily have been designed to be in alignment with philosophical

insight. They may in fact very well be misaligned with a variety of philosophical perspectives, and reflect instead an ad hoc and potentially contradictory set of arrangements arrived at over a long period of time. Interesting though such potential misalignment may be in its own right, it is not the intention of this article to discuss how universities evolved organisationally to come to possess the particular, and historically specific shapes and formats they now exhibit. Let us accept that those structures can be assumed to be the outcome of complex sets of historical, social, economic, political, administrative, logistical, academic, and other conditions and forces.

Even a cursory analysis will reveal, however, that present-day organisational formats are out of sync with such foundational distinctions as are being referred to here. For one thing, we are of course dealing with two typically different entities in this instance: disciplines and, say, departments. But the confusion is evident when one hears, as is more often than not the case, departments being referred to as 'disciplines', just because they are home to some special science. In my own experience, language departments present a particularly good example not only of such misalignment, but also of the terminological confusion associated with it. In systematic, philosophical terms, one cannot, however, in good conscience claim that a national language ('English'; 'Afrikaans') or set of national or supra-national languages ("Modern European"; "African languages") can constitute an academic discipline, and especially not if it can be demonstrated that the cross-cutting analyses of phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, text linguistic and discourse analytical investigations of such languages or groups of languages are all done from similar viewpoints or even from competing contemporary paradigms or theoretical approaches.

The point is: the organisational form of a university department cannot define what is being studied within it as a discipline. Nor is the existence of a discipline any guarantee at any given historical moment of its proper location within the organisational or sub-institutional unit of a department, school, unit or centre. The foundational distinctions to be outlined here nonetheless provide a coherent way not only of looking at disciplinary work within current organisational structures, but also of working responsibly as a practising academic within them.

As defined and circumscribed with regard to the philosophical distinctions referred to above, in the South African case language

departments can harbour within their organisation up to three distinct disciplines: linguistics, aesthetics and applied linguistics (Weideman, 2011b). The grounds for such foundational analyses and arguments have already been adequately articulated elsewhere (Weideman, 2011a); for the sake of brevity I simply wish to signal and confirm here that in the case of language departments, the three defining foci in question are, respectively, the lingual and the aesthetic aspects of our experience in the case of the study of linguistics and literature (for the latter, cf. Malherbe, 1947; Rookmaaker, 1946, 1947), and the formative or technical aspect in the case of applied linguistics (Weideman, 2013).

3. Disciplines as demarcated but related fields

There are two sides to the philosophical narrative that we are setting out here. We not only need to distinguish the various scientific disciplines, but also, in making a distinction as to their uniqueness, need to say what makes them coherent. First, since the way that we introduce and socialise new entrants into the academic enterprise is through what are called 'fields' or areas of study, we need to recognise the potential diversity of those fields:

> By calling these fields disciplines, we emphasise in the notion of 'field' not only that it has limits, boundaries, and demarcation, but also add to it an idea that different fields will have diverse content, and potential variation in what is considered an acceptable way of analysing things in a certain domain. We can only make sense of disciplines if we have a way of demarcating them as such, and as different from others in various respects (Weideman, 2011a:2).

Second, as will become evident below, we also need a notion of what disciplines have in common. We need to articulate the coherence among the various disciplines of the academic enterprise (Strauss, 2006), and need to see that our analysis of such coherence has both a systematic and a historical side.

This article will focus on only one of the three disciplines currently embedded in a conventional language department: linguistics. The first part of the following discussion therefore examines a set of arguments for the modal delimitation of its field of study that makes a case for not referring to a concrete object ('language') as sufficient grounds for such delimitation. In a subsequent part of the discus-

sion I shall turn to an examination of how that object, language, together with other lingually interesting, concrete phenomena, objects, states and events, is indeed relevant for linguistic analysis, and how they all are doubtless examinable, linguistically.

4. Arguments for a modal delimitation of the field of linguistics

In the philosophical tradition that has informed my work, academic disciplines are defined, as was noted above, by their study of phenomena from the point of view of a unique dimension of our experience. If that argument for the modal delimitation of the field of linguistics is correct, the discipline is best defined not by reference to concrete language, but by the study of phenomena that takes the lingual dimension as its point of departure, and it is that unique aspect of our experience that gives it its specific focus.

The argument that linguistics is best defined by referring to the study of language is certainly a popular and enduring one. Here are four conventional definitions of the discipline that are widely supported despite the different paradigmatic orientations of their authors (be those of a systemic functional, structuralist, generativist, cognitivist or dynamic systems nature), and stretch, as is evident, over several decades:

(1) Linguistics is the study of language (Berry, 1975:1).
(2) Linguistics may be defined as the scientific study of language (Lyons, 1969:1).
(3) Linguistics, the study of language, is as old as any recorded human activity in the domain of science (Culicover & Nowak, 2003:4).
(4) The science of linguistics is concerned with ... [m]uch [that] is unknown about the nature of human languages, their grammars and use (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams 2013:315).

The apparent agreement, however, masks wide differences of opinion, not the least of which concerns what we should consider to be ‘language’. If we cannot agree on what language is, we shall in light of these kinds of definitions be unable to identify the data of linguistic enquiry. One of the most contentious points of difference among linguists indeed remains the question of what constitutes the

data of linguistic enquiry. To take a historical example: in the prelude to modern linguistics in the 19th century linguistic thinking was centred on explaining what was hypothesised to be the historical lineage of particular languages or groups of languages. Utilising the observation that many European languages appeared to be related, and also that in the development of a particular language there were successive historical stages, historical linguists described the actual and the possible sound shifts occurring between different stages of a language, or even between the oldest known form of a language and a hypothesised proto-form, such as Proto-Indo-European (cf. Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2014:374ff., Sampson, 1980:ch. 1). If any answer were to be given in this period to the question of what should be examined as 'language' in the definitions (1) to (4) above, it would surely have been: the historical aspects of language change, especially as these manifest themselves in successive sound-changes. Yet none of the authors of definitions (1) to (4) would have found that to be an agreeable starting point.

A second illustration of just how divergent these views are, is noticeable when we compare two recent views on what linguistic theory should accomplish. For Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2014:13f.), the "major aim of linguistic theory is to discover the nature of UG" (Universal Grammar), about which study they make the following confident claim:

> The more linguists explore the intricacies of language, the more evidence accumulates to support Chomsky's view that there is a **Universal Grammar (UG)** that is part of the biologically endowed human faculty. (emphases in the original)

Contrast this confidence with the following, equally serious claim by Lee, Mikesell, Joaquin, Mates and Schumann (2009:3), made a good five years earlier:

> … in the last 20 years, beginning in the mid-1980s, … [i]n biological investigations of language … we have had no success in finding a neural substrate that would instantiate UG.

A more contradictory set of statements on the goal of linguistic enquiry can scarcely be imagined. With the same confidence as

Fromkin *et al*. (2014) proclaim its triumphal progression, Lee *et al*. (2009:11) claim that "the innatist position is losing ground". These divergences are related to Lee *et al*. (2009) adopting a complex systems perspective on language, which is sharply antithetical to the generativist paradigm whence the confidence of Fromkin *et al*. (2014) derives. What to one is evidence, to the other is the lack of it. I shall return below to the systematic analysis of paradigms in linguistics; the point I wish to make here, however, is that our identification of the data of linguistic enquiry is divergent. We may conceive of that data as either the successive sound changes in the historical evolution of language (the answer given by historical, comparative linguistics at the end of the 19th century), or the system of language (the response of De Saussure, which launched modern linguistics at the beginning of the 20th), or the intuition and innate knowledge of the native speaker (as in late 20th century generativism), or in the language resources inherent in many interacting systems (the answer given by those who subscribe to complex systems theory – cf. Weideman, 2009b). The divergence that we notice depends on the foundational theoretical stance or paradigm we subscribe to.

That 'language' cannot be defined in a way that everyone would agree with is, however, only the beginning of the trouble of defining linguistics with reference to it. Probably the best illustration that language is not an adequate focus of linguistics lies in the observation that many other academic disciplines have an interest in language. Mathematics, for example, makes use of mathematical and algebraic formulae that constitute the language of mathematics. While one may argue that this is a special language, created for internal disciplinary purposes, it certainly conforms to the definition given by Lee *et al*. (2009:3) for language, namely that it "is a cultural artefact that emerges as a complex adaptive system from the verbal interaction among humans". But other natural sciences, such as acoustic physics, and those technological disciplines that might seek to apply its findings, like architecture and engineering, that design anything from huge concert halls and auditoria to minutely crafted hearing aids, take a serious interest in what is certainly general human language and language use. Similarly, psychology and psychotherapy closely analyse the meaningful lingual interactions between doctors and patients,

interactions that are substantially supported by language. In the engagement of yet another field, jurisprudence, with language, we find serious and sustained attention to studies of how to interpret legal texts. A kindred concern with the science of hermeneutics in the field of theology offers us ways of making sense of certitudinal and theological discourse, embodied in the ecclesiastical and cultic literature, as well as the 'holy' books of the various faiths. It is this concern of a multitude of other disciplines with language that Halliday (2003:74) decries as the reason for the unnecessary specialisation of linguistics. Why Halliday is characterising this as an 'unnecessary' specialisation, one suspects, is that all these could have been accommodated by means of the entirely valid but neglected idea of language as social semiotic (evident in his work from early on: cf. Halliday, 1978), a point I shall be returning to below. In my opinion, however, it is probably more productive to acknowledge with Wells (1966:15) that

> the phenomena of language can be studied from different points of view. Dozens of sciences can study linguistic phenomena ... from as many points of view - each one putting these phenomena into relation with phenomena of some other sort. What aspect of the phenomena, if any, is left to linguistics as its exclusive property? (Wells, 1966:15)

Though asked from a structuralist and modernist perspective, this last question remains an important one. It suggests that there is an "aspect of the phenomena" that is the exclusive concern of linguistics, and which is relevant for an adequate definition of the discipline. Wells's sentiments are an echo of those of an earlier, even more prominent structuralist, Hjelmslev (1963:5f.), who urged linguists to attempt

> to grasp language, not as a conglomerate of non-linguistic (e.g., physical, physiological, psychological, logical, sociological) phenomena, but as a self-sufficient totality, a structure *sui generis*.

The aspect of the phenomena, or dimension of reality that circumscribes linguistic endeavour, is the lingual mode of experience. A tentative definition of the field would thus be:

> (5) Linguistics is the theoretical analysis of objects, phenomena, states, and events from the perspective of

> the lingual mode of experience, where 'lingual' refers to *expression related to the understanding of signs*.

Structuralism may indeed have been the first linguistic paradigm to have identified this 'semiotic' dimension or *modus significandus* as the target of our linguistic investigations, by helping us to understand how abstracting away from the multiplicity of dimensions enables us to see the one aspect that could be singled out and potentially isolated for enquiry. For the sake of brevity, I leave aside here the various discussions on what alternatives there are for a name to articulate the idea of such a *modus significandus*, noting at this point only that this contribution of structuralism is no doubt what gave rise to modern linguistics.

The above definition (5) refers not only to the lingual modality, but also to its meaning nucleus ('expression'), since that nuclear moment or meaning kernel is its isolating feature, which enables us to compare and contrast it with other dimensions of experience, that in their turn circumscribe other disciplines. Of course, since our experience is integral and reality is one, such isolation will always be counterbalanced by the links that exist among all the dimensions of reality. It is to a discussion of some of these that I subsequently turn.

5. Linguistic primitives

If linguistics is to conceptualise phenomena operating within the lingual dimension of experience within a coherent conceptual framework, it needs to answer the question of *what makes linguistic conceptualisation possible*. The answer in reformational philosophy points to a set of basic linguistic concepts or theoretical primitives. Not only is the lingual mode of reality unique, since that dimension is characterised by expression, an idea that is not central to the idea of any other aspect; it also links with all other dimensions of reality. The various linkages or analogies of other aspects within the lingual dimension of experience that will be considered here illustrate that such references allow us to conceptualize a number of basic, foundational concepts and ideas that have traditionally been investigated by linguistics. Taken together, these basic concepts constitute a class of linguistic primitives or foundational theoretical concepts and ideas that provide those engaged in linguistics with a framework to pursue the investigation of lingual phenomena not in

a piecemeal, but in a single, coherent, and integrated framework (Weideman, 2009a, 2011). Since they are foundational concepts, this means that linguistic primitives are in essence founding concepts of the discipline, and in that sense philosophical (Strauss, 2009). To phrase it differently: examining the conditions for what makes linguistic conceptualisation possible cannot be pursued within linguistics, as a disciplinary question belonging to that field (Strauss, 2012). One needs to step back into a philosophical perspective that seeks to clarify not one discipline, but the whole of the encyclopedia of science. Though the concepts and ideas that are important in linguistics are truly linguistic concepts and ideas, in that their content is determined by analyses of phenomena operating within the lingual dimension of experience, their theoretical meaning derives from the philosophical paradigm that supports them. The paradigm is what constitutes the coherent foundational or philosophical perspective on which, in this and every other case, linguistic conceptualisation depends.

The philosophical framework being utilised in this paper was developed by Dooyeweerd (1953), and derives especially from his idea that reality has a horizon of modalities that allows our theoretical analysis to conceptualize a multiplicity of unique, mutually irreducible, yet interconnected aspects. By viewing these modalities as irreducible but interconnected, Dooyeweerd's approach in principle avoids the reductionist pitfalls that impede theoretical concept-formation, in which one mode of reality is absolutised, and all others are subsumed under it.

In linguistics, there is a long line of investigation that, to a greater or lesser degree, has attempted to utilize this framework by showing how the lingual mode of experience, that (for linguistics) field-defining aspect of reality, coheres or analogically reflects all the other aspects of experience: the numerical, spatial, kinematic, physical, organic, sensitive, logical, formative, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical and confessional. This lingual aspect analogically connects both with earlier and later aspects in the order of time. In the former instance, those connections yield foundational or constitutive elementary concepts. In the latter case, the linkages generate regulative ideas. Upon analysis, from the analogical connections, referring both backwards and forwards, we observe the emergence of what may also be termed linguistic primitives. In a systematic analysis done in terms of such a framework

(Weideman, 2009), I have, following Hommes (1972) and others (De Jongste, 1949, 1956; Verburg, 1951, 1965, 1971, 1976; Strauss, 1967, 1970, 1971; Yallop, 1978; Weideman, 1981; Bakker, 1984), presented a much more detailed foundational articulation of various such linguistic 'primitives' or elementary systematic concepts of linguistic theory than here. The philosophical framework employed in both is, however, the same.

The main concepts and ideas of this kind of analysis are summarized below in tabular form (Table 1); for examples, the reader is referred to Section 6 ("The historical importance of systematic distinctions"), below.

Table 1: Constitutive concepts and regulative ideas in linguistics

Disciplinary angle	**Aspect / function / mode to which lingual refers**	**Analogical links**	**Kind of concept yielded**
	numerical	system & unity n withi multiplicity	foundational, constitutive concepts
	spatial	range & relation	
	kinematic	constancy & movement	
	physical organic	effect & process differentiation & adaptation	
	sensitive analytical formative	volition & perception meaning & identity command & forms	
lingual	**nuclear moment / kernel**:	*expression related to understanding of signs*	
	social	types of discourse & communication	disclosing, regulative ideas
	economic	scarcity & distribution	
	aesthetic	alignment /&co-construction	
	juridical ethical	ratification & redress accountability & integrity	
	confessional	commitment & trust	

It is important not to misinterpret their presentation in Table 1 as hierarchical, or as an order of higher and lower. Their sequence is one of earlier and later aspects; the numerical is not 'higher' or 'lower' than the ethical, nor does it have less value. The same applies to the aspect of belief and those that precede it, if one turns the table upside down. Trust is not higher or more valuable than frugality, which characterizes the economic mode of reality.

As has been remarked above, these linguistic primitives are echoes of the analogical links among the lingual and other aspects of reality. Depending on the direction in time (foundational or transcendental) in which the connection is made, they may be characterised either as constitutive concepts, that depend on reflections of earlier dimensions in the lingual, or as regulative ideas, that emanate from connections that the lingual has with subsequent dimensions. The links between the lingual and the aspects preceding are technically known as retrocipations. Those links between the lingual dimension of reality and the aspects following it, on the other hand, are known as anticipations, since the lingual reaches out, as it were, to their unfolding force: when lingual expression deepens into shared expression, for example, lingual communication becomes possible, evidencing the anticipatory link between the lingual and the social. So those analogies that derive from connections among the lingual and those dimensions occurring subsequently in the order of time, like lingual communication and acceptability, lingual economy, lingual remedy and ratification, lingual integrity and lingual trust, are elementary linguistic ideas or limiting, approximating – in the sense of concept transcending – notions. They derive from analogies in which the lingual anticipates, and is disclosed by the social, economic, juridical, ethical and confessional dimensions of reality (Weideman, 2011).

6. The historical importance of systematic distinctions

The previous section has sought to demonstrate how the connections among the lingual dimension of reality and the other aspects provide a conceptual base, a set of linguistic primitives, that makes linguistic conceptualisation possible. The relevance of these elementary concepts is well illustrated in the history of linguistics. When one defines lingual system as a unity within a multiplicity of

lingual norms, for example, De Saussure's early 20th century insight into this basic linguistic concept is immediately in the spotlight. When one defines a lingual system as a unity within a multiplicity of lingual conditions that govern the creation of lingual facts, it is indisputable that this constitutive concept derives from the numerical analogy within the structure of the lingual dimension of reality: the notion of one and many is a clearly numerical one. An everyday lingual object like a telephone book, for example, works according to a *unitary* system that combines at least *two* alphabetical orders that sort first by surname, and second by initial or initials, and associates these with a unique number of a predetermined set. The system is a unity of conditions that regulate both the creation and the understanding of the factual lingual entity that is the telephone directory, and its factual entries. And even in an apparently simple lingual fact like such an everyday book, there are many more lingual systems at work than just the two mentioned. As books go, we know that there are also lingual systems at work that regulate their typicality, their uniqueness as objects; there is little doubt that we would have no difficulty at all at distinguishing between a telephone directory and a novel by Joseph Conrad, for example. Each are typically different lingual objects.

In the same sense as the linguistic primitive that De Saussure identified as lingual system, the constitutive linguistic concept of lingual position and sequence is what defines linguistics subsequent to his groundbreaking insight. Structuralism, the movement that it set in motion, and that held sway for the first half of the 20th century, clearly relates to the connection between the lingual and the spatial. In structuralist linguistics, we first catch sight, conceptually, of how different parts, for example of a sentence, which may be conceptualised as constituted by a noun phrase and a verb phrase, are not only parts that have a relation to each other, but also parts of one syntactic whole, the clause or sentence. Similarly, one cannot imagine Chomsky's conceptualisation of such structural lingual sequences not only as elements in different positions in a sequence, but as potentially movable parts of sequences, without reference to the link between the lingual and the kinematic dimensions of experience: we originally encounter consistent, regular movement in the kinematic aspect of reality. It is the connection between the lingual and the kinematic aspects, the

discovery of the regularity in the potential movement of certain elements of the sentence, therefore, that enabled transformational grammar to bring about a paradigm shift in linguistics in the latter part of the 20th century.

The historical importance of the discovery of these conceptual links between the lingual and the other dimensions of reality is not limited to the constitutive elementary linguistic concepts discussed above. In the regulative linguistic ideas, for example in the notions of lingual acceptability, appropriateness, discourse, and text types, we clearly find connections between the lingual and the social. These are founding ideas of the whole of sociolinguistics. The lingual economy that conversation analysts discovered in the interaction between participants at talk, and the equitable distribution of turns among them (cf. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Goffman, 1981), reflects the analogical link with the economic mode of existence. The orientation we have as to who is a ratified participant at talk clearly depends on a notion of lingual legitimacy, that derives as a linguistic idea from the juridical anticipation in the lingual sphere. The same applies to the notion of lingual redress, or the lingual remedies that are instituted when talk is not fairly distributed among participants. Where lingual communication is therefore short-circuited, at those junctures where interruptions, overlap or misunderstandings occur in lingual interaction, participants at talk – the lingual subjects involved – jointly and collaboratively bring about a correction, by either yielding to the one who started speaking first (in the case of interruptions), or by recycling only that part of their turn at talk that was obscured (by overlap), or by further elaboration (in the case of misunderstanding). In such cases co-participants at talk are evidently engaged in lingual remedy and redress, or what might be called lingual justice. When we consider and criticise public advertisements that offer stereotypes of gender or some other non-voluntary human characteristic, we may bring into play the further linguistic idea of lingual integrity, a clear ethical echo in the lingual. Our language should care and show concern for others, and that condition relates the lingual to the dimension of love. In addition to lingual integrity we may invoke the idea of lingual trustworthiness, for example of translations and interpretations of texts, a condition that depends on the link of the lingual with the dimension of faith. If we cannot trust an interpretation or a

translation, the process of collaborative meaning-making breaks down.

The identification of various elementary linguistic concepts and ideas illustrates that though the lingual aspect is unique, it is nonetheless connected with every other aspect of reality. That, in turn, should be the appropriate starting point for an analysis of the links between different disciplines: they may have more in common than we might initially suspect. It is one of the biggest advantages of employing the systematic insights of reformational philosophy that it potentially provides us with an overview of the coherence of the whole of our scientific endeavour. In providing this overview, it is partially aligned with calls in our time, such as those made by McNamara (2008), that we should break down the walls that separate the human sciences. Yet we should not, as McNamara (2008) has suggested, limit the task of "breaking down the walls" to those separating the human sciences only. A more comprehensive, foundational framework for linguistics needs to account how the lingual relates both to the human or cultural, and to the natural facets of our experience. This kind of analysis demonstrates how, in linguistics, we have a discipline that has advanced beyond formal linguistics, which is mainly concerned with constitutive linguistic concepts, into investigating sociolinguistic ideas (Weideman, 2009), that part of linguistics that investigates the sociolingual unfolding of the lingual. Through its processes of concept-formation, linguistics connects both with the human and with the natural sciences.

7. Beyond elementary concepts

When we consider new paradigms in linguistics, such as dynamic systems theory (Weideman, 2009b; De Bot, Lowie & Verspoor, 2007; Beckner, Blythe, Bybee, Christiansen, Croft, Ellis, Holland, Ke, Larsen-Freeman, & Schoenemann, 2009; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007), it is soon evident that there are processes and events operative within the lingual dimension of experience that can be grasped theoretically only in terms of several, or sets of, elementary linguistic concepts.

Such combinations of elementary linguistic concepts are systematically distinguishable as complex linguistic concepts. Generally, three such complex concepts are identified: first, an idea of the complex relationship between norm and fact; second, an idea of the

complex relationship between subject and object; third, an idea of the beginning, development, maturation, and possible end of a phenomenon. To take the latter as a first example: In dynamic systems theory (DST), we find an attempt to describe the complex phenomenon of how language originates (both in the individual and in a language group), how it develops (not always linearly), how it matures (or reaches a stable point, called an attractor state in DST), and how it may be lost (as, for example, in aphasic conditions in the individual, or in language contact and conflict situations, where the languages of whole groups compete and where some may become extinct). Lee *et al.* (2009:36f.) attend to the various attractor states of languages as they develop from jargon to pidgins, and from extended pidgins to creoles. Such complex language emergence is conceptualised in terms of a multiplicity of linguistic concepts and ideas: the notion of multiple interacting systems (a numerically-based concept) is employed, as are the language changes that happen between one developmental phase and the next (a clearly physical echo), the inherent adaptability of the multiple interacting systems (a biotically oriented concept), their productivity (a formative connection), and, finally, the subjective human social interaction of which the systems producing language is a part, that connects this complex linguistic idea with the social dimension of experience.

With reference to the latter idea, we can observe how the treatment in linguistic theory of these complex notions contributes a further argument to demonstrate that defining linguistics with reference to 'language' is inadequate. Complex linguistic ideas include a consideration not only of the objectively factual lingual object ('language'), but of how such a lingual object relates to the lingual subjects that produce it. DST gives us a good illustration of how we can conceptualise both this intricate relationship, as well as the idea of the origin and growth of language. But positing a lingual subject as worthy of investigation is a certain indication that the disciplinary focus is not on language, but also on those who produce language(s). Without both lingual object and subject, psycholinguistic investigation into how languages are learned would in any event have been impossible.

The first complex linguistic concept mentioned above, the intricate relationship between lingual norm and lingual fact, has already

been touched upon above. Lingual norms, conceived as conditions for the creation of lingual objects such as language, regulate lingual facts, the creation of lingual objects by lingual subjects. Lingual norm is inconceivable without lingual factuality, and *vice versa*. In addition, the complex relationship between lingual norms and lingual facts can, as is the case with other complex linguistic concepts, be conceptualised best in terms of sets of elementary concepts and ideas. Take, for example, the conditions governing the regular formation of the plural in English from the root morpheme, its singular. Its regularity is evidence of there being a relationship between the lingual and the kinematic, its formation evidence of there being a lingual creativity that is based in the formative mode of experience in its interaction with the lingual. The system of regular plural formation is evidence, furthermore, of an integrated set of lingual sound, morphemic and semantic subsystems, that allows a lingual extension (an analogical spatial concept) of a singular root into a plural by means of one of three lingual sounds (/z/, /s/ or /iz/, as in *bars*, *facts* and *voices*). The sound system is obviously based on the different lingual environments at the end of the root forms (the singulars *bar*, *fact* and *voice* all end on different sound types, giving rise to three regularly employed conditions), an indication that lingual environment, another analogical spatial moment, is critical to the articulation of the system. This lingual sound system is further integrated with the morphemic subsystem, that proceeds from a lingual condition ("Make a singular into a plural by adding, in the regular case, the single morpheme |s|") in order to yield the desired result. What is more, these two lingual subsystems relating, respectively, to lingual norms for sound and form, are integrated with a third lingual subsystem that allows us to create not only a new word (a plural), but a new, systematically integrated lingual relationship (singularity-plurality) between words with distinctly different meanings. The lingual meaning or semantic distinction between the theoretically given (the singular form) and the new (the plural) depends on the connection between the lingual and the logical dimension, which is characterised by distinguishing. Without an analogically analytical basis in distinction-making, we would not have been able to grasp distinct meanings among what gets expressed lingually. And these analogies, emanating from the kinematic, formative, spatial, numerical, and logical echoes within

the lingual dimension of experience, are not the only elementary concepts in play here. Meanings are embedded in discourse, and discourse itself is multi-layered and differentiated (Weideman, 2009), differences that are again systematically distinct, though in a typical, entitary way.

8. Are linguistic data restricted to speech?

Hjelmslev's (1963) early work, together with Halliday's (1978) idea of the social meanings embedded in and expressed by language have for more than half a century made it clear that how we express meaning in interaction with other lingual subjects cannot be excluded from linguistic treatment just because it does not fit our definitions of language. So Goffman (1981: 3f.), for example, remarks:

> Every utterance and its hearing have gestural accompaniments … Every utterance and its hearing bear the marks of the framework of participation in which the uttering and hearing occur … [D]eeply incorporated into the nature of talk are the fundamental requirements of theatricality.

Goffman goes on to illustrate that what we express (1981:41) in our interactions are matters that "may not be merely verbal". Faced with a question such as that asked by A, B in response is obliged to give more than a verbal response:

> A: What's the time?
> B: (pause) It's five o'clock.

The pause is obligatory, should B not wish to appear to be impolite, even if B had looked at their watch a moment before A's question. If A had not seen B look before asking the question, B is obliged to reassure A of receiving a sincere response, by looking again. What is transcribed as 'pause' in this three- rather than two-part (question-answer) exchange is lingually significant, and therefore of interest to linguistics. This is the case with all gestures, whether they accompany talk, as in the fabricated example above, or whether they signify meaning independently of talk. They are non-verbal forms of expressing available to lingual subjects, and either with or independent of the verbal forms of expression we have available, they allow lingual subjects to participate in a lingual event. Expression is not limited to verbal expression. In the example

above, we therefore have three lingual moves, and not two, that constitute the objective exchange between two lingual subjects.

So here we have yet another argument why linguistics should not restrict itself to 'language', especially if and when the latter is defined as speech, which was in the 20th century considered to be the 'prime' target of linguistics. 'Language' can be verbal (based in sound or print) or non-verbal (based in the bodily musculature). What is more; we have not only lingual subjects and objects at play here, but whole ranges of signs made and left by humans, which could be classified as *subjective* and *objective lingual facts*. Compare, for example, how literary works of art use subjective lingual facts as symbols: Leopold Bloom's subjective behaviour, in his avoidance in *Ulysses* of the representatives of state and church, is an expression of his steering clear of trouble, like the hero of Greek legend he represents. Such subjective actions are regulated, for the sake of his tale, by a lingual system that becomes evident to Joyce's readers as they progress. Similarly, in Joseph Conrad's fiction, objective lingual facts like light and darkness can only be interpreted in light of the symbolic system that provides the conditions for their interpretation. But subjective and objective lingual facts also operate in the more mundane: compare how our lingual subjectivity allows us to mark, with an object such as a fence, the legal boundaries of possessions. The fence signals the extent of the property, not because it is a lingually qualified object (it is not), but because it can participate objectively in the lingual dimension of experience. Thus we exercise our lingual subjectivity when we place a trademark on a manufactured object, and the trademark, being an objective lingual fact, demonstrates our goodwill as manufacturer towards the buyer. The signs left behind when a crime has been committed are objective lingual facts that need to be imaginatively interpreted by competent detectives. Fingerprints and their discovery and interpretation are, respectively, objective and subjective lingual facts.

The realm of linguistics is therefore much broader and richer, more varied but at the same time also more everyday, than conventionally accepted in the field. Such a broadening of the scope of linguistic enquiry will not be acceptable to those who limit the discipline to what have been called constitutive linguistic concepts. The narrower definitions of linguistics almost all relate to what is

sometimes called 'formal' or 'theoretical' linguistics, the broader ones to some variation of sociolinguistic analysis, which investigates regulative linguistic ideas. That division has been a fault line within the discipline almost since its inception (Weideman, 2009). Yet this division is only a manifestation, in practice, of even more significant fundamental differences of perspective. Those paradigm differences within linguistics are the important keys to understanding the more conventionally recognised disputes within the discipline. I turn finally to a discussion of those, in order to illuminate the distinctions made in this paper from that foundational angle.

9. Paradigm differences in linguistics

The above discussion presents a framework for linguistic enquiry. The function of such a foundational perspective is to account for the strong and, potentially, the weak points of the various competing and complementary approaches to doing linguistics. It is important to start by acknowledging that each current and new approach to how we should proceed in linguistics is informed by a theoretical or philosophical starting point. As I have observed above, early approaches to formal linguistics were structuralist, before they were superseded by the mentalist perspectives of Chomskyan rationalism. Transformational generative grammar found its strength, and a new paradigm for linguistics, in dynamicising structuralist insight. Chomsky's generativism finds its strongest opponent in Halliday's systemic functional grammar (SFG), that builds a bridge between formal linguistic insight into constitutive lingual concepts and sociolinguistic ideas. It is clear that the perspective proposed by Halliday links the lingual dimension of experience strongly to its social anticipation. That is its systematic strength, as against generativism's potential weakness. As the following excerpt from an interview with Halliday makes clear, SFG is Marxist in orientation. On the occasion of the S. Pit Corder commemorative colloquium at the 2007 annual conference of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL), I was privileged to interview Halliday, and ventured to ask him about his beliefs, and how these influenced his linguistic theory (Davies, Joseph & Weideman, 2007:3). Here is the question and his answer:

> *AW*: … I ask this question simply because I'm interested in what happens to people at historical

> turning points. To me, your own work created a bridge between theoretical linguistics and social perspectives on language at a time when the discipline was badly in need of it. My question is this: At that time, did you see its importance for the historical development of the discipline? Did you have any inkling of how influential it would be? Or did you simply do it out of sheer conviction? …
>
> *MH*: … I just would like to put together four components. One was simply personal conviction. One can look into background reasons for that. It could be connected with all sorts of things like my father being a dialect specialist in Yorkshire. But secondly and most importantly, there's my background as a student of Firth, because of course for J.R. Firth the link between theoretical linguistics and social perspectives was central. You couldn't do linguistics unless you put it in that sort of context, and I took on that view from Firth. Thirdly was my own background as a Marxist and work with our little linguistics group in the Communist Party in the fifties. We were searching for a Marxist linguistics and that obviously had to be grounded in a social context ...

The above remarks demonstrate, as I have observed elsewhere (Weideman, 2011:152f.), that wherever one turns in linguistics, one is confronted by -isms: a first example is the relationism of the structuralists, as well as their behaviourism, the latter characteristic particularly of that version of structuralism that came to be known as American descriptivism. In addition to these -isms, we find the cognitivism and mentalist roots of generativism; in Halliday's SFG the Marxism underlying the systemic choices; in a dynamic systems approach emergentism and organicism, combined with an empiricism that sets it apart from Chomskyan rationalism. The kind of overemphasis that results in these -isms is rife in theoretical explanations across all disciplines; the skewed and biased foundational perspective they bring is not limited to linguistics. The explanation in reformational philosophy for them is that they contain within them the seeds of absolutisation of one or more aspects of

reality. One dimension of reality is promoted to the position of conceptual key to understanding all others.

It is not the case that such overemphasis is unknown within scientific disciplines. One hears many excuses for their employment, one being that the absolutisation of one aspect corrects and brings different perspectives into balance. In this way, feminism, in allegiance with poststructuralist and postmodernist analyses, for example in critical discourse analysis, may be seen as the necessary corrective of sexism and paternalism. Likewise, the over-emphasis on political power that theoretically propels 'critical', mostly Marxist analyses of all kinds, also in postmodernist perspectives in applied linguistics, is regarded as repairing the damage of colonialism and racism. In a dynamic systems approach, an even more recent development, we encounter a battle of rationalist and generativist paradigms that is inspired by empiricist and organicist starting points.

The thesis of this paper is that such variations in emphasis originate in the convictions that underlie linguistic (and other) analyses. Halliday's confession, above, is an honest illustration of that. In its anti-reductionist stance (cf. Strauss, 2009:369), reformational philosophy, however, offers an antidote to subsuming one mode of reality in another. The relativism associated with the fragmented perspectives so beloved by postmodernism will not bring lasting relief in this respect, since relativism undermines its own credibility: everything is relative, except that particular claim (that everything is relative). That starting point has to be exempted from relativity.

This paper opened with the question of how we might demonstrate to newcomers in the academic world the coherence of its analytical undertakings and business. My argument has been for a foundational framework for the special sciences, such as linguistics, informed by a non-reductionist perspective, such as we find in reformational philosophy. However much we may appreciate and honour their valid insights into parts of linguistics, my contention is that neither earlier paradigms, nor later or current ones, such as postmodernist perspectives, give us that kind of responsible overview. To do linguistics responsibly, also within language departments with various other teaching and research emphases, is first to appreciate the insights of others, but then not to limit one's work to those either. The professional price we pay for not working deliberately within an articulated framework is to drift along with each passing tide,

potentially the victims of each new paradigm that appears on the academic horizon. We should not forget that within institutions of higher learning, different, competing paradigms are likely to constrain and suppress others, even while co-existing with them (McNamara, 2008:304). Different disciplinary traditions are often institutionalised, and derive organisational power from the contexts in which they have been established and entrenched. Such power is always resistant to change, and creates an unwillingness to offer room for alternative theories or philosophies to grow. This power can only be channelled into productive linguistic work if there is understanding, appreciation and communication amongst various paradigms. I have observed before (Weideman, 2011:161f.) that possibly

> … the strongest argument in favour of employing a deliberate theoretical framework … is that through it, one is able to set up lines of communication among various competing or potentially complementary paradigms within linguistics. … [S]electing from the older methodologies what is useful, and discarding what is not, requires reference to criteria that can only be credible if they can be justified in terms of a theoretical framework. There is thus an interplay between the history of the discipline, and the systematic treatment, appraisal and assessment of previous, current and new paradigms attempt to create intellectual space for useful and alternative views of how disciplinary work may be accomplished, and to establish meaningful communication among the various schools of thought within linguistics.

Acknowledgements

My heartfelt thanks go to Colleen du Plessis for research assistance; to Albert Weideman of *Beeld* and Annette de Wet for commenting on and assisting with the Afrikaans summary of part of an earlier version of these analyses, as well as to Danie Strauss, who has faithfully supported with his analyses and ideas our joint thinking about these issues over many decades, and a lifetime of scholarship within the reformational tradition.

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