

STORIA DELLA LINGUISTICA 2014-15

Materiali 4

LA LINGUISTICA STATUNITENSE DELLA PRIMA METÀ DEL NOVECENTO

I. ALCUNE CARATTERISTICHE GENERALI

1. Grande attenzione dedicata allo studio delle lingue degli indiani d'America (lingue "amerindiane", o "amerinde"):

American Linguistics [...]got its decisive direction when it was decided that an indigenous language could be described better without any preexistent scheme of what a language must be than with the usual reliance upon Latin as the model (M. Joos, *Readings in Linguistics. The Development of Descriptive Linguistics in America 1925-56*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1957, p. 1).

2. Strutturalismo americano e strutturalismo europeo:

An older term for the new trend in linguistics was 'structural'. It is not idle to consider how the term 'descriptive' now came to replace it, even if not all the reasons can be identified. The Sapir way of doing things could be called structural, but the term was more often used for the stimulating new ideas that were coming out of Europe, specifically from the Cercle Linguistique de Prague. American linguistics owes a great debt to that stimulation; but in the long run those ideas were not found to add up to an adequate methodology. Trubetzkoy phonology tried to explain everything from articulatory acoustics and a minimum set of phonological laws taken as essentially valid for all languages alike, flatly contradicting the American (Boas) tradition that languages could differ from each other without limit and in unpredictable ways, and offering too much of a phonological explanation where a sober taxonomy would serve as well. (ibid., p. 96).

3. Analisi *distribuzionale* del linguaggio (v. più avanti, V).

II. QUADRO DI INSIEME

Studiosi	Opere più importanti
Inizi: Franz Boas (1858-1948)	<i>Handbook of American Indian Languages</i> (curatore, dal 1911)
“Capiscuola”: - Edward Sapir (1884-1939): “mentalismo” - Leonard Bloomfield (1887-1949): “comportamentismo”	- Sapir: <i>Language</i> (1921); <i>Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality</i> , a cura di D. G. Mandelbaum (1951) - Bloomfield: <i>Language</i> (1933)
“Post-bloomfieldiani”: - George L. Trager (1906–1992) - Bernard Bloch (1907–1965) - Zellig S. Harris (1909-1992) - Charles F. Hockett (1916-2000) - Rulon S. Wells (1919-2008)	- Bloch e Trager: <i>Outline of Linguistic Analysis</i> (1942) - Harris: <i>Methods in Structural Linguistics</i> (1951) - Hockett: <i>A Course in Modern Linguistics</i> (1958) - Wells: <i>Immediate Constituents</i> , in “Language”, 23, pp. 81-117

III. SAPIR

1. Concezione del linguaggio e della linguistica: “mentalismo”

Language is primarily a cultural or social product and must be understood as such. Its regularity and formal development rest on considerations of a biological and psychological nature, to be sure. But this regularity and our underlying unconsciousness of its typical forms do not make of linguistics a

mere adjunct to either biology or psychology (Sapir, *The Status of Linguistics as a Science*, in "Language", 5, 1929, p. 14).

Speech is so familiar a feature of daily life that we rarely pause to define it. It seems as natural to man as walking, and only less so than breathing. [...] The process of acquiring speech is, in sober fact, an utterly different sort of thing from the process of learning to walk. (Sapir, *Language*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1921, p. 1).

Physiologically, speech is an overlaid function, or, to be more precise, a group of overlaid functions (ibid., p. 8).

Let us assume that a typically pronounced *wh* is identical with the sound that results from the expulsion of breath through pursed lips when a candle is blown out. We shall assume identity of both articulation and quality of perception. Does this identity amount to a psychological identity of the two processes? (Sapir, *Sound Patterns in Language*, in "Language", 1, 1925, p. 37)

Non v'è alcuna entità, nell'esperienza umana, suscettibile di essere definita esattamente come la somma o il prodotto meccanico delle sue proprietà fisiche (Sapir, *La réalité psychologique des phonèmes*, in "Journal de Psychologie", 30, 1933, trad. it. *La realtà psicologica dei fonemi*, in AA. VV., *Il linguaggio*, Dedalo, Bari, 1976 [ed. or. 1933], p. 285).

Il fonema è una "unità che ha un significato funzionale nella forma o nel sistema rigidamente determinati dei suoni propri di una lingua" (ibid., p. 285).

Nel corso di una lunga esperienza di osservazione e di analisi di lingue non scritte, amerindie o africane, sono riuscito a raccogliere prove concrete del fatto che il soggetto parlante poco istruito non ascolta degli elementi fonetici, ma dei fonemi (ibid., pp. 287-8).

2. Tipologia linguistica

a) difficoltà della classificazione tipologica tradizionale

A language may be both agglutinative and inflective, or inflective and polysynthetic, or even polysynthetic and isolating, as we shall see a little later on (Sapir, *Language*, cit., p. 130).

b) premessa a una nuova classificazione tipologica: i vari tipi di "concetti grammaticali"

I. *Basic (Concrete) Concepts* (such as objects, actions, qualities): normally expressed by independent words or radical elements; involve no relation as such [...]

II. *Derivational Concepts* [...] differ from type I in defining ideas that are irrelevant to the proposition as a whole but that give a radical element a particular increment of significance [...]

III. *Concrete Relational Concepts* [...] differ fundamentally from type II in indicating or implying relations that transcend the particular word to which they are immediately attached [...]

IV. *Pure Relational Concepts* [...] serve to relate the concrete elements of the proposition to each other, thus giving it definite syntactic form.

The nature of these four classes of concepts as regards their concreteness or their power to express syntactic relations may be thus symbolized:

	I. Basic Concepts
<i>Material Content</i>	{
	II. Derivational Concepts
	III. Concrete Relational Concepts
<i>Relation</i>	{
	IV. Pure Relational Concepts

(ibid., p. 101).

c) classificazione delle lingue in base ai tipi di concetti grammaticali (classificazione fondamentale)

It is well to recall that all languages must needs express radical concepts (group I) and relational ideas (group IV). Of the two other large groups of concepts - derivational (group II) and mixed relational (group III) - both may be absent, both present, or only one present. This gives us at once a simple, incisive, and absolutely inclusive method of classifying all known languages. They are :

- A. Such as express only concepts of groups I and IV; [...] We may call these [...] *Simple Pure-relational languages*.
- B. Such as express concepts of groups I, II, and IV; [...] These are the [...] *Complex Pure-relational languages*.
- C. Such as express concepts of groups I and III; [...] These are the [...] *Simple Mixed-relational languages*.
- D. Such as express concepts of groups I, II, and III; [...] These are the [...] *Complex Mixed-relational languages*.

(ibid., pp. 145-6)

d) classificazione in base alla "tecnica" e al "grado di sintesi"

Each of the types A, B, C, D may be subdivided into an agglutinative, a fusional, and a symbolic sub-type, according to the prevailing method of modification of the radical element. In type A we distinguish in addition an isolating sub-type, characterized by the absence of all affixes and modifications of the radical element (ibid., p. 147).

Further, should it prove desirable to insist on the degree of elaboration of the word, the terms "analytic," "synthetic," and "polysynthetic" can be added as descriptive terms (ibid., p. 148).

3. "Ipotesi di Sapir e Whorf"

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society (Sapir, *The Status of Linguistics as a Science*, cit., p. 209).

We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated (B. L. Whorf (1897-1941), *Language, Thought and Reality*, a cura di J. B. Carroll, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 1956, p. 214).

Hopi may be called a timeless language. It recognizes psychological time, which is much like Bergson's "duration," but this "time" is quite unlike the mathematical time, T, used by our physicists (ibid., p. 216).

How would a physics constructed along these lines work, with no T (time) in its equations? Perfectly, as far as I can see, though of course it would require different ideology and perhaps different mathematics (ibid., p. 217).

IV. BLOOMFIELD

1. Concezione del linguaggio e della linguistica: "comportamentismo"

[...] we have learned, at any rate, what one of our masters suspected thirty years ago, namely, that we can pursue the study of language without reference to any one psychological doctrine, and that to do so safeguards our results and makes them more significant to workers in related fields (Bloomfield, *Language*, Holt, New York, 1933, p. vii).

The physicist and the biologist do not content themselves with teleologic formulae. [...] It is only when we deal with man that we are satisfied with teleologic formulae: men do things because they "want" or "choose" or "have a tendency" to do them.

[...] We keep ourselves in this dream by taking the primeval drug of animism. [...] Accounting with magic ease for anything and everything that may happen, animism obscures every problem and drugs us into accepting our ignorance and helplessness in the face of human conduct.

Let me now state my belief that the peculiar factor in man which forbids our explaining his actions upon the ordinary plane of biology, is a highly specialized and unstable biological complex, and that this factor is none other than language.

This hypothesis is not original with me; it is very carefully worked out in Weiss's *Theoretical Foundations of Human Behavior* [...] (Bloomfield, *Linguistics as a Science*, "Studies in Philology", 27, 1930, pp. 554-555).

Language enables one person to make a reaction (R) when another person has the stimulus (S) (Bloomfield, *Language*, p. 24).

The two statements,

There are berries behind that hill;
There aren't any berries behind that hill,

are such that a hearer cannot make any one type of conventional response to both at the same time; thus, he cannot at the same time go behind the hill with his berry-basket and stay at home (Bloomfield, *Linguistic Aspects of Science*, "Philosophy of Science", 2, Oct., 1935, p. 506).

2. Analisi delle "forme" e delle "costruzioni"

a) Fonemi

The phonemes of a language are not sounds, but merely features of sound which the speakers have been trained to produce and recognize in the current of actual speech-sound - just as motorists are trained to stop before a red signal, be it an electric signal-light, a lamp, a flag, or what not, although there is no disembodied redness apart from these actual signals (Bloomfield, *Language*, p. 80).

[...] the phoneme is kept distinct from all other phonemes of its language. Thus, we speak the vowel of a word like *pen* in a great many ways, but not in any way that belongs to the vowel of *pin*, and not in any way that belongs to the vowel of *pan*: the three types are kept rigidly apart (ibid., p. 81).

b) Forme "libere" e "legate", "complesse" e "semplici"

A linguistic form which is never spoken alone is a *bound* form; all others (as, for instance, *John ran* or *John* or *run* or *running*) are *free* forms. [...]

A linguistic form which bears a partial phonetic-semantic resemblance to some other linguistic form, is a *complex form*. [...]

A linguistic form which bears no partial phonetic-semantic resemblance to any other form, is a *simple* form or *morpheme*. Thus, *bird*, *play*, *dance*, *cran-*, *-y*, *-ing* are morphemes. Morphemes may show partial phonetic resemblances, as do, for instance, *bird* and *burr*, or even homonymy, as do *pear*, *pair*, *pare*, but this resemblance is purely phonetic and is not paralleled by the meanings (ibid., pp. 160-1).

The positions in which a form occurs are its *functions*. Thus, the word *John* and the phrase *the man* have the functions of 'actor', 'goal', 'predicate noun', 'goal of preposition', and so on.

[...] All forms having the same functions constitute a *form-class* [...].

A form-class of words is a *word-class*.

[...] The maximum word-classes of a language are the *parts of speech* of that language (Bloomfield, *A Set of Postulates for the Science of Language*, "Language", 2, 1926, p. 159).

c) "analisi in costituenti immediati"

[...] every complex form is entirely made up, so far as its phonetically definable constituents are concerned, of morphemes. The number of these ultimate constituents may run very high. The form *Poor John ran away* contains five morphemes: *poor*, *John*, *ran*, *a-* (a bound form recurring, for

instance, in *aground, ashore, aloft, around*), and *way*. However, the structure of complex forms is by no means as simple as this; we could not understand the forms of a language if we merely reduced all the complex forms to their ultimate constituents. Any English speaking person who concerns himself with this matter, is sure to tell us that the immediate constituents of *Poor John ran away* are the two forms *poor John* and *ran away*; that each of these is, in turn, a complex form ; that the immediate constituents of *ran away* are *ran*, a morpheme, and *away*, a complex form, whose constituents are the morphemes *a-* and *way*; and that the constituents of *poor John* are the morphemes *poor* and *John* (Bloomfield, *Language*, cit., p. 161).

d) Costruzioni “esocentriche” ed “endocentriche”

Every syntactic construction shows us two (or sometimes more) free forms combined in a phrase, which we may call the *resultant* phrase. The resultant phrase may belong to a form-class other than that of any constituent. For instance, *John ran* is neither a nominative expression (like *John*) nor a finite verb expression (like *ran*). Therefore we say that the English actor-action construction is *exocentric*: the resultant phrase belongs to the form-class of no immediate constituent. On the other hand, the resultant phrase may belong to the same form-class as one (or more) of the constituents. For instance, *poor John* is a proper-noun expression, and so is the constituent *John*; the forms *John* and *poor John* have, on the whole, the same functions. Accordingly, we say that the English character-substance construction (as in *poor John, fresh milk*, and the like) is an endocentric construction (ibid., p. 194).

Endocentric constructions are of two kinds, co-ordinative (or serial) and subordinative (or attributive). In the former type the resultant phrase belongs to the same form-class as two or more of the constituents. Thus, the phrase *boys and girls* belongs to the same form-class as the constituents, *boys, girls*; these constituents are the members of the co-ordination, and the other constituent is the co-ordinator. [...]

In subordinative endocentric constructions, the resultant phrase belongs to the same form-class as one of the constituents, which we call the head: thus, *poor John* belongs to the same form-class as *John*, which we accordingly call the head; the other member, in our example *poor*, is the attribute (ibid., p. 195).

d) Creazione di forme nuove: l’analogia

[...] it is obvious that most speech-forms are regular, in the sense that the speaker who knows the constituents and the grammatical pattern, can utter them without ever having heard them; moreover, the observer cannot hope to list them, since the possibilities of combination are practically infinite. [...] A grammatical pattern (sentence-type, construction, or substitution) is often called an *analogy*. A regular analogy permits a speaker to utter speech-forms which he has not heard; we say that he utters them *on the analogy* of similar forms which he has heard (ibid., p. 275).

V. IL DISTRIBUZIONALISMO POST-BLOOMFIELDIANO

1. Caratteristiche dell’analisi distribuzionale

a) Definizione di “distribuzione”

The DISTRIBUTION of an element is the total of all environments in which it occurs, i.e. the sum of all the (different) positions (or occurrences) of an element relative to the occurrence of other elements (Harris, *Methods in Structural Linguistics*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1951, pp. 15-6).

b) Il “principio della separazione dei livelli”

There must be no circularity; phonological analysis is assumed for grammatical analysis, and so must not assume any part of the latter. The line of demarcation between the two must be sharp. (Hockett, *A System of Descriptive Phonology*, 1942, rist. in Joos 1957, cit., p. 107).

2. Fonologia e morfologia

a) Fonemi e allofoni

The criterion of complementary distribution. If it is true of two similar types of sounds that only one of them normally occurs in certain phonetic surroundings and that only the other normally occurs in certain other phonetic surroundings, the two may be sub-types of the same phoneme (M. Swadesh, *The Phonemic Principle*, 1934, rist. in Joos 1957, p. 35).

We know that the sounds comprising a single phoneme —the allophones, to give them a convenient name —sometimes differ strikingly among themselves. Most writers on the subject have dwelt on this fact, and all readers are familiar with the stock examples offered as illustrations: the different varieties of [k] in *keep cool*, of [l] in *leaf* and *feel*, or of the velar spirant in German *ich* and *ach* (Bloch, *Phonemic Overlapping*, 1941, rist. in Joos 1957, p. 93).

b) Morfemi, “morfi” e allomorfi

Morphemic alternants can conveniently be called allomorphs. Accordingly, allomorphs are related to morphemes as allophones are related to phonemes (E. Nida, *The Identification of Morphemes*, in “Language”, 1948, rist. in Joos 1957, p. 258).

A morpheme may appear in more than a single phonemic shape. A single shape of a morpheme is a *morph*; the various morphs which are the shapes or *representations* of one and the same morpheme are its *allomorphs* (Hockett, *Two Models of Grammatical Description*, 1954, rist. in Joos 1957, p. 389).

Esempi di mancata corrispondenza biunivoca tra morfi e morfemi: 1) morfi ‘vuoti’, ad es. la vocale tematica delle tre coniugazioni verbali italiane (*amare, temere, sentire*), che è un morfo distinto dalle radici (*am-, tem-, sent-*) e dalla desinenza (*-re*), ma è privo di significato; 2) morfi ‘cumulativi’: ad es., preposizione articolata francese *au* (‘al’, pronunciata /o/), che rappresenta contemporaneamente i morfemi ‘a’ e ‘il’.

c) “Due modelli di descrizione grammaticale”

Esempio: opposizione tra le due forme di verbi forti inglesi *sing* (‘cantare’, ‘canto’) vs. *sang* ‘cantai’. Soluzioni possibili:

A) Bloch (*English Verb Inflection*, 1947, rist. in Joos 1957, pp. 243-54): contrasto di *allomorfi*; il primo allomorfo è quello che ricorre davanti alla desinenza del tempo presente, il secondo quello che ricorre davanti alla desinenza del preterito (che in inglese non è mai realizzata foneticamente).

B) E. Nida, *The Identification of Morphemes*, 1948, rist. in Joos 1957, pp. 255-71): “morfema discontinuo”; le due forme verbali sono costituite ciascuna da due morfemi, uno identico (la sequenza /s...ŋ/) e uno diverso (la vocale, *-i-* vs. *-a-* nel preterito).

Secondo Hockett (cit.), la soluzione di Nida si inquadra nel “modello a entità e disposizioni” (*Item and Arrangement Model*), che si contrappone al “modello a entità e processi” (*Item and Process Model*). In base a quest’ultimo modello, l’alternanza tra *sing* e *sang* verrebbe descritta in modo più soddisfacente come un processo che, da una forma soggiacente *sing*, dà la forma *sang* mediante la sostituzione della vocale tematica. Questo secondo modello implica che le forme soggiacenti in un certo senso “precedano” quelle derivate: ma in che senso si doveva interpretare questa “precedenza”?

3. Sviluppi dell’analisi in costituenti immediati

a) Svolgimento dell’analisi

Let us call the ICs of a sentence, and the ICs of those ICs, and so on down to the morphemes, the CONSTITUENTS of the sentence; and conversely whatever sequence is constituted by two or more ICs let us call a CONSTITUTE. Assuming that the ICs of *The king of England opened Parliament* are *the king of England* and *opened Parliament*, that those of the former are *the* and *king of England* and those of the latter are *opened* and *Parliament*, and *that king of England* is divided into *king* and *of England*, *of England* is divided into the morphemes *of* and *England*, and *opened* is divided into *open* and *-ed* - all of which facts may be thus diagrammed: *the* // *king* ||| *of* |||| *England* | *open* |||| *d* ||

Parliament - then there are twelve constituents of the sentence: (1) *the king of England*, (2) *the*, (3) *king of England*, (4) *king*, (5) *of England*, (6) *of*, (7) *England*, (8) *opened Parliament*, (9) *opened*, (10) *open*, (11) *-ed*, (12) *Parliament*. And the six constituents in the above sentence are those five of the constituents (nos. 1, 3, 5, 8, 9) that are not morphemes, plus the sentence itself. According to this analysis the sequence *the king of*, for instance, or *England opened*, is in this sentence neither a constituent nor a constitute. And in terms of this nomenclature the principle relating words to IC-analysis may be stated: every word is a constituent (unless it is a sentence by itself), and also a constitute (unless it is a single morpheme). But if *opened Parliament* were analyzed into *open* and *-ed Parliament*, the word *opened* would be neither a constituent nor a constitute (Wells, *Immediate Constituents*, in "Language", 23, pp. 84).

b) "Costruzioni omonime" (o "ambiguità sintattiche")

[...] the two meanings of *old men and women* are most readily accounted for in the following way. In the meaning 'women and old men', the sequence belongs to that construction (noun or noun-phrase + *and* + noun or noun-phrase) which has the meaning of conjunction; the first noun-phrase belongs to the construction modifier + noun or noun-phrase. But in the meaning 'old men and old women', the sequence belongs to the construction modifier + noun or noun-phrase; the noun-phrase in turn belongs to the construction noun or noun-phrase + *and* + noun or noun-phrase. [...]

[...] when the same sequence has, in different occurrences, different meanings and therefore [...] different construction, it may have different IC-analyses. [...] Such cases exhibit HOMONYMOUS CONSTRUCTIONS, analogous to homonymous morphemes (ibid., pp. 96-7).

c) Costituenti discontinui

A DISCONTINUOUS SEQUENCE IS A CONSTITUENT IF IN SOME ENVIRONMENT THE CORRESPONDING CONTINUOUS SEQUENCE OCCURS AS A CONSTITUENT IN A CONSTRUCTION SEMANTICALLY HARMONIOUS WITH THE CONSTRUCTIONS IN WHICH THE GIVEN DISCONTINUOUS SEQUENCE OCCURS. [...]

(3) [*a*] *better [movie] than I expected, [the] best [friend] in the world, [an] easy [book] to read, too heavy [a box] to lift*. Of the examples of type (3), all but satisfy the proposed condition for being discontinuous constituents: the corresponding continuous sequences all occur after a copula; thus (4) [*this movie is*] *better than I expected, [this book is] easy to read, [this box is] too heavy to lift* (id., 104).