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Linguistics as metaphor: analysing the discursive ontology of the object of linguistic inquiry

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Abstract

One of the most important developments in the contemporary social and human sciences is 'the turn to language'. The science of language itself — modern Western linguistics — ironically, has seemed slow in responding to this language project but has remained largely preoccupied with its perennial search for general notions and rules of the sentence or the text. In the present study, I take up the discourse of linguistic theorising as the focus of attention, especially the ways in which basic assumptions about 'language' are formulated and discussed. My aim is to show that the very object of linguistic investigation is a social, discursive construction and that therefore there is a profound kinship of the language of enquiry with enquiry itself. As data I shall be looking at the theoretical writings of Chomsky and Halliday, the leading exponents of formalism and functionalism, respectively. It will be seen that their foundational concepts (such as 'cognitive device', 'meaning potential') are grounded in and partially constituted by metaphors. It will also be observed that such figuratively engendered concepts serve not only the rhetorical function of justifying one's own practice but also the ideological purpose of excluding rival approaches. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

One of the most lively and important developments in the contemporary scene of the social and human sciences has been 'the turn to language' as is often called (or 'linguistic/rhetorical turn'). In this move many a scholar have shifted their attention from the 'object' of enquiry to the language of enquiry. There is already a deluge of articles and books critically reflecting upon the language of economics (e.g. McCloskey, 1986), anthropology (e.g. Clifford, 1988; Pratt, 1986), sociology (e.g. Weigert, 1970; Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984), psychology (e.g. Soyland, 1994; Danziger, 1997), history, (e.g. White, 1973), philosophy (e.g. De Man, 1978; Rorty, 1978) and science (e.g. Latour, 1987; Bazerman, 2000); see also Simons' *Rhetoric in the Human Sciences* (1989). All this work fundamentally questions the role of language in representing human and social realities. For example, it is argued that Freud's discourse of the human mind as a set of hidden layers to which ordinary people have no access serves to enrol and encourage them to seek further information about themselves (Soyland, 1994; cf. Vološinov, 1987).

The science of language itself — modern Western linguistics, however, has seemed slow and reluctant in responding to this discourse–reflective move. Its own discourse continues to get short shrift. By and large, linguistics remains preoccupied with its perennial concerns — linguistic theories and analysis and so on; even alternative and opposing approaches are more often than not concerned with offering more valid and more reliable accounts. The marginalisation of the discourse-of-linguistics project is best attested to by the continued success of linguistic formalism and functionalism — the two most important, competing ways of thinking and talking about language.

Is linguistic science independent of discourse and rhetoric that have been found to be part of the same activity in the sister disciplines? Or is it indeed a more rigorous and superior form of representation among the human sciences, as has been imagined since the inception of modern Western linguistics? I think rather that the general lack of interest in the language of linguistics has to do with a deep-rooted and widespread credo in the field: namely, language, whether from a formal or functional point of view, is a pre-given object or thing, on the one hand, and, on the other, there is a transparent, objective, scientific language to represent that thing, at least possibly (cf. Grace, 1987; Tyler, 1995). Therefore, the scientific discourse of linguistics is unproblematic for, perhaps even irrelevant to, the linguistic enquiry itself. The clear manifestation of this attitude is that it is generally not discussed, but taken for granted (for exceptions see below).

In this study I put these beliefs in abeyance and take up the language of linguistics as the focus of attention; here 'language' refers to language use in the social context or 'discourse' for short. Specifically, I shall be looking at how, in both formal and functional linguistic theorising, the foundational notion of 'language' is related to the use of metaphors. My primary aim is to show that properties of discourse, such as metaphor, persuasion, self- and other-presentation, are not peripheral, but central and intrinsic to the presumption and conceptualisation of the object of linguistic research. In other words, I shall try to

demonstrate that the very stuff called 'language' or 'the linguistic system' and the like, which have preoccupied western linguistics for much of the century, are in part a product of particular ways of speaking and writing.

The empirical data for the present thesis are selected from the writings by Chomsky (i.e. 1957, 1979 and 1981) and Halliday (1973, 1978, 1985/1994), the leading exponents of linguistic formalism and functionalism, respectively. I use data from both the formalist and functional paradigms, because I am concerned with modern Western linguistics *as a whole*. I have chosen Chomsky and Halliday for case study not just because of their celebrated scientific accomplishments, but also because of their tremendous *influence*, through text and talk, upon the linguistics community and beyond.

Through analysis of discourse, it will be seen, first, that in delimiting and defining the presumed object for linguistic investigation — 'language' Chomsky and Halliday draw on a few metaphors regularly so that these specific metaphors penetrate the object itself. The purported object then becomes immanently and intrinsically metaphorical. Secondly, and more importantly, it will be observed that those figurative devices are also used 'literally', that is, as real grounds, in other parts of theory-building and argumentation. There is therefore a deeper sense in which linguistics is constituted out of elements of discourse. In addition, it will be noted that the tropologically originated concepts of language serve *rhetorical and social purposes*: they help to justify one's own research practice (e.g. idealisation of linguistics; writing of grammar), hence to persuade readers and enlist researchers, and dismiss or refute other, alternative approaches. Thus, what will be witnessed is that 'language' 'exists' and 'has' this or that property not because it really does, but because certain metaphors were there to enable it, and because some individual and social business has to be done.

Before I turn to a theoretical and analytical discussion of discourse and science, some caveats are in order. Firstly, pointing to the interest of the discourse of linguistics is of course not to deny the intellectual worth of linguistics. There is nothing inherently wrong with, say, pursuing mathematical representation or grammaticalisation of human language. But my hope is that the linguistics discourse project will advance our thinking on the nature of linguistics and its object of research. For one thing, explorations in the status of discourse in linguistic enquiry may enhance our awareness of the reflexivity of our own 'representational' means. For another, highlighting the rhetorical, metaphorical dimensions of linguistic enquiry as I do may lead to insights into the discursive nature of the object that linguists try to describe and explain.

Secondly, in pointing to the metaphors used in linguistics, I do not mean to suggest that linguists may not be aware of the fact that they do use metaphors. My interest is rather examining how the metaphors have been used *in effect*, e.g. in the presumption and conceptualisation of the object of enquiry and the subsequent methodological approach. Thus, in making transparent the functions of the metaphors, I shall try to reveal what Burke calls the 'paradox of substance' (Burke, 1962, p. 56). It will be seen that, although describing the properties of one category metaphorically in terms of those of another concedes that they are not

really the same phenomenon, Chomsky and Halliday use certain metaphors as *rational argument* in linguistic deliberation. So, here, let me state emphatically that my point is not that metaphors are used in linguistics writing nor that they are used for purposes of clarification as is commonly believed; rather they have been become the defining, organising and penetrating features of linguistics, including its presumed object of research.

Thirdly, in claiming that linguistics, including its object of study (not just theoretical-writing!), is imbued with metaphorical substance, I do not want to suggest that it should not be. As will be explained in the next section, a constraining assumption of mine is that discourse is an inextricable part of social-scientific research (and human reality more generally) and that therefore there is no such thing as 'perfect' and 'pure' social science divorced from discourse. Admittedly, my own writing here is rhetorical, at times metaphorical, too, and therefore subject to critical discourse analysis. But it is crucial to note here that this theoretical circularity does not have to be vicious in effect: rather, I wish to call attention to this discursive dimension of (linguistic) science and to suggest that criteria should be developed in the academic (linguistic) community with which we can distinguish acceptable kinds of discourse from others — say, using metaphors as rational argument; I shall return to this point in the final section.

Finally, it should be mentioned that already there are important meta-discursive studies of linguistics, with special reference to history (e.g. Sampson, 1980; Harris, 1993; Huck and Goldsmith, 1995), politics (e.g. Newmeyer, 1986; cf. Schegloff et al., 1996), philosophy (e.g. Derrida, 1976, 1981; Harris, 1981; Taylor, 1992) and speech acts (e.g. De Beaugrande, 1998). However, not only have such attempts been disproportionately few in number, but there are many areas still unexplored as well, such as the relationship between discourse and the basic ideas in linguistics and the role of discourse in affecting methodological choices. The present study focuses attention on the effects and consequences of metaphors on the conceptualisation of the object of linguistics and on the choice of approaches to it. (Shi-xu, 1996, 2000)

2. A social–constructionist-linguistics framework

2.1. Definition and nature of discourse

The theoretical framework underlying the present study is Social Constructionist Linguistics (SCL). This is a research programme that I am developing and which is inspired by many critical insights in the social and human sciences (e.g. Fairclough, 1989, 1995; Gumperz and Levinson, 1996; Tyler, 1995; Van Dijk, 1993; Shweder, 1990; Wertsch, 1991; Gergen, 1994; Billig, 1987; Harré and Gillett, 1994; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Antaki, 1994, to name but a few). In this programme on human language, it is reasoned that the object of research should be (defined as) *primarily linguistic-symbolic activity in real-life contexts* ('discourse' for short), and discourse is viewed as co-

constitutive of our social experience (actions and events 'around' us) and our individual experience (thoughts and feelings 'inside' us), constitutive, that is, through concepts, categories and other meaning-making processes of our discourse. In connection with this view of discourse, furthermore, the discourse researcher is regarded as having an active role to play in both the phenomena s/he investigates and the conclusions s/he draws and therefore should take academic and societal responsibilities (see also Shi-xu, 1997, chap. 1 and 2). For lack of space, I shall only briefly describe this concept of discourse.

2.1.1. Discourse as constructive

Discourse is not a mirror or representation of reality. Rather, discourse is dynamic and creative: it offers a version of reality, thereby imposing a particular structure on it. For example, international news media have recently portrayed the 'same' past history of Hong Kong in different ways, e.g. as a glorious transformation from a fishing village into an international economic power and as infamous colonial oppression and exploitation.

2.1.2. Discourse as dynamic interplay between the individual and linguistic, social–interactional and cultural rules and structures

Discourse is an emergent phenomenon in which individuals draw upon, employ and transform, linguistic resources — structures (e.g. words), processes (e.g. metaphor) and rules (e.g. grammar), in both production and interpretation. Similarly, they orient their discourse towards the social Other, be it the second, third or generalised person (i.e. 'you', 's/he/they', a potential interactant). Moreover, in producing and interpreting discourse they also make use of, maintain and develop cultural ways of thinking and acting.

2.1.3. Discourse as co-constitutive of the social human reality

Discourse is not a form of linguistic activity that is merely ('descriptive') about the social and private worlds. Rather, discourse partakes of or makes up the private world 'inside' us and the social–cultural world 'around' us. When greetings are uttered or pleasantries exchanged, for example, a certain social bond is established or maintained thereby; what specific content or form the discourse takes is only a trivial if not irrelevant matter.

2.2. Social science as discourse

Having outlined a view of discourse, I shall proceed to sketching out a theoretical notion of the specific 'discourse of the social and human sciences', for backing up subsequent empirical analysis. As alluded to at the outset, detailed analysis of the discourse of both natural and human sciences has indisputably dismantled the boundaries of scientific knowledge and practice and revealed the penetration of ordinary discourse and rhetoric (e.g. Latour, 1987, Simons, 1989, Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984). In the words of Simons (1989, p. 5), 'In the new metalanguage of the human sciences, behaviours, cultures, entire historical epochs

might be viewed as texts, scientific data as symbolic constructions, scientific descriptions and theories as narratives, mathematical proofs as rhetorical tropes, the ongoing activities of scientific communities as conversations.' Given this contra-Popperian view of scientific knowledge (cf. Popper, 1959), we should better speak of *scientific discourse* (SD) instead of science. Furthermore, the distinction between natural and social sciences has also been de-constructed as subject to discursive-rhetorical work (Gieryn, 1995). (The irony is, though, as Swales points out (Swales, 1990, p. 176), 'social scientists are engaged in a cognitive and rhetorical upgrade of Method at a time when their mentors in the hard sciences are beginning, rhetorically at least, to downgrade its importance.') Since I am primarily concerned with the modern social and human sciences as a form of discourse — call it 'social scientific discourse' (SSD), in the following I shall devote my attention only to the latter, side-stepping the complications of argumentation. Building upon the observations made in the field which I just referred to, I shall touch upon three interrelated aspects of SSD which I think will lead to productive discourse analysis, though of course still other features may be observed.

A first basic feature of SSD is that it is not independent of the speaking/writing-individual. As part of the discursive activity, the scientist has personal merits as well as limitations which obviously will be reflected in the research process and product, i.e. SSD. S/he is also rhetorical in that s/he is concerned to enrol audience and enlist followers, often in a concealed manner (see Soyland, 1994), not least because discoveries that fail to be persuasive or cogent will not find an outlet in the first place. One of the common manifestations of the personal touch of SSD is the presentation of the academic-Other in a negative light, as may have become part of the received genre of academic writing. In addition, another example of the personal element of SSD is the influence of scholarly predecessors and authorities.

Secondly, SSD creates and constitutes its own objects of enquiry, a point that Foucault has made abundantly clear (Foucault, 1970). From a different perspective, there is a dynamic, essential relationship of the scientific enterprise to its subject matter. Man, society, mind, and indeed, language, are not pre-given things in the world, such that social and human sciences are then devised to study them. Power interests or ideologies play an important role in creating and re-creating such disciplinary objects and the disciplines themselves through the meaning-making resources of discourse, e.g. concepts, presumptions, metaphors (cf. Martin, 1998, pp. 10–11). This may be especially true of modern Western linguistics, in which the notion of 'natural science' as a superior paradigm of (gaining) knowledge has been used as a key device for creating its object — language, hence 'linguistic science'. One needs only to recall Saussure, Bloomfield, Hjelmslev or Chomsky as examples.

Thirdly, because social scientific theories and practices are constructed out of the structures and processes of discourse, there is no clear demarcation line between SSD and discourse more generally (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Grace, 1987, p. 3; Pearce, 1995; Stewart, 1995). Consequently, the content of SSD

is not stable but evolving and emerging and its boundaries are blurred (cf. Bazerman, 1998, p. 16). Effectively there will be no cut and dried distinction to be drawn between social science and common sense, nor between scientific discourse and conversation (e.g. variability and flexibility). It has been well documented that scientific discourse also involves self-presentation, social enlistment, alliances and power, for example through rhetorical alignments of citation and reference (Latour, 1987), through offering value, significance and promise (Bazerman, 2000), and through 'the long-standing [...] and widespread use of "hedges"' (Swales, 1990, p. 175).

Immediately I must add that saying that it is hard to distinguish in practice SSD from (lay) discourse does not mean that it is impossible in principle. On the contrary, I believe that there are norms or criteria to be found, to be observed, and to be developed, for critically evaluating SSD; I shall deal with such questions when we look at empirical instances in the analytical section (see also Conclusions). However, a discussion of the normative issue in SSD falls outside the scope of the present study.

2.3. Metaphor

In the present study, I shall focus on one particular process of discourse: metaphor. The Western literature on metaphor dates back at least to Aristotle; it is large and varied. Generally, it may be said that traditional approaches have been mainly either literary (e.g. Aristotle's *Poetics*) or philosophical (Richards, 1936; cf. Soyland, 1994, p. 199), in which a metaphor is seen as a linguistic process which is given a novel meaning/use as opposed to the previous or usual meaning/use of a term or expression (e.g. 'Language is a weapon') or something abstract or unspecified is given a concrete meaning (e.g. 'Language is an instrument/cognitive structure'). In either case, the notion of the 'literal' meaning of a word is decisive for distinguishing the 'metaphorical'. However, calling a piece of discourse 'metaphorical' on grounds that one can find a 'primary', 'original' or 'usual' meaning for it in the history of the language is largely a philosophical or semantic exercise. Such observations are interesting, but they leave out the meanings of discourse in the actual context.

In the present SCL framework, a theory of metaphor is subsumed under the theory of discourse as outlined above. That is, metaphor is a special process of discourse (other kinds being argumentation, explanation, narration). Thus, metaphor and the metaphorical process of meaning-making are not seen as primarily opposed to 'literary' meaning in a idealised or de-contextualised sense, but rather as a discursive practice (see below). Following Goatly (1997), I define 'metaphor' as a *comparative* discursive process, i.e. using the property or properties of one category to characterise another category. The present notion of metaphor involves a broad comparison that includes such processes as simile, analogy, metonymy, synecdoche as well as the conventionally classified 'metaphor'. As such, metaphor is a particularly useful device for linguistics, as we shall see below, because 'language' (such as 'the linguistic system', 'cognitive

device', 'meaning potential') as envisaged in formal and functional approaches respectively is neither available for observation nor actual in life.

Here it is important to emphasise that there is a sense in which metaphor is a matter of participants' or speakers' own discursive practice; that is, it is something that language users themselves offer and accept as such. Such metaphorical meaning is often accomplished through *meta-discursive* strategies such as 'like', 'similarly', 'in a sense', 'just as…so', 'the same', 'can be viewed as' and the like. Of course the same meaning can be achieved by implicit, indirect or extra-linguistic means, e.g. contextual, mutual presuppositions, or worn-out metaphorical expressions like 'tree diagram of linguistic structure' or 'instrument of communication of experience'. To preserve the clarity of the present argument, I shall present data of the former — explicit — kind.

3. Formalist and functionalist foundations as metaphor

In the following the citations may sometimes be long but the reason for that is to give the reader as much contextual information as possible in the space available. The bold type in all the quoted examples below is added by me for emphasis, unless otherwise indicated.

3.1. Chomsky: language as cognitive device

That Chomsky's notion of human language as a cognitive device is a decontextualised, fictive and therefore useless idea is not the argument I want to pursue here. My task is rather to show that Chomsky's understanding of language, in his own expository discourse, is literally *premised upon* a couple of specific metaphors which he regularly employs that such metaphors have guided his methodological approach and furthermore that they have been motivated at the same time to belittle or demean alternative ways of thinking about and doing linguistics.

3.1.1. Physical-science metaphor

Following the founding father of modern Western linguistic science, Saussure (1966), Chomsky assumes a notion of human language as something not directly available for observation. Consequently, imaginary ways of thinking and speaking about it become imperative. What Chomsky chooses to do is to think and talk about it *in terms of something else* — hence metaphor. To illustrate:

> [1] Syntactic investigation of a given language has as its goal the construction of a grammar that **can be viewed as a device of some sort** for producing the sentences of the language under analysis. (Chomsky, 1957, p. 11)

More specifically, Chomsky prefers to use the metaphor of natural, physical, hard science in his characterisation of, and, more importantly, prescription for,

linguistics. He suggests that, in theorising about the object of linguistics and linguistic research, we should follow the natural-science paradigm by picturing some hidden, sophisticated phenomenon ('cognitive device' as he calls it) and then speculating about its laws ('grammar') by empirical falsification. In this sense, Chomsky is not using the object of science and its research methodology merely as a metaphorical means to clarify for us or enlighten us upon the object of linguistics and the way to go about doing linguistics. Rather, the substance of that metaphor has actually been equated with the presumed object of linguistics and linguistic research. It has got into linguistics, as it were. More generally, this practice of using metaphor as justification shows that the distinction between 'transitive objects of science' and 'intransitive objects of science' (as in Bhaskar, 1975) and, indeed, boundaries between sciences are co-created by discursive work (cf. Gieryn, 1995). Such work may be exemplified by the following quotation:

> [2] **Any** scientific theory is based on a finite number of observations, and it seeks to relate the observed phenomena and to predict new phenomena by constructing **general laws** in terms of hypothetical constructs such as (in **physics**, for example) "mass" and "electron". **Similarly**, a grammar of English is based on a finite corpus of utterances (**observations**), and it will contain certain grammatical rules (**laws**) stated in terms of the particular phonemes, phrases, etc., of English (**hypothetical constructs**). These rules express structural relations among the sentences of the corpus and the indefinite number of sentences generated by the grammar beyond the corpus (**predictions**). (Chomsky, 1957, p. 49)

In this fragment, it can be observed, to start with, that the objects of linguistic investigation (such as 'grammar', 'grammatical rules') are not described in their own terms, but rather in terms of something else. Specifically, characteristics of the physical world and natural sciences are adopted by Chomsky as the comparative vehicle, viz. simile (N.B. 'Similarly'), to define the object and procedure of linguistic research. That is, although language is not available for observation, we can imagine it to be something like 'mass' and 'electron'. When this way of thinking is adopted, other possibilities of characterisation are excluded thereby.

As indicated above, language has been presumed to be an object unavailable for observation. Through the currently preferred, figurative process of mapping the properties from the different domain of the physical world onto the domain of 'language' in question, however, an otherwise unobservable 'object' is written into being. Note in addition that, since for Chomsky language is a psychological entity (Chomsky, 1979), the science metaphor here creates a psychological object simultaneously. (Later on I will show how Chomsky uses this preferred science metaphor to his own advantage.)

More importantly, there is a sense in which the science metaphor has penetrated Chomsky's purported object of linguistics and research into it. For, despite the explicit metaphorical process, Chomsky also insists that linguistics conform to the

paradigm of physical science. Observe that, according to him, 'any scientific theory' should have the format of physics — that is the norm for all sciences. Therefore, linguistics should do the same. Observe also that the brackets have been used as equations and accordingly grammatical rules *are* law. Thus, paradoxically, *this* simile is not simply a simile but has become the very rationale for his prescribed linguistics. It is not surprising then that this metaphorically engendered view is consistent with essentialistic presumptions about language in other parts of his writings (Chomsky, 1957, p. 13), 'The grammar of L **will thus be** a device that generates all of the grammatical sentences of L and none of the ungrammatical ones'; similarly (p. 18), 'Assuming the set of grammatical sentences of English to be given, **we now ask what sort of device** can produce this set (equivalently, what sort of theory gives an adequate account of the structure of this set of utterances)'.

There is still another kind of reason for asserting that specifically chosen metaphor has co-constituted Chomsky's linguistics. Namely, not only does not he draw upon the science metaphor, but he does so regularly and persistently to the extent that, denied its use, he would have little to go by for his linguistics. To put it another way, if we took away his science metaphor, there would be little left in his concept of language and linguistics. Let me quote just a few instances to give a sense of his pattern of thinking and talking:

> [3] **Once that system is identified [in science generally], one can try to determine its nature, to investigate theories concerning its structure**. To the extent that such a theory can be formulated, it is possible to ask on what basis the system is acquired, what are the analogues in it to universal grammar, its biologically given principles. **Similarly**, study of performance presupposes an understanding of the nature of the cognitive system that is put to use. Given some level of theoretical understanding of some cognitive system, we may hope to study in a productive way how the cognitive system is used, and how it enters into interaction with other cognitive systems. **Something like that should be the paradigm for psychology, I think**. Of course, this is an oversimplification. One cannot legislate the "order of discovery". **But** this paradigm seems **to me basically correct**. (Chomsky, 1979, p. 49)

> [4] I am personally interested in the possibility of **testing** linguistic **hypotheses**. Certain questions cannot be resolved by sole reliance on the customary methods of linguistics. [...] Linguistics can hope to characterize the class of possible grammars, that is, establish the abstract properties which every language must satisfy. Similarly, study of a particular language can at best specify abstract properties of its grammar. It is **something like the study of algebra**: every abstract algebra can be realized by many different real systems. **The theory of groups** can be realized by the number system, or by the rotation of objects. **In a similar way** the formal systems of the linguists can correspond to different real systems [...]. (Chomsky, 1979, p. 48)

> [5] Certainly one must preserve the experimental sophistication of behaviourist psychology, but in order to employ it rationally. **The same thing is true in physics**: perhaps there are more sophisticated experimental techniques than those devised by physicists to answer interesting questions, but which have no relevance to questions of scientific interest. It would then be senseless to define **physics** in terms of this technology of experimentation. In itself this technology has no interest, apart from its possible relevance to significant questions. **In the same way**, psychological experiments have no interest, unless they can be put to use to sharpen our understanding of significant theories that can be developed concerning **some significant object of study**. (Chomsky, 1979, p. 47)

In these fragments, again, 'psychology', 'universal grammar/possible grammars', 'abstract properties', 'cognitive system', 'the formal systems/real systems', etc. are described in terms from science, like algebra, the theory of groups, physics. Beyond this metaphorical process, we also notice that he gives his personal injunction as a rational authority on the model of the science metaphor: 'should be the paradigm for psychology', 'basically correct' (for Chomsky's expression of rationality as social act see De Beaugrande, 1998).

3.1.2. Promissory notes

Derrida once said (Derrida, 1976, p. 145), 'Writing always leads to more writing, and more and still more'. To this, one might add that such extended writings form a scheme of arguments and help reflexively to reinforce the preferred writing. This is the kind of phenomenon we shall see in this sub-section. That is, I want to suggest that the conception of linguistics based on the science metaphor has affected other (and subsequent) parts of Chomsky's writing and linguistic theorising and that, conversely, these parts have helped sustain the original conceptual assumption.

The specific data evidence I shall present here is what Soyland (1994) has called 'promissory notes', in which promises are made about the *eventual* discovery of 'internal' linguistic realities (cf. the 'promissory notes' Soyland finds in psychology; see also 'the truth will out' in Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984). Such promissory discourse is not just consistent with, but also logically follows from, the metaphorical conception of language as a hidden rule-system. Since the concealed phenomenon is already presumed, it is only natural to talk of taking Time to reveal it. Consequently, promissory writing, along with the language-as-hidden discourse, rhetorically encourages students to join the 'discovery' expedition. I shall come back to the persuasive aspect of Chomsky's theorising in the next sub-section. Thus, on account of this extended Time-metaphor, it may again be asserted that the idea of language as a thing-to-be-discovered is a metaphorical accomplishment. Look at some of Chomsky's promises:

> [6] What **seems to me particularly exciting about the present period** in linguistic research is that we can **begin to see the glimmerings** of what such a theory might be like. **For the first time**, there are several theories of UG that seem to

have the right general properties over an interesting domain of fairly complex linguistic phenomena that is expanding **as inquiry into these systems proceeds**. (Chomsky, 1981, p. 4)

[7] To be sure, it is **too early** to hope for definitive answers from such experiments [‘click’ experiments to establish cognitive structure of the sentence]. **But the logic** of the situation is **sufficiently clear**. It **is possible** that significant relationships between perception and sentence structure **will** be experimentally demonstrated. (Chomsky, 1979, p. 45)

[8] [I]t is only through the detailed investigation of these particular systems that we have any hope of advancing towards a grasp of the abstract structures, conditions and properties that **should, some day**, constitute the subject matter of general linguistic theory [universal grammar]. **The goal may be remote, but** it is well to keep it in mind [...].
[...] I think that we are, in fact, **beginning to approach a grasp of** certain basic principles of grammar at what may be the appropriate level of abstraction [of UG]. (Chomsky, 1981, p. 2)

[9] While it is, needless to say, **much too early** to hope for a realistic proposal of this sort in the case of UG, **nevertheless** it is perhaps useful to take note of some of the conditions that such a theory should satisfy. (Chomsky, 1981, p. 10)

In these fragments several kinds of promissory ploy relating to Time can be found which entail the true and objective existence of linguistic realities. Among these are assurance of discovery by ‘logic’ (e.g. ‘the logic [...] is sufficiently clear’, ‘should’), affirmation of possibility of discovery (e.g. ‘is possible’, ‘will be [...] demonstrated’), specifying the amount of time, space or work needed for discovery (e.g. ‘too early’, ‘remote’, ‘as inquiry [...] proceeds’), the beginning of discovery — the device of ‘seeing light at the end of tunnel’ (e.g. ‘beginning to approach a grasp of [...]’, ‘begin to see the glimmerings of [...]’, ‘for the first time’) and — ‘untypical’ of scientific discourse — expressing the personal elation of discovery (‘seems to me particularly exciting about the present period’).

3.1.3. Justifying own approach and undermining alternatives

Just as Chomsky’s science metaphor has enabled his promises about linguistic truths, this same discursive mechanism has also been carried over into Chomksy’s linguistic argumentation as the very basis of rationality and validity. That is, Chomsky’s chosen science-metaphor has been employed as the ground for defending his own approach and refuting alternative ones. In such discourse, metaphor again acquires the status of ‘real’ argument; linguistic argumentation becomes entangled with properties of ordinary discourse. More importantly, in such cases, we see that the metaphor informing Chomksy’s notion of language and linguistics is motivated socially and ideologically as well: it serves to justify

his own theory and practice and to reject or exclude other rival approaches. Just a few examples will illustrate the point.

> [10] Phenomena that are complicated enough to be worth studying generally involve the interaction of several systems. **Therefore** you *must* [italics original] **abstract some object** of study, you **must eliminate** those factors which are not pertinent [...] **In the natural sciences** this isn't **even** discussed, it is self-evident. In the human sciences, people continue to question it. **That is unfortunate**. (Chomsky, 1979, p. 57)

Here the nature of language is implicitly taken to be *the same* as the nature of an object in the natural sciences (NB. 'That is unfortunate', the presupposition of which makes it apparent that they *are* the same). In this way, the metaphorical origin of the notion of language we saw earlier is obscured. But the point I want to make here is that collapsing the distinction between the human and natural sciences and deploying the latter as the standard for the former is not a disinterested course of action; rather, they do two good turns for Chomsky. First, it should be noticed that the recourse to the natural sciences here occurs in a particular context, when, as anyone familiar with the linguistics literature would know, his practice of isolating and idealising linguistic objects is being loudly and often ungenerously criticised. Erasing the metaphorical origin and turning the linguistic object into a natural-science object, along with the corresponding methodological approach, serve rhetorically to shield himself from the attacks and, moreover, to justify his practice. In terms of Chomsky's own implicit argumentation: since the object of linguistic research is connected with other things but since it can be isolated from them, just as in natural science, abstraction and idealisation are only a logical imperative. This leads to my next point.

Second, Chomsky's recourse to natural science in the conceptualisation of language serves to undermine and exclude other approaches. Specifically, this social effect is accomplished through: (1) presuming the paradigm of natural science to be the sole approach to scientific knowledge on the one hand and at the same time; (2) emphasising the difference or deviance of other approaches from this paradigm. This discursive strategy is at times implicit and at times explicit in his interview text/talk:

> [11] In my opinion, many psychologists have a **curious** definition of their discipline. A definition that is **destructive, suicidal. A dead end**. They want to confine themselves solely to the study of performance — behaviour — yet, as I've said, it **makes no sense** to construct a discipline that studies the manner in which a system is acquired or utilized, but refuses to consider the nature of the system. In my opinion, in order to do good psychology one **must** start by identifying a cognitive domain — vision, for example — that is to say, a domain which can be considered as a system, or a mental organ, that is more or less integrated. (Chomsky, 1979, p. 49)

[12] M.R. [interviewer, in the context of talking about sociolinguistics]: Aren't sociologists seeking to preserve the methods they use at present, their interviews, surveys, statistics, and so on, which take the place of scientific practice?
N.C. [Chomsky]: Again, in itself this type of approach is neither good nor bad. **The question is** whether it leads to the discovery of principles that are significant. We are back to the **difference** between natural history and **natural science**. In natural history, whatever you do is fine. If you like to **collect stones**, you can classify them according to their colour, their shape, and so forth. Everything is of equal value, **because you are not looking for principles. You are amusing yourself**, and nobody can object to that. **But in the natural sciences**, it is **altogether different**. There the search is for the discovery of intelligible structure and for explanatory principles. **In the natural sciences**, the facts have no interest in themselves, but only to the degree to which they have bearing on explanatory principles or on hidden structures that have some intellectual interest. [...] **Natural science**, as **distinct from** natural history, is **not** concerned with the phenomena in themselves, but with the principles and the explanations that they have some bearing on. There [sic] are **simply two entirely different things**. (Chomsky, 1979, pp. 58–59)

[13] **No discipline can** concern itself in a productive way with the acquisition or utilization of a form of knowledge, **without** being concerned with the *nature* (italics original) of **that system of knowledge**. [...] If psychology were to limit itself to the study of models of learning or perception or speech while **excluding from its field of investigation the system itself** that is thus acquired or utilized, it would **condemn itself to sterility**. That kind of delimitation of psychology would be quite **pointless**. At this point, **linguistics understood as the study of the system of language seems to fill a conceptual gap** in the manner in which psychology is often conceived. (Chomsky, 1979, pp. 43–44)

In these instances, the criterion of scientific research is spelt out following the model of *natural science* — as depending on whether one starts with a presumption of some hidden phenomenon and then goes on to look for the laws underlying it. That this is the *only* standard for *all* scientific activity is implied through modal expressions like 'should', 'must', 'properly', '[n]o discipline can [...] without [...]'. Next to this standard, other approaches (e.g. sociolinguistics, process-oriented psychology) are singled out as deviating from that standard — by negation ('you are not looking for principles') and by contrast (e.g. 'altogether different', 'simply two entirely different things'). Effectively, they are banished from science. Worse still, the current metaphorical process renders the alternatives as of no intellectual value. Thus borrowing from natural science is but a guise, in a way, for justifying his own, much attacked practice of idealisation on the one side and for defeating rival ways of doing psychology and linguistics on the other. In this way, too, his talk of sociolinguistics as 'stone collecting', 'amusing oneself', and of process-oriented psychology as 'suicidal', 'dead end', 'pointless', etc.

becomes only neutral, or, indeed, natural-ised. As an aside, it may also be pointed out here that it is apparent that in such instances Chomsky opposes the kind of psychology that does not conceptualise its object of investigation in the *natural-science* way as he does. But this effectively also undermines and excludes any non-Chomskyan type of linguistics, because he has categorised language and linguistics as part of psychology (Chomksy, 1979).

3.2. Halliday: language as (instrumental) system

Similar to the science metaphor in Chomsky's linguistic writing, there are metaphors built into the theoretical and methodological foundations of Halliday's systemic linguistics. (So placing the case of Halliday here is not meant to contrast with that of Chomsky. They are not discussed together, however, because different kinds of metaphor are at stake.) Just as Chomsky presupposes language as a hidden cognitive device, entirely consistent with Saussure's argument for conceiving language as unobservable *langue*, so Halliday makes comparable assumptions about what he terms 'the meaning potential', 'instrument', 'language/linguistic system', '(lexico)grammar', 'code', or 'unconscious', etc. That is, the real starting-point of Halliday's research programme is something *potential*, as opposed to the actual (language use). What I shall pay special attention to below is, likewise, how metaphors have gone into the formation of this 'something potential' and how they have consequently become the foundations or justifications for the systemic-functional approach.

3.2.1. Language as language development

To start with, it may be noted that, in Halliday's systemic-functional view of language (1973, 1978, 1985), the basic characteristic of language is 'functional', in the sense that its interior is assumed to have been shaped by and therefore reflects the external social environment and human needs (in addition to other senses of the term). This extra-linguistic object is described by Halliday (1978, p. 2) as 'both "good to think" and "good to eat"'. The question I want to ask in this study is how the 'functional' nature of language itself is defined and defended and subsequently deployed. There is no external evidence for the functional organisation of language, as Halliday states (1973, p. 23). Therefore, (in addition to trying to find evidence from within a language) Halliday turns to comparative or metaphorical means, which I find to be three in kind, viz. language as (1) child language development; (2) cultural and human evolution, and (3) the unconscious. In this subsection, I shall focus on Halliday's reliance on Malinowski's observation of language *development of the child* and, in close connection with that, Malinowski's thesis that *ontogeny provides an analogue for* phylogeny:

> [14] It was in **the language of young children** that **Malinowski** saw most clearly the functional origins of the language system. [...] **Similarly** all uses of language [...] were to be explained in terms of certain very elementary functions. It **may be true** that **the developing language system of the child in**

> **some sense traverses, or at least provides an analogy for**, the stages through which language itself has evolved. (Halliday, 1973, p. 23)

> [15] To say this is in effect to claim, **with Malinowski**, that **ontogeny does in some respect provide a model for** phylogeny. **We cannot examine the origins of language**. (Halliday, 1973, p. 34; see also p. 44)

> [16] The social functions which language is serving in the life of the child determine both the options which he creates for himself and their realizations in structure. **We see this clearly in the language of young children**, once we begin to think of language development as the development of the social functions of language and of a meaning potential associated with them. **However**, although this connection between the functions of language and the linguistic system is clearest in the case of the language of very young children, **it is essentially, I think**, a feature of language as a whole. The internal organization of natural language can **best** be explained in the light of the social functions which language has evolved to serve. (Halliday, 1973, pp. 33–34)

In these statements it can be seen, first of all, that Halliday, following Malinowski, makes speculations about the functional structure of language by explicitly drawing upon its similarity with language development (N.B. 'Similarly', [14]), analogy with language development ('provides an analogy for', [14]), the model of language development (N.B. 'provide a model for', [15]), the inference from language development (N.B. 'We see this clearly in', 'is the clearest in the case of', [16]), and even 'substance' of language development (N.B. 'traverse', [14]). In other words, the characteristics of the child language development are mapped onto the adult language. At this point, it may be noted that there is a further sense in which a metaphorical process is involved in the characterisation of the functional nature of language. That is, some of the comparative processes are extrapolative or uncertain (N.B. 'It may be true', [14] and 'in some sense', [14]). Elsewhere Halliday (1973, p. 24) declares that Malinowski's functional thesis on the child language is merely conjectural: 'Malinowski's ideas were *rather ahead of his time*, and they were *not yet backed up by adequate investigations of language development*' [emphasis mine].

However, despite the fact that Halliday makes explicit use of comparative processes, it can be argued, paradoxically, that such ploys are not merely heuristic or pedagogical; rather, they are defining, constraining and penetrating in the presumption of the functional character of language. In other words, they constitute the description itself. For one thing, we have to view such metaphorical uses in the wider argumentative context of modern Western linguistics, where and when the 'functional' is being countered with the 'formal', as represented for example by Chomsky's approach. For another, the metaphor of the child language development, though only tentative in Halliday's wording, has been used as a potential *argument* for the preferred functional understanding.

Let us take the last quote [16] for example. As anyone familiar with Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics would recognise, the first statement is its basic theoretical conception of language. This is being warranted by the case of 'the language of young children' because it is offered as what might be called evidential ground; N.B. 'We see this clearly in [...]'. On top of that, as if that piece of evidence were not solid enough, an appeal to personal rationality is offered; N.B. 'it is [...] I think, a feature of language as a whole' in the ensuing sentence. More crucially for our thesis here, the foregoing suggestive characteristic of the child language has been turned into something essentialistic in the same appeal to individual authority: it has become 'is essentially [...]'. Still another signal for reading this metaphor as argumentative is that in the final sentence there is an attempt to exclude other alternative (e.g. formal) ways of explaining language by the use of 'best'; otherwise, the sentence roughly echoes the initial statement. Given these strands of evidence we may assert that at the base of Halliday's notion of language is a discursive metaphor of the child language development.

3.2.2. Language as evolution

Closely related to the metaphorical notion of language as language development is the construction of language as an evolutionary system in Halliday's writing. That is, the functional organisation of language is built upon a parallel argument from a different plane, viz. cultural and linguistic evolution. Specifically, it is presumed that the adaptive process of language over hundreds and thousands of years gives language a functional character. In the words of Halliday (1973, p. 22):

> [17] [...] another question, no less significant, is that of the relation between the functions of language and language itself. If language has evolved in the service of certain functions, that may in the broadest sense be called 'social' functions, has this **left its mark**? Has the character of language been shaped and determined by what we use it for? **There are a number of reasons for suggesting that it has** [...]. (Halliday, 1973, p. 22)

Two points need to be highlighted here. First, Halliday posits here two separate issues, evolution of language on the one hand and 'language itself' on the other. Second, the evolutionary concept in question is to be traced, outside linguistics, through Malinowski, Darwin, back to Aristotle, where structure, biological or behavioural, is seen as derived from and adaptive to human needs and social environment. In addition, it is apparent that there is no evidence for the alleged 'evolution' of language, as Halliday himself admits (1973, p. 23), 'There are no living specimens of its [i.e. language's] ancestral types' and (1973, p. 34) '[w]e cannot examine the origins of language'.

What Halliday is trying to suggest here however is that a process — cultural and linguistic evolution — has shaped the product — the linguistic system; n.b. 'left its mark' and 'There are a number of reasons for suggesting that it has'.

Because two separate domains are involved here and because there is an inferential process between the two, whose very basis is doubtful, we may claim that the recourse to the evolutionary idea is argumentative and that the functional nature of language is premised on this metaphorically originated argument. To further illustrate this point, let us look at another example:

> [18] [I]t is the uses of language that, **over tens of thousands of generations, have shaped** the system. Language has **evolved to satisfy** human **needs**; and the way it is organized **is functional with respect to these needs — it is not arbitrary**. (Halliday, 1985, p. xiii)

Here the notion of the functional system of language may again be seen as grounded in a metaphorical argument — inferring from matters of a different domain, viz. cultural and linguistic evolution (see also Halliday, 1973, p. 23, for uses of 'all stages of cultural evolution' and 'level of linguistic evolution'). I have already alluded to the wider argumentative context enshrouding the functional and formal explanations of language. Here I need only to point out two textual features as evidence for the potentially contentious nature of the presumed functional organisation of language. One is the description 'and the way it is organized is functional [...]'; it is consistent with the foregoing factual statements as a 'logical' consequence (despite the vague conjunction 'and'). Another is the negation of the opposite of being functional — 'not arbitrary'. From these moves it may be seen that recourse to the metaphors of 'cultural evolution' and 'linguistic evolution' is argumentatively motivated, in spite of Halliday's realisation/admission that there is no evidence for them (Halliday, 1973, p. 23). Further, it may be argued that the metaphorical basis of Halliday's linguistic construction is embedded in a degree of reflexivity in his functional explanation of language, as implicit in the current excerpt: Language is explained in terms of 'human needs' and yet at the same time the latter are assumed to be reflected in the former (N.B. 'functional with respect to these needs').

3.2.3. Language as unconscious

Still another metaphorical notion that Halliday draws upon in defining the nature of language is 'the unconscious'. Since 'the unconscious' comes in via the notion of speech in Halliday's linguistic theorising, we might as well begin with that. Following Saussure, Halliday maintains that the language system is best captured from the spoken mode (rather than the written). The reason why speech is more suitable is, according to Halliday (1985, pp. xxiii–xxiv), that it contains richer information about language: 'Why is speech important? [...] potential of the system is more richly developed, and more fully revealed, in speech. [...] It is in spontaneous, operational speech that the grammatical system of a language is most fully exploited [...]. This is why we have to look to spoken discourse for at least some of the evidence on which to base our theory of the language' (cf. Halliday, 1985, p. xxv).

If Halliday wants to base linguistic theory on (the grammar of) speech, then

what is his basic conception of it? The key term for it that Halliday uses is 'unconscious' as in:

> [19] There are perhaps two main reasons for this [why speech is important for theorising grammar], underlying both of which is **the same general principle**, **that of the *unconscious*** [italics original] **nature** of spoken language. [...].
> Lying beyond both the points raised above is **the unconscious nature of spontaneous** speech [...]. (Halliday, 1985, pp. xxiv–xxv)

But what does he mean by 'the unconscious'?

> [20] The complexity of spoken language is **more like that of dance**; it is not static and dense but mobile and intricate, **like**,
> [an extended spoken sample]. (Halliday, 1985, p. xxiv)

> [21] In spoken language, we perform without thinking. Talking is **like walking** (and **developmentally the two go together**; protolanguage goes with crawling, language with walking): if you think about it, **you stumble (which is a metaphor we often use**). (Halliday, 1985, p. xxv)

> [22] So far as I know, no-one who is tone deaf speaks his language on a monotone, or with an intonation that is in any way disordered; **such people merely have trouble in bringing it to consciousness**, and therefore in analysing that of their own language or learning that of a foreign one. **In the same way**, those who are 'grammar deaf' make all the same subtle semantic distinctions as other speakers of the language; yet they fail to recognize them when they are pointed out; and will even deny that they are possible. (I know of **no quick cure for this condition. But a good dose of analysis of spontaneous speech can help**.) (Halliday, 1985, p. xxvi)

So here, we do not have to go back to Freud's or Jung's psychoanalysis of 'the unconscious' to understand what 'the unconscious' of human language constitutes. These passages on the unconscious of language are rich in metaphors. 'The conscious' that Halliday speaks is predicated of further metaphors, such as 'walking', 'dancing', '(pathological) condition'. Therefore it may be said that the complex system of language that Halliday pursues is defined by a layer-upon-layer and one-after-another metaphor: language-as-the-unconscious-as-walking/dancing/condition. Such heavy, exclusive reliance on properties of other chosen categories in functionalist theory reflects not just the difficulty of conceptualising and defining the object of research in its own terms and, indeed, in any other ways, but also the thorough-going discursive, metaphorical mediation, and saturation, of what is taken for granted in linguistic enquiry.

More interestingly and more importantly, there may be certain attempts observed here that are made at the same time to justify, and thereby naturalise, those metaphors employed. The two brackets in [21] are a case in point. Following the explicit use of the notion of 'walking' as metaphor, there is,

paradoxically, a first bracketed allusion to 'development' when speaking and walking take place simultaneously. The bracketing move at this juncture, despite its potential meaning of playing down relevance, accomplishes in effect the argumentative role of rationalising and naturalising the concept of speaking as walking. In addition of this justification through (developmental) time, there is the implicit resort to *common sense* for warranting the preferred metaphor: When Halliday reminds us that the metaphor of stumbling is something we 'often use', we are invited to take his words to mean 'therefore that metaphor is not really metaphorical but true'.

In example [22], we can find yet another way of defending the notion of grammatical unconsciousness. Here the unconscious is paralleled with the capacity of tone-deaf people to make tone distinctions in practice. It is not that ordinary laypeople do not have the grammatical unconscious, according to Halliday, it is merely that they have a 'pathological condition' in that respect, and that what they need for it is a large 'dose' of spoken grammar. In this way, one metaphorical process is reinforced and effectively naturalised by another kind of metaphor.

3.2.4. Justification for writing grammar

Using metaphors to shape and define the object of linguistic research is entirely consistent with the Saussurean notion of *langue* as an arcane phenomenon for linguistic science. Saying that the human language system is really like child language, a possible product of unspecified linguistic and cultural evolution, and that it exists at the level of the unconscious (as dance does) serves to create an intellectual interest in demystifying it. Moreover, since grammar is viewed as the 'central processing unit' of a language and discourse (Halliday, 1985, p. xxii and pp. xxxiv–xxxv), a need to spell it out arises naturally as well. Hence Halliday declares the pursuit of the 'internal' organisation of language to be the primary goal of functional linguistics (Halliday, 1973, p. 45). In this subsection, we shall see that the chosen metaphors that we witnessed earlier serve fittingly to warrant the subsequent practice of writing (functional) grammar.

> [23] This [talking is like walking] means that the categories of our language represent unconscious rather than conscious slices of meaning; and this **is one of the main problems for a grammatical theory**. (Halliday, 1985, pp. xxiv–xxv)

> [24] The meaning is built into our unconscious. [...].
> **This book** [*Introduction to Functional Grammar*] **is** [...] **an interpretation of** the English code. (Halliday, 1985, p. xxvi)

> [25] **[A] grammar is an attempt to crack** the code. (Halliday, 1985, p. xxxi)

> [26] In order to understand how language works, **therefore, we have to engage with the grammar**. (Halliday, 1985, pp. xxxiv–xxxv)

In these fragments it may be seen that there is a tacit assumption of an obscured, sophisticated and controlling system. Such a phenomenon is implicit in or invoked by such constructions as 'one of the main problems for a grammatical theory', 'the English code', 'to crack the code', 'to understand how language works [...] we have to engage with the grammar'.

It may also be noted that in these excerpts the taken-for-granted hidden code is in fact used as the argument or rationale for the enterprise of grammatical theory. For, the presumed particular nature of the linguistic system, or indeed 'the conscious', effectively suggests the necessity of deciphering work, hence grammar-writing. In fact, Halliday explicitly tells us the need for and importance of the job of working on grammar (e.g. 'The meaning is built into our unconscious', 'we have to engage with the grammar').

Earlier we saw that language is viewed as having the nature of child language development, as being evolved, and as unconscious (as in walking and dancing). With respect to the present notion of 'code' or 'grammar', these metaphorically charged conceptions are perfectly consistent; only they are presupposed here. Thus, looking back on the metaphorical mediations in the background, one may realise that the present job of writing the grammar is indeed justified and highly valuable. And reading the grammar will enlighten us on ourselves. In this sense we may assert that the choice and use of specific metaphors have a constraining and penetrating effect on the (subsequent) linguistic practice (in this case, writing the grammar). Another way of saying this is that the justification for the job of writing grammar is facilitated by positing a central processing system that is evolved and unconscious.

4. Concluding remarks

In this paper, I attempted a re-orientation of linguistics. Instead of proceeding from the traditional premises and pursuing the conventional aims, I took the discourse of linguistics as the topic of research and examined in some detail the ways in which the basic, taken-for-granted 'real' object of modern Western linguistics is presumed, discussed and utilised, with special reference to the use of metaphor.

Through discourse analysis in the SCL perspective, we found that the foundational presumptions of 'language' in both Chomsky's and Halliday's linguistic theories are in fact grounded in and penetrated by preferred and recursive metaphors. In other words, the very stuff named 'language', 'the cognitive device', or 'the linguistic system', is not simply a thing that is pre-given, pre-existing, out there in the human world, something that linguists only have to theoretically model and empirically specify. It has been rendered present and real by linguistics-writers through metaphorical and rhetorical devices.

Not only have metaphors been used to make present, define and fashion the object of linguistic enquiry, but we also saw that they have affected linguistic theory formation and argumentation by functioning as rational arguments and by

facilitating other assumptions about language. For instance, they are used to form the basis for dismissing or refuting alternative approaches and theories of language on the one hand and for justifying one's own practices or accounts on the other. In this sense, the way that the object of enquiry is presumed and conceptualised is also oriented to ideological interests. From these metaphorical, rhetorical and social perspectives, I may assert more generally that there is a profound kinship of 'the object of linguistic enquiry' with ordinary, commonsensical discourse — to adapt Foucault's turn of phrase: 'the profound kinship of language with the world' (Foucault, 1970, p. 43).

Findings and observations of the kinds that we have made here may be utilised to help open up possibilities of changing existing linguistic discourse and thinking. For example, we can start re-formulating questions so that integration of disciplines, say linguistics, discourse analysis and social theory, becomes possible. Since discourse is a constituent part of linguistics, we can also try to positively act upon the object of study, e.g. by creating helpful (versions of) linguistic reality, say 'language used in real circumstances' for examining its effects on people's lives. Further, given the current case findings, it should now be realised that norms of linguistics discourse should be developed, such as avoidance of argumentative use of metaphors, especially when justifying one's own approach and refuting others'.

Clearly, the present case study is but a preamble to a more inclusive examination of other parts of linguistic theory writing and to a wider-ranging study of the discourse of linguistics writing as a whole. Here I have concentrated only on a few metaphorical and rhetorical aspects of the foundational notions (of language) in a few (though most influential) works of a couple of leading linguists. I am convinced that more data analysis will show for instance that there may be other kinds of metaphorical basis, say geological or arboreal. There may be marked variations and inconsistencies in linguistics writing (say between theoretical ideals and practical analysis). And there may be dominant ideologies in particular theoretical formulations to exclude the social-academic Other. In fact, I hope that what we have seen in this study will serve to signal the benefit of re-considering the discourse of linguistics as a whole.

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