THE DILEMMA OF PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics is the field of linguistic practice, language in action, the use of language; it is the moment of how the sentence functions in actual speech situations. At the same time, pragmatics is the field of conventional utilization of linguistic elements in well-determined situational contexts. It concentrates on the ritualized modalities of using language.

These two features, seen and understood simultaneously, contradict the Saussurian langue - parole. "La langue" has an institutional and standardized character by virtue of a social consensus. It represents the coercive factor, the social constraint upon the individual. In opposition with it, "la parole" represents the active aspect of language, the free and spontaneous action of the individual, the generative moment of language 1. Pragmatics seems to belong to both of them

The standardized character of linguistic practice is the argument - but not the only one - put forward by pragmatics in favour of the abolition of Saussure's rigid opposition.

Since sociolinguistics aims at demonstrating the systematic covariation of linguistic and social structures, it adopts a polemic position, similar to the one we have mentioned above. The idea of structure is extended to speech as well. At the same time, "free variation" is not truly free, it is correlated with systematic social differences. The actual facts invalidate the theoretical conclusions concerning the exclusive autonomy of linguistics, according to which languages are uniform, homogeneous and monolithic structures.

To the argument of the standardized and conventional character of linguistic practice we add both the argument of the presence of subjectivity in language and the argument of the limitations of linguistic semantics. The last two arguments speak about the penetration of "speech into language".

On the one hand, Em. Benveniste (1974) noticed the presence in language of some entities whose status is generated by the act of speech and which are the self reference elements : the class of deixis, performative and delocutive verbs, the imperative, the vocative etc. : "Il faut donc distinguer les entites qui ont dans la langue leur statut plein et permanent et celles qui, emanant de l'enonciation, n'existent que dans le reseau d'[individus] que l'enonciation cree et par rapport a l'[ici-maintenant] du locuteur (vol. II, p. 84).

On the other hand, Osv. Ducrot (1972) noticed that the sense cannot be reduced in its totality to the sense derived from language. What must be added is the value acquired by words in the process of speech. The verb to do, whose

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meaning is "to perform / to carry out an action", acquires, during its imperative utilization, the sense of a command : Do what I say ! The sentence It's late ! has, in certain situational contexts of use the sense of It is time to go home or Let us go home !

There is no longer any distinction between language, which fixes the sense, and speech, which communicates it. At the same time, the effects of speech on discourse situations are not accidental, but governed by rules : "Nous voulons seulement faire apparaitre que la signification enregistree par la langue comporte, comme partie integrante, certaines conventions qui fixent, arbitrairement, les effets de l'emploi sur la situation de discours". (Ducrot, 1972, p. 25).
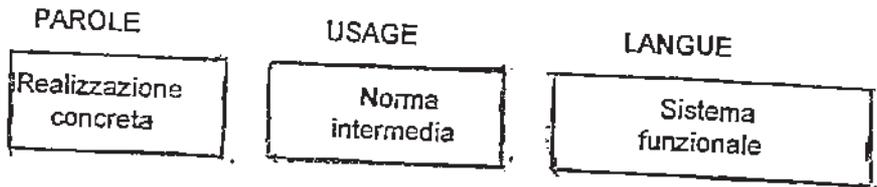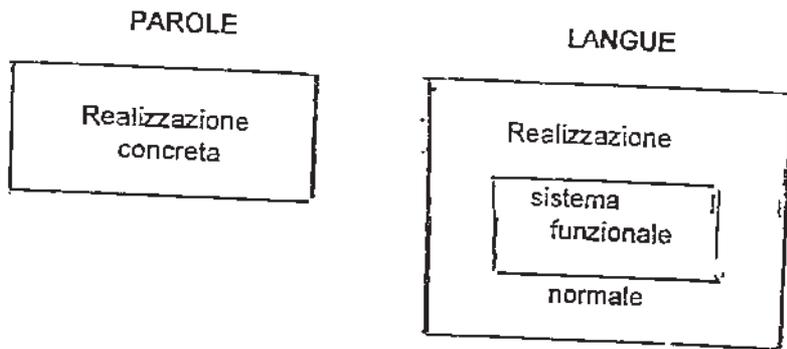
In the attempt, based on the above-mentioned arguments, to extend the concept of "speech" and, consequently, that of "linguistics", we have retained only the need of extending the linguistic area so as to cover the field of pragmatics and that of "parole". We consider erroneous the attempt to fix pragmatics inside the opposition "langue - parole".

The opposition langue - parole had for Saussure a special methodological function and we consider its elimination to be inefficient. The respective opposition represents, from the linguistic point of view, the equivalent of the philosophical oppositions general - particular, static - dynamic, abstract - concrete, formal - material, possible - actual, constant - occasional, ideal - phenomenal, and, finally, metaphysical - physical. "En separant la langue de la parole, on separe du meme coup : 1^0 ce qui est social de ce qui est individuel; 2^0 ce qui est essentiel de ce qui est accessoire et plus ou moins accidentel" (Saussure, 1967, p. 30).

However much we might try to assign to speech the features of language, it remains an irreductible element, phenomenal, concrete and individual in character, which sends us back to Saussure's concept. Trying to abolish or displace the respective opposition means contradicting a philosophical presupposition without offering a substitute.

E. Coseriu, in his studies Teoria del Lenguaje y linguistica general and Sistema, norma e "parola", achieved a first step towards establishing shades in the Saussurian distance and not shortening it, through the fact that he introduced the concept of norm, an intermediary between "langue" and "parole". In contradistinction to those who are trying to do away with the concept of speech (in the Saussurian acception), Coseriu lays down a new distinction inside the concept of "langue" namely realizzazioni normale / sistema funzionale.
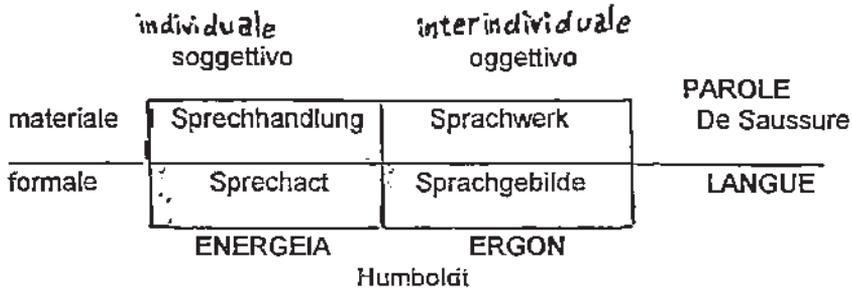We thus have :

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        PAROLE                         LANGUE

   ┌─────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────┐
   │                 │      │                          │
   │   Realizzazione │      │      Realizzazione       │
   │    concreta     │      │   ┌──────────────────┐   │
   │                 │      │   │   sistema        │   │
   └─────────────────┘      │   │   funzionale     │   │
                            │   └──────────────────┘   │
                            │                          │
                            │        normale           │
                            └──────────────────────────┘


     PAROLE              USAGE              LANGUE

┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│ Realizzazione │   │    Norma     │   │     Sistema      │
│   concreta    │   │  intermedia  │   │    funzionale    │
└──────────────┘   └──────────────┘   └──────────────────┘
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"La langue non e solo sistema funzionale ma anche attuazione normale, oppure si presenta imprescindibile la necessita di trovare per esse un terzo campo, per essempio quello che certi studiosi hanno identificato vagamente col cosiddetto uso linguistico, che dovrebbe essere qualcosa come una norma intermedia e secondaria permessa dal sistema stesso e la parole." (p. 245 - 246). "La distinzione fra sistema e norma risolve le difficolta della dicotomia langue - parole e contribuisce a chiarire il funzionamento del linguaggio, l'attivita linguistica, come creazione e ripetizione (recreazione), movimento obbligato e movimento libero, nel quadro delle possibilita offerte dal sistema" (p. 252).

From our point of view, in order to find a place for pragmatics inside linguistics, it seems more effective to combine simultaneously several features, bearing in mind the same idea of refining the distance langue - parole. The concept of norm, introduced by Coseriu, only partially solves the problem of pragmatics. It represents a socially performed aspect of the linguistic fact, concrete and like language itself, it is a produce and not an activity. It is useful to follow the series of triple oppositions : parole - norma - sistema : actual - actual - conceptual, individual - social - social, concrete - concrete (with an increased degree of abstraction) - abstract.

Taking Buehler's diagram (Coseriu, Sistema, p. 238) as the starting point, a diagram which besides Saussure's opposition, introduces Humboldt's (energeia - ergon, i.e. activity - produce) :

	individuale soggettivo	interindividuale oggettivo	
			PAROLE De Saussure
materiale	Sprechhandlung	Sprachwerk	
formale	Sprechact	Sprachgebilde	LANGUE
	ENERGEIA	ERGON	
	Humboldt		

We are trying to outline a diagram having three axes, corresponding to the series of three oppositions : static - dynamic (or produce - activity, corresponding to ergon - energeia), individual - interindividual (or subjective - objective), material - formal (or actual - virtual / possible). Although the three oppositions were introduced by Buehler into his diagram, he did not take them into account. We thus have the following model :
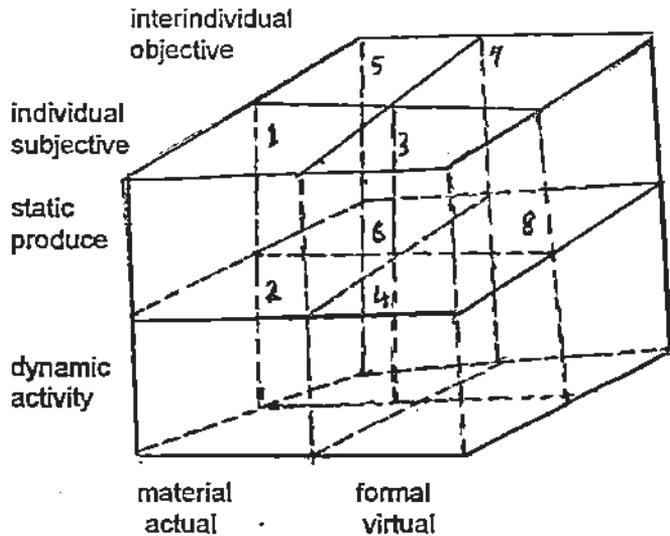
In accordance with the matrixes obtained by combining three features we can fit in the various concepts put forward by different authors dealing with the respective problem:

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1. indiv. sub - mat - produce	- Realizzazione concreta	⎫⎫ parole
2. indiv. sub - mat - activity	- Sprechhandlung	⎬⎭
3. indiv. sub - form - produce	- Norma individuale	⎭
4. indiv. sub - form - activity	- Sprechact	performance
5. interind. ob - mat - produce	- Realizzazione normale	⎫
6. interind. ob - mat - activity	- Dialogue	⎬
7. interind. ob - form - produce	- Sistema / linguistic competence	⎭
8. interind. ob - form - activity	- Pragmatic competence / ling. act; acte de langage	

The field of pragmatics - as we can see - is placed on the intersection of the features : interindividual - formal - dynamic / activity and corresponds to pragmatic competence. It is corrrelated with dialogue in the field of material feature. It is opposed to the concept of "langue" (sistema) being an activity (dynamic) and not a produce (static), and it is opposed to the concept of norm by the same opposition (which, however, differs from the system at the level of the opposition material - formal), and, finally it is opposed to the concept of "parole" at the level of the oppositions interindividual - individual, formal - material.

The equivalence of Saussure's opposition langue - parole to Chomsky's competence - performance which was too hastily established for the sake of symmetry, obcsures linguistic reality. The concept of performance corresponds only partially to that of parole; it also overlaps the concept of norm of usage, introduced by Coseriu. If, on the basis of competence, we can generate the totality of possible correct sentences in a language, performance chooses only those accepted by "usage". Thus, theoretically it is possible to generate an infinite recursive sequence, but practically it is rejected by usage.

The matrix justified the position of those linguists who tried to fix pragmatics at the level of language, i.e. at the level of formal and interindividual. For instance, Searle asserts : "It still might seem that my approach is simply, in Saussurian terms, a study of 'parole' rather than 'langue'. I am arguing, however, that an adequate study of speech acts is a study of langue ". (1970, p. 17). See also D. Wunderlich, (1968, p. 1) : "Keineswegs handelt es sich um Phanomen der sprachlichen Performanz". Or : "Eine Theorie der sprachlichen Kompetenz notwendig eine Pragmatik der Sprechsituation einschlie Ben muB." (p. 4). Meaning : "It does not definitely deal with a phenomenon of speech performance". Or : "A Theory of speech competence does not necessarily have to include a pragmatics of speech situation".

In order to avoid a possible confusion concerning the concept of speech act in relation with one of the terms of Saussure's oppositions it is preferable to use

the notion of linguistic act (in French it is also possible to use the notion of acte de langage). Searle, in order to avoid this confusion, makes the following specification : "I shall approach the study of some of these problems in the philosophy of language through the study of what I call speech acts or linguistic acts or language acts". (1970, p. 4).

The domain of linguistics comprises fields 7 and 8, therefore, supplementing "linguistic competence" (in the sense given by Chomsky) by pragmatic competence. We are introducing the concept of pragmatic competence equivalent to that of communicative competence, but, from the theoretical point of view, more powerful and unambiguous2. If langue sends us to the field 7, introducing pragmatics into linguistics, it is implicitly possible to extend the concept of language itself. Language means not only a set of rules, relations or entities in relations, but also rules and relations in action. It is not only a produce, it might be understood as an activity as well. Pragmatics is the field of intersubjectivity, but not of a concrete or material present. It is the field of practice, of linguistic activity seen from the perspective of its institutional manifestation.

Including pragmatics in the study of language we thus witness a new process of resemiotization of linguistics, i.e. the reintroducing of linguistics in the study of signs and symbols.

The first introduction into semiotics was made by Saussure, defining language ("la langue") as a semiological institution : "La langue est un systeme de signes ... On peut donc concevoir une science qui etudie la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale ...nous la nommerons semiologia (du gree semeion, [signe]). La linguistique n'est qu'une partie de cette science generale". (p. 33)3.

Nowadays the semiotic dimension of linguistics is achieved on the basis of Morris' views (1946). According to him, semiotics has three components : syntactics - the study of the formal relations of signs to one another, semantics - the study of the formal relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable, and pragmatics - the study of the relations of signs to the interpreters (p. 217).

The advantage offered to linguistics by its semiotic interpretation is that language regains a third dimension, the pragmatic one, which means that the study of language is placed inside the process of communication. The semiotic perspective renders the integrated image of language, reevaluating its communicative valences.

Therefore, by extending the concept of language, we regain its integral dynamic dimension and, at the same time, we reaffirm the social, interindividual character of language, present in Saussure's definition.

The reproach made by Ducrot (1972, p. 33) to Saussure that he places the definition of language inside the communicative relation and then abandons this idea, appears, from the pragmatic point of view, as a rectification.

For Saussure, the conventional and coercive character of linguistic data is a consequence of language's functioning as an interindividual reality. In language private property does not exist, as Jakobson says : everything is socialized. To speak or, more accurately, to "practice" a language means to enrol in a vast institution, signing a contract by which one undertakes to observe its norms. Breaking that contract means being rejected from the complicity of mutual "intelligiblity".

At the pragmatic level, linguistic activity is not spontaneous, but governed by rules. Linguistic convention concerns not only the relation between the sign and the referent or the relation between the signs themselves, but also the relation between the sign and its context of use.

The standardized connection of the sign with the moment of speech reveals the intention with which the sign was used. The conventional character of the pragmatic data represents a way of access to the generator of the act of communication. We thus recognize that particular quality of language by which it enables a subject to open himself to the world.

Not only is pragmatics unhindered by the paradox of the conventional character of the act of "speech", but it even amplifies it, transforming speech into a vast ceremonial. The institution of language, at the pragmatic level, is not just viewed as the constraint of the system or norms, but as a possibility of the individual to enrol in ritualized activity. Because it lies at a junction-point of individual and interindividual, pragmatics discovers a new aspect of social integration, achieving a fundamental theoretical mutation. Integration in interindividuality represents - beyond a "free" acceptance, under the pressure of necessity, of a social coercion - the opportunity to set up a reality. Subscribing to a convention means gaining access to freedom of initiative. Consequently, the institutional character of language reveals itself not only as functioning of the code, but also under the form of linguistic interaction.. In this respect, linguistic practice is possible, in the first place, by virtue of certain constitutive rules and not by virtue of regulative rules4.

Reconsidering Saussure's metaphor of the game5 of chess, we can give it a new interpretation : linguistic activity is like a game in which the partners impose upon each other situations which allow for openings to new mutations (changes of state, acts). Linguistic interaction is one of the modalities of social integration of the individual, an integration which results in a unitary and cooperative plural. An interagentive relation manifests itself simultaneously in a coagentive form.

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If, from the Saussurian perspective, the idea of institution implies that of system, from a pragmatic point of view, the idea of institution implies that of interaction.

The social character of language, renewed by pragmatics, implicitly favours an extralinguistic approach. The question is : to what extent are requirements imposed by Saussure concerning the autonomy of language still valid?

Saussure's predecessors had to resort to extralinguistic factors in order to find explanations for the changes occurring in language. The social charater of language was connected with these changes. The unity of language was determined by the nation as a social unit. For Saussure's predecessors the social criterion had an exogenous nature.

Adopting a polemic position towards this exterior determination, Saussure confers an endogenous character on the social nature of language. From the social character of language, Saussure derives its institutional way of functioning. The socialization of linguistic facts, by implicit convention, ensures their systematic functioning. The social factor rules individual behaviour and determines the stability of language. The individual cannot interfere in language without collective legislation.

In conclusion, for Saussure, the existence of language is autonomous from the context of its functioning, although the latter is the "medium" which enables it to exist. The changes that occur have an internal cause.

From the pragmatic point of view, the endogenous nature of the social character of language is still valid, but it concerns linguistic activity. Language itself viewed as interaction, becomes a form of intersubjective relation. The constitutive rule of reality by language presupposes a mutual determination of individuals in their entire psycho-social connection. In contradiction to psycho- and sociolinguistics, which study linguistic variation depending on psycho-social factors, in pragmatics, psycho-social distances represent the distributional element of interactional linguistic energy. The machanism of linguistic interaction has internal causes of development : each act is justified by the preceding one and generates the possibility of the following one. Linguistic interaction is self sufficient, justifying, once more from the pragmatic point of view, the idea of a functional (this time not a systematic) autonomy of language.

Notes

1 Cf. Saussure, 1967, p. 25 : "La langue est a la fois un produit social de la faculte du langue et un ensemble de conventions necessaires, adoptees par le corps social pour permettre l'exercice de cette faculte chez les individus". See p. 30 : "La parole est au contraire un acte individuel de volonte et d'intelligence".

2 The concept of communicative competence was introduced by sociolinguistics (cf. Del Hymes, On Communicative Competence). Extension of the concept of linguistic competence, the communicative competence is defined as the ability of utilization of language in concrete situations of speech. It was adopted by linguist - pragmaticians also. See, for instance, S. Dik, 1978, p. 4-5 : "(Communicative competence is) the ability to carry on social interaction by means of language".

3 In a parallel direction to Saussure's, but independently of him, Perice laid the base of semiotics as a possibility of a science of signs. Peirce took the name, under the form of semeiotic, from John Locke, who applied it to a science of signs and meanings, having as a point of departure logic itself conceived as the science of language. (See Benveniste, 1974, vol. II, p. 13).

4 See opposition introduced by Searle 1970 : "Regulative rules regulate antecedently or independently existing forms of behavior; for example, many rules of etiquette regulate interpersonal relationships which exist independently of the rules. But constitutive rules do not merely regulate, they create or define new forms of behaviour. The rules of football or chess, for example, do not merely regulate playing football or chess, but as it were they create the very possibility of playing such games". (p.33)

5 In contradistinction to Osw. Ducrot 1972a, p. 4, our opinion is that pragmatics does not substitute the concept of code by that of game, but associates them.

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