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Interpretability, Text Strategies, and Text Types

1

The subject of my paper is a global one, posing some of the ultimate questions that can be posed about human communication, language and literature. My purpose is to fly high to map a lot of ground, and my hope is to pose some questions and define some concepts in ways that might be helpful to students of literary communication.

For a number of years now, linguists have operated with concepts such as grammaticality, acceptability, and stylistic decorum or appropriateness (decorum being a concept that has been with us since the ancients). In my own personal variant of this terminology, grammaticality refers to relations between an utterance (usually a sentence) and a grammatical description of the language in question. A sentence is grammatical or ungrammatical in relation to a certain grammatical treatise. Acceptability is a concept relating an utterance to the judgements of suitably chosen informants: an utterance has high acceptability if it is approved of by a high proportion of judges. Techniques of acceptability studies have been described e.g. in GREENBAUM 1987. Appropriateness is contextualized acceptability: there are utterances which are acceptable in some contexts but odd or rude or excessively solemn in others. An appropriate expression is one that conforms to expectations in a certain definite situation. Appropriate expressions raise no eyebrows because of their form and style: if they surprise, they do so because of their contents.

These three concepts, however useful in their own spheres, fail to cover the most basic question of all, namely, when is a text interpretable (or comprehensible)? Could we perhaps learn to specify more precisely what makes it possible for a hearer or reader to understand a text? What do we mean by «understanding a text» anyway? Should we supplement «success concepts» such as grammaticality, acceptability, and appropriateness with a fourth, interpretability? If so, how are we to define interpretability?

Let me reveal my main point at once. It would be fallacious to expect that we could use linguistic form alone to draw the line between interpretability and non-interpretability. To cut a long story short: we all have daily experience of impromptu speech, where we understand our fellow men even when they mess up their syntax, make false starts, hesitate, pause, correct, and repair their utterances. There are discourses which function perfectly well in a speech situation but which are hard to analyse in terms of traditional syntax because they refuse to segment into proper clauses and sen-

tences. We also have experiences of texts which wilfully flout all plausible rules of syntactic well-formedness but all the same do a good job in their particular context. I am thinking of so-called modernistic poems for instance, and of the kind of advertising that attracts attention by its disregard of standards appropriate to, say, literate expository prose. In such contexts syntactic deviance can be a virtue instead of a sin.

2

As the language of literature is our concern, let me cite a few examples of what I have in mind. Unfortunately, the term «nonsense» has been used so loosely as to make it useless for my purposes. Edward LEAR is often called a writer of nonsense, and two of the *loci classici* of illustration of so-called «nonsense poetry» are Lewis CARROL's «Jabberwocky» and perhaps even EE CUMMINGS's «Anyone Lived In A Pretty How Town». A linguist should not rest happy with such indiscriminate lumping together of disparate phenomena. Edward LEAR's «nonsense» consists of evocations of funny worlds in normal English. Lewis CARROL's «nonsense» builds on the use of invented but graphotactically, phonotactically and semantically highly structured and suggestive words in normal syntactic frames. And EE CUMMINGS uses normal words but in warped syntax and an adventurous typography.

So, instead of talking about «nonsense» and of once again quoting these classic instances, let me give you a few other examples, this time from Russian and German literature. As all the texts I shall cite were presumably written as experiments, we might recall at the outset that experimental poetry can be roughly classified under three headings. There is stochastic poetry which is put together by statistical principles, including randomization, nowadays often by computer. There is concrete poetry whose typographical shape is suggestive of referents in a real world: you can give a poem about drinking the shape of a bottle on the printed page. And finally there is what one might lump together as Dada, allowing the possibility of Dada poetry long before the birth of Dadaism and the various Futurist and Dadaist Manifestos that began appearing around 1910 (QVARNSTRÖM 1973): «Ehe Dada da war, war Dada da,» as Hans ARP once put it. Note that I am here using Dada as a default category just as vague as «nonsense»: its only function is to contrast with stochastic and concrete poetry. There are many kinds of Dada.

My first example is a famous, or notorious, poem by Alexej KRUTJONYCH, one of three poems «written in my own language differing from others: their words lack definite meaning». The text runs as follows:

dyr bul ščyl
ubeššču
skum
vy so bu
r l ez

This «transrational poem», here cited from HARDING and JANGFELDT 1976 (Figure 1), was published in a book entitled *Pomada* in 1913. Not surprisingly, established cirtics failed to appreciate KRUTJONYCH's outrageous claim that these five lines contained more of the Russian national character than all of PUSHKIN's poetry put together! Granted, some of the letter and sound combinations may suggest existing lexemes of Russian such as *dyrá* «hole» and *bulka* «bun», whereas others seem to lack such semantic associations; to Russian ears, the lines of KRUTJONYCH's «poem» sound harsh and ugly. Nor did KRUTJONYCH avoid a conflict with basic rules of Russian orthography: the letter щ (štš) should not occur in front of ы (y). Also they fail to evoke a coherent world picture: for instance they resist summarizing. In a word: KRUTJONYCH's poem is not referentially interpretable. But it is all the same not meaningless: it carries meaning as a symptom of its creator's state of mind, his revolt against established literary patterns, his scoffing at traditions. Its meaning lies in the metamessage, to speak with Deborah TANNEN (1986), rather than in the message proper. And in

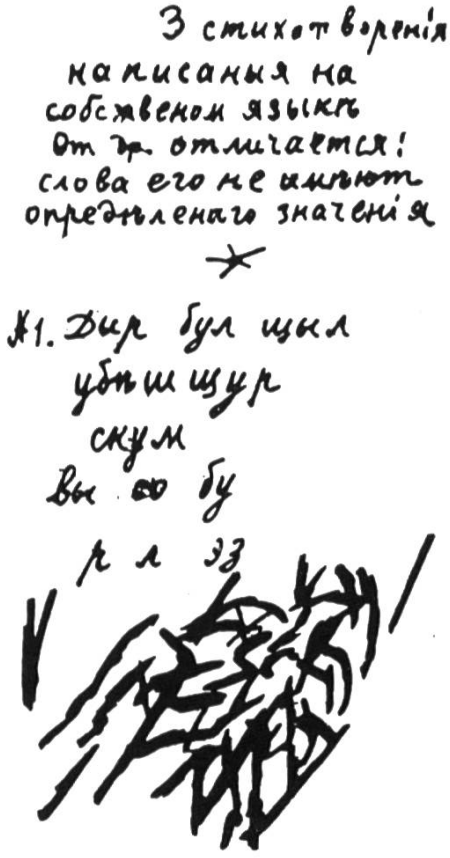


Figure 1

its revolt we can find an anticipation of 1917: perhaps KRUTJONYCH's claim was not so outrageous after all.

The reason why I wanted to cite KRUTJONYCH is that his «poem» teaches us an important lesson. Man is a meaning-hunting animal. If we cannot find a referential meaning in a message – that is, if we cannot discover the symbolic and syntactic function of the words and morphemes – we still do not give up. We shift our quest for meanings from semantics to pragmatics, and try to interpret the message as a symptom of its producer's mental and physical state and purpose. So, when semantics fails, pragmatics takes over. In most types of communication, message and metamessage work together in happy harmony, one supporting the other. In KRUTJONYCH's «poem», however, the message proper is minimal or null, and the metamessage must carry the burden of communication. And indeed the metamessage struck home: KRUTJONYCH is remembered and his «poem» is cited, for instance at this moment at St. Gallen, seventy-five years after its publication.

The Russian futurists are rightly famed for their many texts of interest to the student of interpretability. In Vassilij KAMENSKI's «armoured-concrete poems» for instance, typography was used as a futurist device, as a symbol of revolt against conventions. Typography is similarly important for his famous poem «Tango with Cows», whose referential message is clear enough not to daunt modern readers used to poetic experimentation. One Englishing of this text might run as follows:

> Life is shorter than the sparrow's squeak.
> Isn't it a dog floating
> On the block of ice in the spring flood?
> With tin-coated joy
> We look at fate.
> We are discoverers of countries,
> Worms under the skins of fruit
> Kings of the orange groves.
> We are cattleraisers.
> Perhaps we shall some time drink
> A goblet of wine
> For the health of the finished planets
> Or better – wind the gramophone.
> But go to hell
> You hornless ones and pressing-irons!
> I want to dance alone
> The tango with cows
> And build bridges
> From the jealous tears of the bulls
> To the tears of the scarlet girl.

(Cited from HARDING and JANGFELDT 1986; translation by N. E. E. Text in Figure 2.)

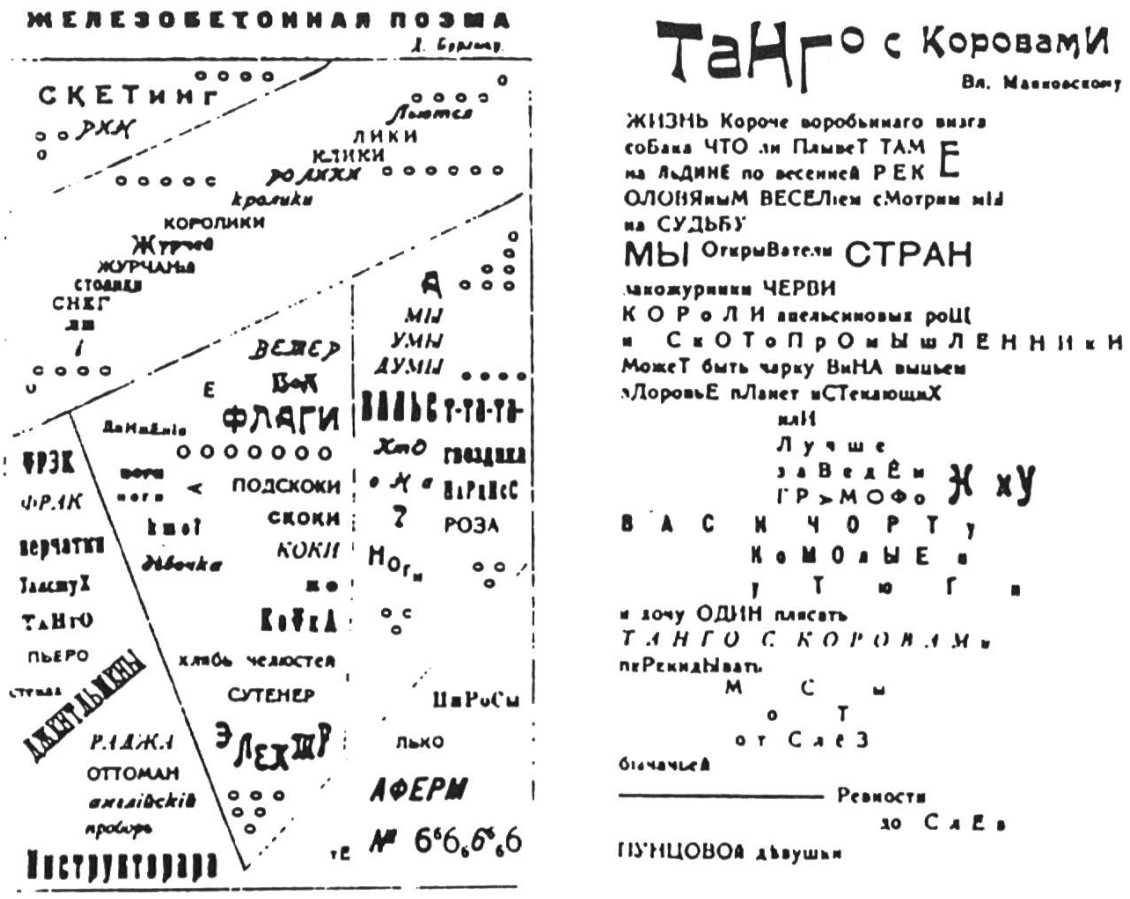


Figure 2

Though space forbids a more thorough analysis, let me just say that in my own reading, the poem has always made good referential sense. It begins with reflections on mortality; goes on the exult man ironically: man in cosmos is like a worm in an orange; moves from exhausted planets to artefacts of entertainment, gramophones; tells the oppressive «pressing-irons» – *utjugi,* which at least in current Soviet slang also refers to black-market dealers in jeans and other sought-after Western commodities – of a powerless establishment to go to hell; and ends with a union of man and nature, a tango with cows, and bridge-building between the tears of jealous bulls and those of a weeping girl. We move from mortality through ironic exultation to salvation in the individual's happy rejoicing with the brute creation. Here the vocabulary and syntax are normal enough for easy pattern recognition. What is remarkable is the coexistence of the startling typography, which builds up a structure of its own by contrasting with normal printing and by emphasizing certain words, and some of the collocations which evoke unusual and absurd though not absolutely counterfactual images: in some reasonably literal sense, I suppose, one could actually

dance the tango with cows. Like the surrealists, KAMENSKIJ liked to juxtapose incompatibles in a startling manner.

A few further examples, this time from German, citing the reader by HAJNY and WIRBELAUER (1983). In his *texte und kommentare* (Anabas Verlag, Steinbach 1968), Claus BREMER published a text - call it a poem if you like - entitled «immer schön in der reihe bleiben,» which consisted of these words repeated 52 times:

immer schön in der reihe bleiben
immer schön in der reihe bleiben
immer schön in der reihe bleiben
immer schön in der reihe bleiben
immer schön in der reihe bleiben
immer schön in der reihe bleiben
immer schön in der reihe bleiben
immer schön in der reihe bleiben
immer schön in der reihe bleiben
immer schön in der reihe bleiben
immer schön in der reihe bleiben
.....

The point is, of course, that the reader refuses to stay in the ranks. «Diese Organisation,» said BREMER, «provoziert den Freiheitsdrang und die Vernunft.» The referential meaning of «immer schön in der reihe bleiben» and the crushingly oppressive repetition create a tension which shows the absurdity of staying in the ranks and of reading the whole text line by line. The poem is ironical in that its metrical, iconic, concrete structure reveals the absurdity of its referential meaning. The interpretation hinges on the coexistence of two simultaneous structures, namely the referential meaning and its repetition, and on the ironic tension that prevails between them.

Yet another classic example from Kurt SCHWITTERS (*Das Literarische Werk,* ed. Friedhelm LACH, Dumont 1973, I: 205), namely the final movement of his «Ursonate».

Zätt üpsiilon iks *(bewegt)*
Wee fau Uu
Tee äss ärr kuu
Pee Oo änn ämm
Ell kaa Ii haa
Gee äff Ee dee zee bee?

Zät üpsiilon iks *(bewegter)*
Wee fau Uu
Tee äss ärr kuu

Pee Oo änn ämm
Ell kaa Ii haa
Gee äff Ee dee zee beee?

Zät üpsiilon iks *(einfach)*
Wee fau Uu
Tee äss ärr kuu
Pee Oo änn ämm
Ell kaa Ii haa
Gee äff Ee dee zee bee Aaaaa.

Zätt üpsiilon iks *(sehr bewegt)*
Wee fau Uu
Tee äss ärr kuu
Pee Oo änn ämm
Ell kaa Ii haa
Gee äff Eeee dee zee beeee? *(schmerzlich)*

In my reading, this poem could be entitled «Beloved A, Once Found And Again Lost For Ever». Doomed to his eternal quest for structures in messages, the reader soon notices the reversal of the alphabet, and is struck by the missing A. He engages in a quest, becoming agitated (bewegt – bewegter!); in a calmer mood (einfach), he finds his A; he rejoices (sehr bewegt), and once again loses the A, painfully (schmerzlich). The number of vowels in the spelling-forms of letters, as in *bee* versus *beeee,* hint at possible readings and accentuate the shifts in mood. Here too, then, a reader finds a meaning-creating structure, though the individual «words» – names of letters – lack referential meaning in themselves.

3

These examples, I should emphasize, were all authentic in the sense that they have been cited from literature rather than invented for my lecture. Their writers at least have expected them to function in literary communication: they are texts in a literary speech act (Pratt 1977). Lest somebody still doubt that any reasonable definition of syntactic or textual well-formedness, however it be defined, is inadequate as a criterion for communicative function, let me cite two fabrications of my own. The first goes like this:

> The goalkeeper writhed on the ground. With agonizing slowness the ball rolled over the white chalk line to the roar of ten thousand fans. Just before the players began to celebrate their triumph there was a whistle. The referee declared the kick offside.

Note that there are no overt cohesive links such as repetitions or pronominal anaphoras or substitutions or synonyms or ellipses tying the sentences to each other. All the same the text is coherent to all those who know about football. On the contrary we can have pseudo-coherent texts with plentiful links between their sentences which still fail to make sense. Here is one:

> I walked to work. Work is the workaholic's opium. DeQuincey was a romantic. Romantic settings often involve the moon. Dust from there was analysed in several laboratories. They are expensive to build. Build is an irregular verb.

As I already noted, yet another type discourse which makes use of pauses, hesitations, false starts, corrections, repair, anacolutha, and other departures from the syntactic norms characteristic of, say, literate expository writing is, of course, impromptu speech (ENKVIST 1982). Every day we successfully interpret hundreds if not thousands of such impromptu utterances in context, though these same utterances might look messy beyond interpretability when given in decontextualized transcription.

In the light of all these examples, which could be multiplied and varied ad infinitum, we should once again ask, what is it that makes a coherent text coherent? And let me repeat once again: to enumerate all those syntactic and lexical structures that lead to textual coherence, and to suggest that structures beyond the list would fail to contribute to coherence, would obviously be a hopeless job, even if we tried to do so through generative rules capable of generating an infinite number of texts rather than by taxonomic lists covering a limited corpus. Coherence is a matter of successful processing, not of linguistically specifiable structuring.

Perhaps one of the reasons for man's spectacular evolutionary success is his compulsive yen to extract meaning from messages. Now meanings arise out of contrasts. If an item does not contrast with anything else, it cannot have meaning. And contrasts can arise only within systems allowing paradigmatic alternatives. When a receptor hears or sees a message, he contrasts the elements actually present in the message with the other elements in the contrastive set of paradigmatic alternatives, that is, with those elements the text-producer's choice excluded from the message. Such an exclusion of alternatives is what produces information.

That messages may have meanings at several levels follows from the fact that they may contain elements from several contrastive sets at several different levels. When interpreting messages we try to find the levels that carry information through the exclusion of items from a contrastive paradigmatic set. In KRUTJONYCH's poem there were no readily specifiable referential meanings, there was no world picture evoked by the nonsense-

syllables which were too nonsensical to belong to any recognizable lexical set. Therefore the interpreter had to move on to the metamessage, interpreting KRUTJONYCH's choice as a symptom of his attitudes to the world and to poetry rather than as an effort to refer to, or evoke, a factual or counterfactual world. Such emphasizing of metamessages and symptomatic meanings is common also for instance in phatic discourse, whose information contents are, under relevant circumstances, too meager to motivate the effort of expressing them. If I go up Säntis with Professor WYLER and say, «Well well well and here we are on top of old Säntis again,» the referential contents of my message – though true as they reflect an existing state of affairs in a universe of discourse – do not tell Professor WYLER anything he didn't know before. What my utterance tells him is that I want to reciprocate his friendship and have reached the end of my tolerance of silence. The metamessage should still strike home.

So, discourse has potential meanings at all those levels at which a given receptor in a given situation can assign contrasts to the items actually present in the discourse. There are situations where even an inarticulate grunt contrasts with something, namely the absence of a grunt through either silence or articulate speech. It may, in context, produce highly specific information. An example: at the dentist's, a muffled grunt, as contrasting with silence, may suffice to signal the presence of live nerve tissue at a very specific point of a very specific root canal.

The larger the number of contrast-carrying systems activated by a piece of discourse, the greater is its pregnancy of meaning. There are certain kinds of poetry which might be defined as different from, say, scientific prose because of their larger number of coexistent contrast-carrying semantic and pragmatic systems, and their resulting greater pregnancy of meaning (a principle argued at length in LOTMAN 1977). But there may also be texts usually classified as literary, such as KRUTJONYCH's or SCHWITTERS's «poems» cited above, which produce their effect precisely through their paucity of levels of meaning. Here we may suspect that readers use another of man's basic capacities, namely imagination. We have learned to expect something, and when we do not find it, we fill it in on our own accord. Just as HEMINGWAY's texts have been called sentimental because they leave the filling-in of sentiment to the reader, so SCHWITTERS's text can provoke thoughts of universal quest and loss, universal precisely because of the lack of specifics in SCHWITTERS's alphabet-dominated text world. We might speak of such texts as triggers, as «generators of thought» to speak with LOTMAN 1986, as opposed to texts as references. Indeed texts can be ranged on a scale between the extremely referential (scientific texts for instance, best expressed in artificial languages lacking the disturbing connotations

of natural tongues) and the extremely suggestive (like poetry), or between the explicit and the implicit as I said in ENKVIST 1983.

4

Now back to my question, what makes a piece of discourse interpretable? The best answer I can give goes like this:

> A piece of discourse is interpretable to those who can, under the prevailing circumstances, build around it a text world in which that piece of discourse makes sense, either by being potentially true in that particular text world, or by conforming to acceptable maxims of human behaviour, or both.

There are many formidable problems compressed into these forty-nine words.

First I am assuming that discourse comprehension involves world-building, or scenario-building if you prefer that term. We understand texts and discourse by placing them in a scenario, in a world. Either the world is once and for all circumscribed by the situational context, as in face-to-face communication about the situation itself. For instance if I am pulling up a heavy boat from the sea with my son and say «About six inches more and a bit to the left», he will at once know the world into which the utterance belongs. Or then the world is evoked by the utterance. Had I continued by saying to my son, «Last night I was planning my next trip to St. Gallen», he would have to evoke another world, namely that of my activities on the night before.

What are the bricks and the mortar of the text world we are building? To repeat: the structuralists and information theorists were right in claiming that all meanings arise out of contrast. Any element that contrasts with another element within a system is meaningful. And an element which does not contrast with anything else lacks meaning, fails to increase information either because of its lack of structuring or because of its predictability, and does not involve the kind of choice that results in meaning. Contrasts of course exist in any system, a system being by definition a sequence of structured choices with a condition of entry.

A natural language is a system of systems, some of these systems indeed merging, through paralanguage, into non-linguistic behaviour patterns. As I already noted, meaningful choices arise through choices in many systems: choices between letters, phonemes, morphemes, words, syntactic structures, and textual and discoursal structures, including metrical and literary ones, as well as intonation patterns, paralinguistic features, proxemics,

body movement, gesture and facial expression and the like. All paradigmatic choices at all these levels are potential carriers of meaning and potential bricks in the building of the text world. Also there are paradigmatic choices in the frames, schemata and scripts in which we store our knowledge of the world. Thus if I say, «Nils Enkvist is wearing a blue tie.», the choice of *blue* has eliminated all other colours of the contrastive paradigm available in the schema of colours. Intertextual systems also provide meaningful choices: if somebody wants to express his feelings in a sonnet, the choice of form will contribute to the meaning of the message.

The mortar that binds the bricks into structures is the syntagmatic structure of the discourse. However, as chains of units at one level form single units at the next higher level, our analogy between bricks and mortar unfortunately breaks down: a chain of morphemes, such as un + fortunate + ly consisting of three bricks and word-formation mortar, turns out to be one single brick in the syntactic structure *Unfortunately John did not know.,* which in turn can be a single brick in a text. Therefore a better analogy than bricks and mortar might be a prefabricated house: planks are put together into a module, this module becomes part of a wall, the wall becomes part of a house, the house is part of a housing project, the housing project is part of a street, the street is part of a city.

A text, then, is interpretable to those who manage this kind of world-building under the relevant circumstances. The world-building process is constrained by the interpreter's person, his previous knowledge, present mood and purpose, as well as by the situational context. Referential interpretation is to begin with a yes-no, or threshold, phenomenon: a text is to some extent interpretable to all who can build some kind of world around it. But once the interpretability threshold is crossed we should recognize degrees of interpretation. A person trained in nuclear physics is bound to extract more meanings than a layman out of a physical text: he can better reconstruct the choices made by the text producer, among other things because he knows more about the choices not taken. And the situational context of course helps information crucially, as we saw in the example of myself with son pulling up our heavy boat from the sea.

The criterion of successful world-building is that the text we have been given fits snugly into the world we have construed around it, again in the opinion of the discourse interpreter. Such fits can be explicated in two ways: in terms of referential truth-functional semantics, and in terms of pragmatics. The former, semantic, way would involve saying that the world and the discourse form a match when the discourse might be true in that particular world. «Might be» rather tan «is» to allow for fiction: note that the science-fiction-writer's problem is how to help the reader construct a text

world in which a counterfactual text becomes plausible and thus potentially true. The latter, pragmatic, way involves relating the text to maxims of human behaviour, such as those of Grice and Leech and the relevance principles of SPERBER and WILSON (GRICE 1975, LEECH 1983, SPERBER and WILSON 1986). Symptomatic meanings, metamessages, inference, irony and the like can presumably be reached only through pragmatics. It is not my purpose here to look into the philosophical questions as to the relative advantages and disadvantages of truth-functional and pragmatic world-building, or to discuss to what extent truth functions perhaps reduce into pragmatics and vice versa. Generally speaking, the balance between these two ways of placing the text in a world depends on the text type. In scientific communication for instance, referential meanings are crucial. On the contrary, in trying to make sense of KRUTJONYCH's poem we must largely rely on pragmatic views of the metamessage, and use our pragmatic inferences to generate a world around the text.

Two more points about text worlds. In my jargon, «universe of discourse» is the universe of which one specific text world is part. For instance if my text world is a conference at St. Gallen the universe of discourse involves conferences in general, the Handelshochschule of St. Gallen, the city, Switzerland, and so forth. Obviously a text cannot bring in all features of all worlds and universes. The building of text worlds stops at a relevance threshold: what remains outside the relevance threshold for one individual text is part of the universe of discourse. The specifics we put into the text world are special instances of our general knowledge of the universe of discourse. And we can put in such specifics, either because they are explicitly mentioned in the text or because we know them by inference.

Inferencing in turn is largely based on a knowledge of prototypes. Our universe of discourse is built up of prototypes – of the prototypical bird, the prototypical room, the prototypical professor, and so forth – and once somebody mentions a bird or a room or a professor, we can extract features from the prototype which is available in our universe of discourse. This enables us to sketch out features in the text world if and when the need appears, until we are told to abandon prototypical features for features specified in the text. There is thus a default rule favouring the prototype. If somebody talks about a bird, without giving us any further clues as to what kind of bird he has in mind, we provide the emerging text world with a creature more like a sparrow or pigeon than an ostrich or turkey or hummingbird or penguin, unless or until our interlocutor gives us clues to abandoning the prototype we used for default, or the situation gives us clues to specifics we ought to put into the emerging text world. At an Antarctic research station, a reference to «bird» might well be taken to refer to a

penguin. The specific states of affairs in our text world are thus partly prototypical inferences, which may be influenced by the situation and context, and partly features expressly specified in the text. Here by the way is one of the explanations why I dislike film versions of favourite novels. I have inferred my own concrete visualizations of prototypical features suggested by default, and when the film-producer's concretizations differ from my own I get disappointed and annoyed. (One of the classic papers on prototypes is ROSCH 1977.)

This use of prototypes for non-specified features in the text world can of course be restated in terms of information theory. Of several alternatives we always choose the most probable, the one that is most likely to occur in a given context and situation. And by definition the most likely is at the same time the most prototypcial in the relevant context. For instance, if somebody tells me there are no animals left in St. Gallen, and I say, «No, on my way to this lecture room I saw three.», these animals are more likely to have been cats or dogs or perhaps horses than, say, ostriches or hippopotami or whales. And probability is the inverse of information: what is most probable is least startling and least informative. To cite the Semantic Axiom Number One of Martin Joos, the least meaning is the best meaning (Joos 1972).

6

The bulding-up of a text world is an incremental process. Every structured element in a piece of discourse increases information and certainty by excluding alternatives. The larger the number of excluded alternatives, the greater the information content of the element (though we can quantify information content only in closed systems with a limited number of elements, preferably with readily calculable sequential probabilities of occurrence). In communication, our aim is to enable the receptor to build up a text world which is sufficiently isomorphic with our own to satisfy the communicative needs in this particular situation. The order in which text worlds are built up through incrementation is of course of great importance, both for the text world itself and for ease of processing. And choice of order is one of the most important ingredients in what I shall call text strategy.

Let me cite a piece of text to counterbalance my overlong theorizing. Once again I shall choose a tourist guide because it so neatly shows what I have in mind. I cite from the description of the Villa Adriana in the *Blue Guide to Rome and Central Italy:*

> At the N.E. angle of the Poikile are the remains of the Philosophers' Hall (57 by 39 ft.), with an apse, seven niches for statues, and four side-doors; and adjacent is a series of baths. Thence we pass into a circular building (140 ft. in diameter), with an Ionic marble peristyle, known as the Naval Theatre or Natatorium, but more probably a retreat in which the emperor sought occasional solitude. Within, a circular moat (c. 12 ft. broad), lined with Luni (Carrara) marble, enclosed an island which could be reached only by removable gangways.
>
> To the S. of the Naval theatre extends an olive-planted valley called the Stadium, running N. and S. and flanked on the E. and W. by edifices. That on the E. comprises a rectangular court (193 ft. by 109 ft.), with a portico of fluted composite columns. (P. 378.)

Notice the high frequency of structures of the type locative adverbial + copula + subject, «in such-and-such-a-place is such-and-such a sight». Obviously these structures owe to what I have called experiential iconicity (ENKVIST 1980), that is, the principle of ordering the text to reflect experience or action. The strategy might be labelled go-look-learn: first the tourist is supposed to go to a specific place, then he is supposed to look at something, and then to learn about what he is looking at. The linear order of constituents in the sentence thus reflects the order of actions expected of the tourist who follows the guide.

The fronted locative adverbials also have another function. They mark the onset of new sections of text, which correlate with stops on the tourist's route: each stop, each go-look-learn unit corresponds to a section of the guidebook. To borrow a term from Lars EVENSEN (1988), they might be called «superstructural pointers» (as long as we remember that the disposition of a text into text units in fact is not a superstructure imposed on sentences, but the other way round a base structure which determines the grouping and shape of the sentences). And, in additon to clarifying the structure of the text in units, the locatives also explicate the hierarchization of the sights. We might for instance have a passage which begins with a fronted adverbial specifying a cathedral, followed by a passage that begins with a locative adverbial specifying a chapel, followed by a set of passages with fronted locatives specifying parts of the chapel. For brevity I fabricate an example:

> In the cathedral of Nirgendshof we can see some of the most celebrated sculptures of the 13th century. In the first chapel on the left are the tombs of the Schlachthaufen family. In the centre is the sarcophagus of Konrad von Schlachthaufen, on the right that of his son Hartmuth. In the second chapel we see...

This type of text is obviously dominated by an iconic strategy. The arrangement of the text reflects the order of actions in the tourist's progress, and

the hierarchic organization of text units, signalled by the semantic hierarchy of fronted locatives, also reflects the ordering of things in the world. But there is yet another reason favouring the structure *in place x is y* rather than *y is in place x.* Once we are in a certain location, we can expect another indication of place: place is thus «older» information to us than is the information about the sight. And as most information in a normal text is new, it follows that the description of the sight tends to get longer and more weighty than the mention of the location. In the structure *in place x is y,* the «y» is usually longer than the fronted locative adverbial «in place x». Thus the Principle of End Weight, or *Gesetz der wachsenden Glieder* to speak with Otto Behaghel, conspires with the iconicity. The strategy is determined by a conspiracy between iconicity, text disposition, and information structures within the sentence: all motivate fronting of the locative adverbial.

Different text types make use of different strategies. In texts describing the world or actions in the world, iconicity is an important principle. In chronicles listing events one after the other, the dominant text-strategic principle is likely to be temporal: there is temporal isomorphy between text and events. In narrative texts the strategy must usually emphasize not only temporality but actor as well. The simplest iconic arrangement of temporality is once again to specify actions in the same order as they took place, but as narratologists have shown (see for instance GENETTE 1972), many devices for introducing unities other than temporal iconicity are available to a skilled narrator. In argumentative texts, the organizing principle must be based on argument patterns: assertion, support, counterassertion, judgment, summary, and the like. We might note in passing that argumentative and expository texts may show greater cross-cultural variation than does, say, a tourist handbook. If the actions are independent of language and culture, like the tourist's go-look-learn sequence, we can expect texts in different languages and from different cultures to have much the same macrostruture. But if the actions are more dependent on cultural tradition, we might also expect texts to be culture-dependent. This is true for instance of school essays, editorials, and medical articles (see e.g. CONNOR and KAPLAN 1987, TIRKKONEN-CONDIT 1987, LIEFTLÄNDER-KOISTINEN forthcoming, and RÉGENT 1985).

7

I have now introduced two new problem areas into my talk. I have spoken about text types and about the text strategies that are associated with them. Both need a word of comment.

First, text strategies. In linguistics many people have spoken about strategies, but far fewer have tried to define what they mean by a strategy. Let me begin by noting that «strategy» in fact is a process term rather than a structure term. Those who speak about strategies are obviously interested in viewing text production and text comprehension as processes, because a basic component in the meaning of «strategy» is management and movement and disposition. In a military context, to cite the Concise Oxford, a strategy involves «management of an army or armies in a campaign, art of so moving or disposing troops or ships or aircraft as to impose upon the enemy the place & time & conditions for fighting preferred by oneself». Tactics is the term for the procedures adopted in actual contact with the enemy. Analogically I have spoken about text strategies in the sense of management of discourse as a whole and above the sentence. Text strategies are then executed by «tactics», that is, by choices of words and syntactic structures. The overall flow of information through the text and the management of old and new information, theme and rheme, topic and comment are thus matters of text strategy. The actual ways in which old and new information are expressed by lexis and syntax are matters of syntax, of text tactics as one might say with an analogy from the military.

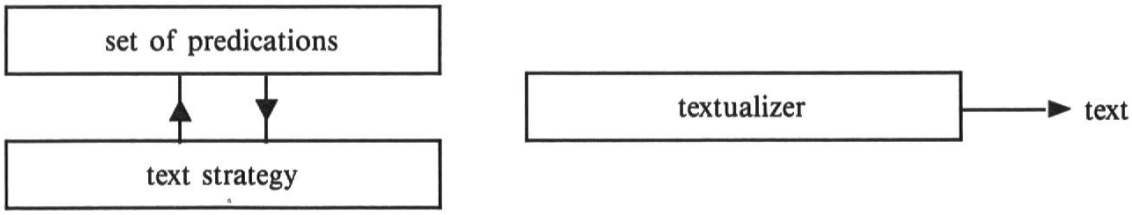
It is easy enough to talk about strategies in such general terms, metaphorically as it were. It is far more difficult to specify precisely what a text strategy might be. As «strategy» is a process term related to decision procedures, we can only approach it through a conceptual frame borrowed from decision theory. Therefore a brief rehearsal of a few fundamental concepts of decision theory is in order.

Decisions are made in a decision space, whose dimensions are determined by the factors affecting the decision and of the world within which the decision takes place. The forces affecting decisions can be modelled as parameters having specific ranges of values and, in each text and text type, a characteristic weight. The patterning of parameter values and weights in turn determine the category to which the phenomenon described through the parameter belongs. Thus for instance in the tourist guide the iconicity parameter has a positive value: iconicity is important. But iconicity actually interferes with another principle, that of English canonical word order which generally favours beginning sentences with a subject noun phrase. In a tourist guide, iconicity is more important than canonical word order: the iconicity parameter is weighted more heavily than the canonical-word-order parameter, with the result that canonical word order has to yield to iconicity. Text strategies can thus be modelled as arising from an interplay of parameters which have a value and a weight. Often parameters conspire towards the same result; but often they conflict. In case of conflicts,

the stronger parameter, the one weighted more heavily, always wins. A text is thus like a battlefield after the battle: we see the winning forces, and those that lost have left the battleground. So-called poetic licence, which arises when a poet fails to harmonize poetic form with ordinary syntax, is another good case in point. If the metre is faulty, syntax has won; and if the syntax is warped in the interests of metre and rhyme, the metre parameter has been given a weight greater than the syntax parameter. If so, metre has won and syntax has lost the battle.

To model the ways in which text production is steered by a text strategy we must place text strategies in a frame. Students of text and discourse have operated with various text models, which can be conveniently grouped under four main headings as long as we admit combinations and overlaps of our four model types. The first model type I have called sentence-based because it accepts texts as they are, without tampering with their sentence division, and traces links between sentences in terms of repetition, anaphora, cataphora, substitution, ellipsis, synonymy, hyponymy, inference, and the like. Sentence-based models can be characterized as static, the remaining three as dynamic. The second model I have called predication-based because it starts out from a set of predications which are textualized into discourse. The third model is cognitive: it goes further back than the predication-based model in trying to form predications out of a knowledge store, such as a cognitive network, sets of frames and schemata and scripts. And the fourth model type is interactional in that it looks into the interactional reasons why a certain person in a certain situation chooses to extract certain predications out of his knowledge store for textualization, and why he chooses certain politeness levels, turn-taking signals and the like for his discourse. Interactional text models thus lean heavily on pragmatics.

Of these four model types, strategies enter conspicuously into the dynamic ones, the predication-based and cognitive and interactional. A simple box diagram illustrating the basic principles of a predication-based model might look like this:



The predications are simple propositions, at this level prelexical. The text strategy governs their linearization, conjunction and embedding, and the

textualizer then turns them into text by dressing them in words and syntactic structures. To implement such a model of course requires specification of what the set of predications looks like and how the strategy operates on it: some attempts at such specification have been made (cf. the «text base» of VAN DIJK and KINTSCH 1983 and of TURNER 1987; cf. also the «kernel sentences» in CHOMSKY 1957 and their use in stylistic analysis in OHMANN 1964). Still I am proposing this diagram as a rough scheme only, without claiming to be able to operationalize it in terms that could be handled by man or by computer.

In this sense, then, a text strategy is a set of principles governing the textualization of a set of predications. If the principles adopted arise through conflicts and conspiracies between various text-shaping forces which can be modelled in terms of parameter weighting, we can try an operationally more concrete definition: a text strategy is a goal-determined weighting pattern of decision parameters. The term «goal-determined» brings in the text-producer's purpose and opens a channel for introducing interactional considerations into predication-based text modelling. In this sense, «text strategy» becomes a near-synonym of «style». Conversely, an interpretation strategy would be a goal-determined procedure for the recovery of aspects of the text strategy and text world out of an existing text.

There are other ways of looking at text strategies which are compatible with the definition I gave a moment ago. In terms of information theory, we can say that the purpose of all communication is to increase the pool of shared information between text producer and receptor. The theory also tells us that information is increased through the elimination of alternatives: every time a text producer chooses one item from a paradigmatic set of alternatives within a system, he has eliminated the other alternatives and thus specified a piece of information. In this light we might define text strategy as an ordered pattern of the elimination of alternatives, for instance in terms of the linear order in which a text is supposed to increase the shared pool of information.

These were process-based definitions. But unfortunately the processes postulated by such definitions are hard or impossible to get at, except through the product, the text, they have produced. True, we can to some extent simulate text processing by computer, as in work with artificial intelligence, and try, if we dare, to set up analogies between the operations of the computer and of the human mind. And we can try our hand at psycholinguistic expermentation hoping to gain insight into actual human discourse processing. Still in today's state of the linguistic art we must live with a gap between a product-based, discourse-based, reconstruction of hypothetical processes, and the actual processes of the mind: we have no

grammar based on the anatomy and physiology of the brain. Therefore we must still short-cut our hypothesizing of discourse processing and relate strategies, not to neurology but to discourse structure. We might for instance say that the strategy of the tourist guide, the go-look-learn strategy, is reflected in frequent sentences with locative topicalization and post-verbal subjects, either with heavy post-modification or with anaphorically signalled specification in the following sentence or sentences. Such a relating of text strategies directly to text structure will inevitably turn the student of text strategies into a student of discourse structures, of text types and indeed of styles. One may therefore well ask whether the term «text strategy» is motivated at all, or whether it ought to be shaved off by OCCAM's razor. Without being a «realist», as opposed to a «nominalist» in the scholastic sense, I still see some virtues in talking about text strategies. Such a term reminds us of language as a dynamic process and relates text production to a sequence of complicated choices, some hierarchic and some heterarchic, within many interrelated systems. These interrelated systems in turn constitute language.

8

With the structural approach to text strategies as appearing in the product and not only in the process, we have in fact entered text typology, which to literary scholars means, among other things, the study of literary genres. Text typology is an important area of intertextuality: it is the intertextual comparison and grouping of texts into categories, into genres, that yields typologies. And it provides us with many of the structural systems out of which text-producers choose one item and reject its paradigmatic rivals, and thus produce meanings. About genres I presumably need say no more: I hope the link between the linguist's typologies and the literary scholar's genres, *Gattungen,* is obvious enough. In this light I should define a literary genre as a text type sanctioned by a literary tradition. The first work of a new type does not yet belong to a genre, unless we allow a specific genre to all works that flout traditions. In a more common sense, a genre has arisen when a text type begins spreading beyond a single text.

9

Of the now countless corollaries of Murphy's Law, Muir's law has become a particular favourite with my students. «When we try to pick out anything

by itself,» says Muir's Law «we find it hitched to everything else in the universe» (Block 1981). Those of you who have borne with me this morning can see why. Text structures are related to genres and to text types, which are results of text strategies, which are in turn motivated by a text producer's efforts to help his fellow men to share a text world and a universe of discourse. And conversely: a speaker's or writer's desire to share his world with others is reflected in discourse structures which are exponents of text strategies. So, to understand why tourist guides have many sentences beginning with adverbials of place we must know a great deal about human society and human behaviour, including language processing.

Such global views are likely to worry linguists more than they daunt literary scholars. Students of literature are used to looking at texts as exponents of personalities operating in a social setting and as stimuli towards world-building in a receptor. Some linguists on the contrary emphasize that linguistics has so far achieved its best results when eliminating as many uncontrollable variables as possible from their consideration. Such a restrictionist policy underlies for instance the principle that linguistics should look into the behaviour of ideal speakers in a homogeneous speech society, though we well know that such speakers and societies do not exist. The opposite, expansionist mood has been spreading triumphantly among linguists in the past few decades. There are many linguists who study linguistic variation, emphasizing that variation rather than homogeneity is an essential feature of all speech societies. There are many linguists who look into hesitation, correction and repair, not as deviations of an ideal state of perfection but as natural mechanisms that every linguistic system must tolerate and even develop in the interests of communication. An interesting area of research would be what one might call syntactic tolerance: which syntactic structures can be tolerated, under different circumstances, without destroying the message? The tolerance border obviously runs short of misrepresentation: we cannot say *Charlie hit Jack* if what we mean is *Jack hit Charlie.* Further, there are pragmalinguists who look at linguistic structures against the background, not of syntax but of human behaviour patterns: speech acts, politeness, turn-taking, and the like.

There has, then, been a new marriage between Mercury and Philology, one whose nuptial gifts are once again all the arts that go into the study of language. In linguistics and in the study of literature we need more collaboration than ever, and it seems to me that recent discourse linguistics should have something to give to students of literature, just as students of literature can enrich discourse linguistics with many relevant observations. In work on cognitive science and artificial intelligence, needless borders between departments tend to disappear by themselves as it were.

In universities, departmental divisions, needless hierarchization (is linguistics part of a literature-oriented philology, or is the study of literature a subdepartment of linguistics?), and personal ignorance and prejudice have often hindered a natural collaboration and even fusion of linguistics and Literaturwissenschaft. I think we could use a new Martianus Capella to provide a happy frame in which these disciplines could enter into a fecund union.

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