PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF PAPER 5

PRESENTATION BY PROF. HARPER

Prof. Harper defined the term promiscuity coefficient as:-

$$PC = \frac{\text{number of different syntactically related items}}{\text{frequency of test word}}$$

For example, if an adjective occurs 1000 times with 50 different nouns, the PC is. 1/20.

Examples of promiscuous adjectives, one with a high PC are (translated),

> large
> analogous
> well known.

The adjectives in the Rand text with low PC are (translated),

> fast
> further
> our

This low PC for 'our' is valid only for Physics texts; it would not hold for general language.

A run has just been completed in which those nouns were discovered which always possessed either an adjective or a genitive complement. Examples (translated) are

> measure
> action
> ray

Other investigations of this type will be carried out. The relation of adjectives and adverbs, and the effect of aspect on adverbs, will be examined.

DISCUSSION

DR. GOOD thought it would be worth while to express the promiscuity coefficient as an estimate of a population parameter. For example, it could be an estimate of the sum of the squares of the probabilities, which is easy to compute.

PROF. HARPER agreed.

PROF. OETTINGER, without wishing to raise the question of intuition again, said that an alternative to counting was to ask a native informant. The guesses obtained were often quite good, knowing the sort of errors that

have to be tolerated in any case. Having tried both, he at present believed in using the informant's intuition.

PROF. HARPER said that it was too early in his work to be able to show results and compare them with those obtained by other methods. He felt, as a matter of faith, that his results would improve on those obtainable by intuition.

PROF. JOSSELSON said that he regarded intuition as another name for genuine thought processes, as reliable as other thought processes, because it uses the same data, and the same kind of recognition of patterns. The traditional names of parts of speech were arrived at by intuition, as were some of the new names. He suggested that the sharing of common adjectives by two nouns is the kind of thing we ought to mean when we say that those nouns have similar meanings.

PROF. HARPER was in some agreement with this, but felt that more work was needed.

PROF. JOSSELSON proposed two rules which could now be tested. Firstly, a promiscuous word is probably not a technical term of the field of discourse. Secondly, a non-promiscuous (i.e. faithful) word has partners which belong to the particular field of discourse.

PROF. HARPER thought these to be reasonable hypotheses.

DR. PARKER-RHODES asked what criterion was used to distinguish the governor and dependent in a given pair.

PROF. HARPER replied that the system used was described in Rand reports. It was not always the same as others used. The verb governs the subject, direct object, indirect object, adverb, and prepositional phrase. The noun governs its adjectives, the preposition governs the noun and the adjective governs the adverb.

This is the way government is recorded in their texts. He felt that there were many types of dependency, about which grammarians could give more information.

DR. UTTLEY referred to the example of the word "ray", which had been stated to have a genitive complement in all cases. Perhaps in a book on geometrical optics the word "ray" would be used alone in most cases, "ray of light" being understood.

PROF. HARPER replied that in the physics texts which they have processed, "ray" is always used with a qualifier, but he did not think this would necessarily hold everywhere.

D. W. DAVIES