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Linguistic Relativity versus Innate Ideas: The Origins of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis in German Thought by Julia M. Penn

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American Anthropologist, New Series, Vol. 78, No. 2 (Jun., 1976), pp. 456-457

Published by: [Blackwell Publishing](#) on behalf of the [American Anthropological Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/675367>

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His Introduction to the book is required reading if one is to make sense of the articles that follow.

In this Introduction, Hymes makes an initial distinction between "paradigm" and "cynosure." The former is a model that pervades a discipline, while the latter is a perspective that for a period of time functions as the center of a discipline's intellectual interest and energy without displacing peripheral orientations that may themselves once have been or may come to be the cynosure of that discipline. This distinction facilitates a more accurate account of the history of linguistics than Kuhn's model allows. For in linguistics a particular "tradition" can continue to survive and even thrive, moving in and out of or possibly never even entering that limelight or center of attraction to which the majority of scholars are drawn.

This useful set of distinctions is complemented by a second set in Hymes' Introduction that distinguishes several *phases* in the history of linguistics: (1) *Folk linguistics*—a stage of linguistic awareness wherein the members of a given community come to consciously distinguish particular linguistic features, as for example when the differences between the linguistic varieties spoken in two distinct communities are explicitly recognized; (2) *National philologies*—a stage most often associated with the acquisition of writing systems wherein conscious attention to language is deliberately cultivated with a special interest in mind—e.g., the "... Babylonian concern to preserve a literature embodied in a language becoming obsolete" (p. 5); (3) *General linguistics*—the stage wherein generalizations about the nature of language, advanced with however slender a comparative foundation, begin to be made. This third phase is the one most often attended to in literature on the history of linguistics.

The organization of the articles brought together in this collection is derived from these two sets of distinctions. Thus the first section describes two little known "national philologies": the Babylonian use of grammatical texts and a very early tradition in Indian linguistics.

Section Two contains four articles describing various "traditions" in linguistics that have heretofore received little attention. The periods covered range from the Middle Ages to the beginning of the 20th century, with the most detailed coverage given to Condillac's contribution to the 18th century debate on the origin of language, in a paper by Hans Aarsleff.

The third section deals with the

antecedents to the great developments in comparative and historical linguistics of the 19th century, and with the contributions of that century's central figures. This section is, as Hymes notes, the "centerpiece" of the book. All seven contributors give explicit or implicit consideration to the "paradigmatic" status of 19th century linguistic work, outlining pre-paradigmatic groundwork, and re-evaluating the nature of and contributions to our first (possible) paradigm.

Section Four is the least integrated of the five sections, ranging from George Stocking's useful article on how Boas conceived and planned the *Handbook of North American Indians* to Eric Hamp's discussion of the linguistic field methods of the relatively obscure 19th century linguist Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte. Still, there is unity in the shared concern of all five contributors with the methods of data collection and analysis used by linguists from the 16th through the 19th century in what Hymes calls "The Slow Growth of Grammatical Adequacy."

The fifth and last section should be of greatest interest to the general reader. The three papers gathered here discuss the kinds of questions that should be asked in the history of linguistics and the kinds of information that should be marshalled in answering those questions. Kurt Wolff's paper focuses on the general neglect in the history of linguistics of the social milieu that gives rise to the intellectual preoccupations of particular societies in particular periods—a concern that is noticeably absent in the majority of the papers in this collection. And George Stocking stresses, as does Hymes, the importance of doing history that reflects the intentions and perspectives of the scholars being studied and the periods in which they worked, rather than those of the period during which the history is written.

This book is not for "beginners." Most of the authors assume their readers have a background in linguistics, and for that matter a background in the history of linguistics as well. Only a few provide introductions to their papers that orient the reader to the significance of the mass of sometimes tedious detail through which she/he must struggle. Hymes' success in lending a sense of order and meaning to the collection as a whole is all the more impressive, in light of the highly specialized nature of the papers themselves.

**Linguistic Relativity Versus Innate Ideas:
The Origins of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis**

in *German Thought*. Julia M. Penn. Janua Linguarum, Series Minor, 120. The Hague: Mouton, 1972. 62 pp., bibliography, index. DG12.00 (paper).

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This is a great little book. In one sense it is an intellectual history of linguistic relativity which extends from 18th century scholarship (perhaps anticipated in Plato's *Cratylus* and continued sporadically up to John Locke of the 17th century); thereafter—from the 18th to 20th century inclusive—the intellectual history flows in continuous links.

Linguistic relativity, strictly speaking, has its impact upon those who would oppose innate ideas. Julia Penn's thesis is that innate ideas, including language universals, are fine and that linguistic relativity is garbage.

The object of linguistic relativity is "to free us from the notion of innate ideas, e.g., Kant's categories" (p. 11); before that, the anticipatory John Locke is said to have been opposing "Descartes, who believed certain capabilities . . . to be innate . . ." (p. 45). Yet Locke turns out to be a proponent of linguistic relativity (but only loosely speaking, since "he could delimit the mind's capacity without positing the identity of thought and language"; p. 48).

After Locke (i.e., beginning with the 18th century), linguistic relativity, strictly speaking, came into its own. Thus, for Hamann (p. 49) "reason is language; language is reason—and not merely, as for Locke, an aid to knowing." Hamann's proposition represents Julia Penn's notion of linguistic relativity. Herder, in his prize-winning essay on the origin of language, "posits language with the power to shape our thoughts" (p. 51).

Here the continuous linkage between scholars can be shown. "Herder studied under Kant [and became an ideological opponent later] but Hamann . . . influenced Herder's thought much more" (p. 52). Boas brought Humboldt's *Weltanschauung* hypothesis to America, and Sapir stems from Boas, Whorf from Sapir. But there are links that are not accounted for—e.g., Baudouin de Courtenay, whose ideas are said, without evidence, to derive from Humboldt (p. 54). The evidence for this link is now supplied in the fuller treatment offered by Adam Schaff in *Language and Cognition* (1973).

In epilogue, note the one major weakness of this booklet, at least for those whose central interests lie in cultural anthropology. The author misconstrues Sapir's meaning of culture in relation to language, and that mars

her appreciation of Sapir. For Sapir's central and persistent view of this relationship, see the splendid Sapir sentences concerned with the nonidentity of language and the anthropologist's culture cited with perceptive comment by A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn in their *Culture* (pp. 115-117, 123-124, 1952, Peabody Museum Papers).

Pan-African Language in the Western Hemisphere: PALWH [pælwh]: A Re-Definition of Black Dialect as a Language and the Culture of Black Dialect. Robert D. Twigg. North Quincy, Massachusetts: Christopher Publishing House, 1973. 282 pp., lexicon, references cited (Ch. 1 only). \$9.75.

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The first book-length study of a language by a native speaker always enjoys the potential for opening fresh new insights into those subtle areas of language structure and use so difficult for the outsider to comprehend with total clarity. This must be particularly true in the study of a minority dialect, doubly stigmatized by its lower class status and its near total conflict with the structures of a mandatory national standard. One might easily sympathize, then, with the native speaker of Black English as he comes to realize that the study of his mother tongue remains dominated by just that group of white professionals who have sought increasingly ingenious pedagogical methods of eradicating it. Seen in this context, the near total rejection of all previous work by the linguistic establishment in Robert Twigg's new book, becomes understandable. It is truly unfortunate that Professor Twigg, who is an Assistant Professor of Pan-African Studies at California State University in Los Angeles, has received so little formal training in linguistics or anthropology. Those of us who look forward to scholarly, professional studies of Afro-American speech in the tradition of Lorenzo Turner, Mervyn Alleyne, Beryl Bailey, and Claudia Mitchell Kernan will find little of value in this remarkably naïve linguistic study.

The author sets the tone of his study in the opening pages of the introductory chapter:

I consider the term "black English" (however well-meaning) as a euphemism for the all-inclusive, negative limitations ascribed to "negro dialect," which I