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LINGUÍSTICA

LINGUISTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY: A METATHEORETICAL SYNOPSIS

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Abstract: This article offers an outline of a metatheory of linguistic historiography, focusing on the object and the organization of linguistic historiographical research, and on decisions to be taken by the historiographer. It is argued that linguistic historiography should be viewed as complying with the principles of *grounded theory* in the social sciences.

Keywords: History and Historiography of Linguistics. Metahistoriography. Methodology and Epistemology of Linguistic Historiography.

OBJECTIVES

■ **T**he goal of this contribution¹ is to present, as systematically as possible, a number of reflections on the nature, the domain, and the methodological and epistemological foundations of linguistic historiography, which is, by now, a well-established and institutionalized sub-discipline of linguistics. This is clear from the following facts: since the creation of the first specialized journal *Historiographia Linguistica*, by E. F. Konrad Koerner, in 1974², three more journals devoted to the history of linguistic ideas

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1 This text takes up some of the issues dealt with in my previous work on metahistoriography; see Swiggers (1983, 2004, 2009, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2015). Issues not, or hardly, dealt with here are the status of historiography from a logical-scientific point of view (see Swiggers 1979), models of linguistic historiography (see Swiggers 1990), and the historiographer's language (see Swiggers 1987b, 2010, 2015). For reflections on the relation between the historiography of linguistics and its object, viz. the history of linguistics, see my two encyclopedia articles: Swiggers (1998, 2003). For synthetic overviews of achievements, problems and challenges in linguistic metahistoriography, see Gómez Asencio; Montero del Arco; Swiggers (2014). For a well informed and very readable introduction to the metahistoriography of linguistics, see Batista (2013).

2 The years 1974-75 were *anni mirabiles* for the historiography of linguistics: next to Koerner's foundation of *Historiographia Linguistica* and of the *Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science*, those years saw the publication of three major collective volumes in the field, viz. Hymes (Ed. 1974), Sebeok (Ed. 1975) and Parret (Ed. 1976). For Koerner's appraisal of the development of the field and his own metahistoriographical contribution to the field, see the essays collected in Koerner (1995, 1999).

have appeared: *Histoire Épistémologie Langage*; *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*; *Language & History*; furthermore, linguistic historiography has been “socio-professionally” organized through the foundation of national and international societies, the convening of international and national conferences (especially, the International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences – *ICHoLS*), and the creation of series and collections devoted to the history of linguistics (the most prominent being the *Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science*)³. Also, the historiography of linguistics has its specific place (as a separate section) in the international *Bibliographie Linguistique/Linguistic Bibliography* (see Swiggers 2016).

LINGUISTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY: WHAT IS IT?

Linguistic historiography, or historiography of linguistics, can be defined as ‘the undertaking of *writing* the *history* of the *study of language*’.

1. ‘*Writing*’ refers here to the most prominent (or most codified) form of the historian’s endeavour, but should be taken in a more general way, so as to stand for ‘accounting’: in principle, it thus subsumes also oral ways of presenting a historical account.
2. ‘*History*’ refers to the time axis of past ‘events’ or ‘states of affairs’ (Wittgenstein’s *Tatsachen*), including agents, recipients and mediators, products, circuits and ‘routines’, and contexts, characterized by the presence of language-related ‘knowledge’ (in a broad sense, thus including also beliefs, presuppositions etc.)⁴; this time axis runs to the present, and can be studied by the historiographer (of linguistics) in different ways:
 - (more) globally, over time (and space), or (increasingly) partially and punctually;
 - retrospectively (e.g., how did a particular constellation of linguistic knowledge arise?) or prospectively (what happened with a particular kind of linguistic knowledge, once it was shaped?);
 - with a focus on the ‘events’ that occurred or with a focus on the determining or accompanying factors.

‘History’ functions here as the ‘level of reference’ for historiographical activity: the latter is, fundamentally, an account (‘story’), which can take different forms, ranging from a chronicle of events to more abstract and sophisticated considerations on processes in the evolution of linguistics or on the long-run relevance of linguistic ideas.

3. The term ‘*study of language*’ should not be taken in a strictly ‘disciplinary’ sense, i.e. with narrow reference to an established ‘scientific’ discipline; it refers to an investigation of language(s), resulting in the production of

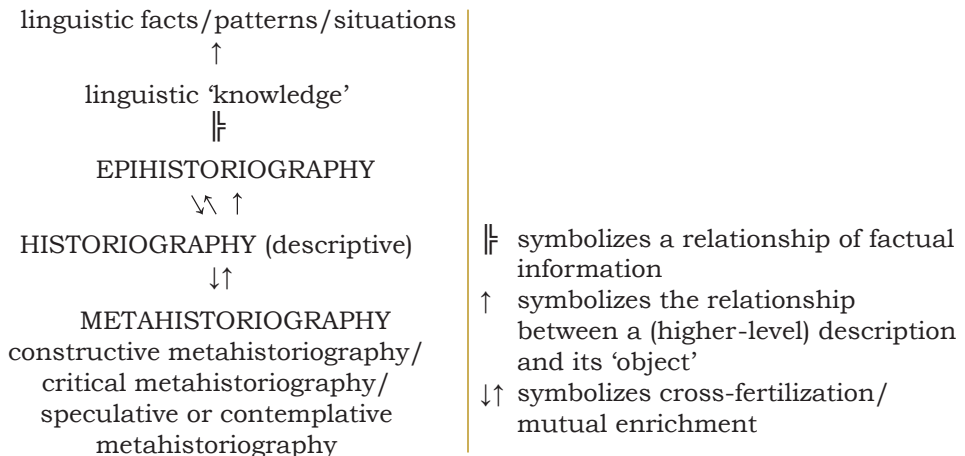
3 For a succinct bibliographical overview, see Swiggers (1987a).

4 Another appropriate term would be ‘linguistic thought’ (Fr. *pensée linguistique*); see Swiggers (1997). For some thoughts on the framing of linguistic knowledge, and the use of ‘transpositions’ (or metaphors) for conveying linguistic knowledge, see Swiggers (1990, 1991b). On the ‘domain’ of linguistic knowledge (units; relationships, functions etc.), see Swiggers (2012a).

‘linguistic knowledge’⁵. The term ‘study of language’ is used here to refer to those types of intellectual activity relating to language(s) that focus on their structural, sociocultural, and historical properties (including characteristics [perhaps] erroneously assigned to language or languages). This definition of ‘study of language’ is, admittedly, a broad one, but it allows the historiographer to start from a vast frame of historical concerns with language(s): reduction to a writing system; ways of documenting and cataloguing languages; phonic, grammatical and lexical analysis (and the construction of models for analysis); planification, standardization, and other forms of ‘political’ investment; analysis of social and cultural aspects of language(s); establishing of historical relationships between languages; analysis (or reconstruction) of older stages; development of tools and models for the teaching of languages (see Frijhoff; Suso López; Swiggers 2012; Swiggers 2017); anthropological, philosophical, ideological reflections on language(s). There is, in fact, no universal consensus among linguists on the extension of the field of language study⁶; it is therefore safer to propose a broad acceptance of the term for its use by linguistic historiographers.

OBJECT, DESCRIPTION AND METATHEORY

Linguistic historiography is a practice, grounded in theory, which takes as its object the historical course of linguistic ‘content packages’ – statements, (diagrammatic or other) representations, teaching instruments and modules – and contexts. This conception entails an organization of the field which can be visually captured in the following scheme⁷:



5 In French I would use here the term *savoir linguistique*; the English term *knowledge* is ambiguous in that it corresponds to French *connaissance* and to French *savoir*. (Note that Michel Foucault’s *L’Archéologie du savoir* (1969) has been translated into English as *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.)

6 See our observations in Swiggers (1990; 2004).

7 For a more extensive presentation and further comments, see Swiggers (2004; 2009; 2010; 2012b; 2013).

The level of linguistic facts/patterns/situations subsumes facts and patterns relating to language structures, and elements constituting the (general, 'ecolinguistic') situation of languages that have been the object of linguistic description and theorizing.

The level of linguistic 'knowledge' includes all types of practices and conceptualizations dealing with (possibly fragmentary) analysis, 'regulation' and codification, comparison and (historical/geographical/typological) classification, appraisal (positive or negative) of languages, or revitalization. Our cover term '*linguistic knowledge*' includes a wide range of linguistically more or less relevant 'actions' taken on languages and their structures; these range from the level of folk-linguistics and the creation of notation techniques to sophisticated models for language analysis, and methodologies for language comparison.

The conjunction of linguistic facts, situations and linguistic 'knowledge' constitutes the *history* of linguistics in its 'ontological' (*in re*) sense.

Linguistic historiography, constituting a *de re* account, is the history-writing of the developmental process of linguistic facts, patterns, situations and correlative linguistic knowledge: historiography is about history.

Epihistoriography, a 'lateral' branch, deals with specific information about the agents and the material products that have shaped the history of linguistics. As such, it involves an important prosopographical and bibliographical (for older periods this also includes, epigraphical, papyrological, and codicological information) and philological⁸ component. Since epihistoriography constantly integrates information produced by historiographers it also has a 'reactive' effect on the quality and depth of historiographical research⁹.

*Metahistoriography*¹⁰ is the domain defined by all types of reflexive activities taking as their objects the practice and the products of historiography; it has thus a *de dicto* status. It seems to me that metahistoriography involves at least three tasks (or levels): (a) constructive, (b) critical, (c) speculative or contemplative. *Constructive* metahistoriography aims at developing models for the history-writing of linguistic thought and description, and at articulating a coherent, precise and (sufficiently) comprehensive metalanguage (see Swiggers 1984, 1987b). *Critical* metahistoriography consists in evaluating, at the level of empirical documentation and at the level of methodological and epistemological principles, extant products of linguistic historiographical practice (see, e.g., Swiggers 1980, 1981b). *Speculative* or *contemplative* metahistoriography deals with the object and status of linguistic historiography, with the justification of 'formats' of historiographical production, and with a number of 'higher-level' problems, such as the concept of '(historical) fact/reality', the notion of 'truth' or 'being right' in its application to the history of linguistics.

LINGUISTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY AS A FRAME FOR QUESTIONING THE PAST

Avoiding an a priori dogmatic stand, the linguistic historiographer has to face her/his object as a 'problematic field', or an 'object of wonder'. Rather than starting from the assumption of a natural course of history, or an 'evident' line of development

8 Relating, e.g., to critical editions of texts, textual emendations or text commentaries; on epihistoriographical requirements relating to text editions and translations, see, e.g., Gómez-Asencio (2007).

9 Useful illustrations of how to combine analysis of source contents and prosopographical information, are Van Hal (2010; concerning proto-comparative and genealogical studies in the Early Modern Period) and Szoc (2013; concerning the earliest grammars of Italian written in the Low Countries).

10 See Schmitter (1998; 2003); Swiggers; Desmet and Jooken (1998a; 1998b).

of knowledge, the historiographer will do well to adopt a Socratic stand, so as not to set out from preconceptions, but to arrive at insight through questioning.

Questions that can be raised with regard to the long and complex past of language-based and language-oriented activities and situations are manifold, and quite diverse, as they will involve a variety of agents, products, contexts, purposes, etc. It seems, however, that the questions can be organized into the following types, which capture crucial aspects that have to be included in any type of historiographical account.

(A) What kinds of linguistic knowledge have occurred over the past?

The answer to this question can be given in the form of an enumeration of (at times overlapping)¹¹ ‘types of linguistic knowledge/interest’. Broadly speaking these types can be organized as follows (see Swiggers 2013; 2015):

- Language-(sub)systemic knowledge: (ortho)graphical
grammatical
lexical (lexicological/lexicographical)
- Language-variational knowledge: diatopical (= dialectological)
diastratic (= sociolinguistic)
- Language-historical knowledge: ‘genealogical’
genetic (i.e. properly historical)
reconstructionist
- Language-comparative knowledge: historical-comparative
contrastive
typological
evaluative (‘qualities’ or ‘vices’ of languages)
- Ecolinguistic and glottopolitical knowledge.
- General linguistic knowledge: concerning the nature/‘life’/ functions of language.
- ‘Paralinguistic’ knowledge: neurolinguistic
psycholinguistic
- ‘Applied’ linguistic knowledge.

¹¹ There are indeed various overlaps: e.g., any general discussion within the fields of language-systemic, language-variational, language-historical and language-comparative knowledge is relevant for general linguistic knowledge; the use of linguistic knowledge (of various kinds) in language teaching turns this into ‘applied’ linguistic knowledge; language-historical knowledge at the level of ‘language genealogy’ and genetic development has a bearing on glottogenetic knowledge; orthographical knowledge is also a matter of ecolinguistic/glottopolitical knowledge; and some aspects of language-comparative knowledge are intertwined with ecolinguistic and glottopolitical knowledge etc.

This overall typology can be used to classify source documents and their contents as to: textual genres, intended audiences, (internal and external) functions etc.

(B) Through which processes has linguistic knowledge been produced, diffused, and 'received'?

The answer to this question requires an investigation into the various factors that play a role in these processes: the 'producing' instances ('authors'¹² and their 'texts'), the 'intermediary' instances (linguistic and cultural intermediaries), the channels of communication/transmission (involving: schools of thought; journals; printers and publishers, translators etc.), the 'receiving' instances ('public'), the linguistic problems or issues constituting the 'subject matter', and the temporal frames (time of production, period of reception, of diffusion etc.).

(C) How have the knowledge contents been framed?

This question, which concerns the 'inner side' of linguistic knowledge, has a direct bearing on the way the linguistic historiographer will (re)write the history of linguistics (or, most frequently, part of it).

The linguistic historiographer faces 'objects' (basically, 'texts' situated in a context¹³, and taking their place in a historical course of textual, and other, 'events') which have a form-dimension and a content-dimension. Both dimensions have been subject, throughout history, to some kind of 'framing', i.e. the application of an organizational formal and 'contentive' grid.

Throughout the long historical course of language-related investigations, linguistic knowledge has been expressed in a variety of forms, or 'formats'. A detailed treatment would involve a full-scale study of the vocabulary, the 'syntax', and the expository format of the specific linguistic contents expressed, in the application of historiographical activity to specific periods, traditions, schools, authors and text genres etc. A general outline of the various types of content-frames would comprise the following formal-expressive types:

- 'implicative' or 'presuppositional' [underlying assumptions and beliefs];
- 'propositional' [hypotheses and affirmative/negative statements];
- 'modular' [this content-frame subsumes: (a) theoretical model; (b) techniques and procedures];
- 'terminological' [providing terms and definitions for conducting a type of linguistic activity];
- 'diagrammatic' or 'figurative.'¹⁴

12 The notion of 'author' should neither be absolutized, nor should it be considered useless (or abusive). See Swiggers (2004), with reference to '(post)structuralist' or 'deconstructionist' views on the concept of 'author'.

13 As Robins (1997, p. 5) rightly pointed out, linguistic historiography has to study the evolutionary course of linguistic contents in their context. See also Swiggers; Wouters (1996); for further methodological remarks on the intertwined study of contents and contexts, see Swiggers (2009; 2012a).

14 This type includes diagrams, schemata, grids, figures etc. While such materials mostly serve to accompany a written text (or an oral exposition), they can take a more or less autonomous cognitive status, as they often capture the co-occurrence of elements that have to be discussed separately in a written text. See, e.g., Mazziotta's (2016) study of the early use of diagrams for syntactic analysis (or for the representation of syntactic relations). For a general study of the role of diagrammatic/figurative aspects in

These types of content-frames (which can of course occur in combination within a single work) refer to the various possibilities according to which content-packages of linguistic knowledge can be, and have been, framed in order to communicate and transmit this knowledge; they set out the (logical and semiotic) grid into which linguistic knowledge can be articulated and communicated.

Next to this, there is of course the content-side itself, which is also (implicitly or explicitly) subject to an organizational frame (which itself stands in relation to more global – scientific, cultural, religious, political – assumptions or intentions, to needs and demands of the intended audience, and to trends in ‘scientific’ investigation). We are of course familiar with specific kinds of organizational frames that, throughout the 20th century, have been named ‘models’ or ‘theories’, such as Saussurean linguistics, Prague structuralism, glossematics, distributional linguistics, tagmemics, generative(-transformational) linguistics, generative semantics, case grammar etc. As well known, some labels are extremely general, such as ‘structuralist’, ‘functionalist’ or ‘cognitive’ linguistics (it is hard to see whether their counterpart, viz. non-structuralist, non-functionalist, non-cognitive, would be assumed by any linguist as an overt label for his or her practice); another unfortunate, and disturbing fact – for both senior and junior linguists – is that we have witnessed in the past half century a constant proliferation of ‘models’ and ‘theories’, especially in the fields of syntax and phonology. To bring some order into the jungle of these (often micro-sized) content-oriented frames, I have proposed to use the term *program*¹⁵ as an overarching classifying tool, and to recognize in the historical course of linguistic activities the unfolding of four major programs:

1. The *correspondence program*: this program investigates the correspondence(s) between language structures, the mind, and the ‘outer world’. It subsumes a variety of authors, schools and theories (ranging from Plato and Aristotle, over the speculative grammarians of the Middle Ages, to the general and philosophical grammars of the Modern Period, and to Chomsky’s generative endeavour). A commonly shared tenet within this program is that language is a means for expressing our ideas/thoughts. Within this program linguistic structures are correlated with an underlying mental organization.
2. The *descriptionist*¹⁶ *program*: this program starts from the axiomatically governing principle that languages have to be studied as sets of formal data to be organized in a systematic way, and this task is seen as a self-sufficient and autonomous one. The basic idea (not always explicitly formulated) within this program is that the ‘whole’ of language is auto-regulating and self-explanatory. Within this program, two options can be distinguished: one focusing strictly on the formal organization itself, the other establishing a link between formal patterns and functional aspects.

linguistics, see Roggenbuck (2005).

- ¹⁵ By ‘program’ I understand here a global and multiplex cognitive system which makes possible some specific ‘actions’ (and their ensuing results), while excluding other possibilities. One program can subsume various ‘theories’ which, despite differences in techniques and terminology, have the same conception of what has to be (primarily and basically) investigated, and how this must be done. The overall unity of a ‘program’ thus resides in the essentially identical conception of how a certain ‘research methodology’ must deal with the fundamental object of a particular discipline. On the ‘orientating’ impact of ‘programs’ (with reference to cybernetics), see Weizenbaum (1976). I first proposed the classificatory notion of ‘program’ in Swiggers (1981a); further refinements can be found in Swiggers (1991a, 2004 and 2012b, the latter with reference to linguistic-didactic products).
- ¹⁶ In French publications I have used the term ‘*descriptiviste*’; for English I prefer, however, the (more general and less connotated) term *descriptionist*.

3. The *socio-cultural program*: this program focuses on language as a social and cultural fact. It stresses phenomena such as language variation and variability, communicative strategies, and communicative competence, the symbolic dimension of language (as a particular semiotic species), the notion of ‘architecture’¹⁷ of language, language ideology/ideologies¹⁸. It subsumes various brands of sociolinguistic, linguistic-ethnographic, dialectological, ‘discursive’, and ‘linguistic-semiotic’ research, and answers the need to inscribe the study of language within an encompassing ‘ecological’ outlook¹⁹.
4. The *projection program*: this is a (relatively) recent, and much more specific, program²⁰, growing out of the work of philosophers (such as Montague, Rescher, Prior, Hintikka) as applied to fragments of natural languages (e.g., quantification and determiners; tense systems; modalities). Within this program logical models are projected upon subsets of language data.

This macro-division into ‘programs’ can serve as a flexible tool for charting the variety of interests and undertakings in the historical course of linguistics: within this variety we can recognize on the one hand broad similarities, overlaps, recurrent approaches, and, on the other, fundamental divergences in outlooks and strategies.

(D) In what (types of) contexts has linguistic knowledge been produced, transmitted, ‘received’?

In dealing with this question, the linguistic historiographer will have to appeal to a distinction between:

- the cultural-ideological context;
- the political context;
- the socio-economic context;
- the (eco)linguistic context;
- the scientific context.

Of course, depending upon the period investigated, the amount and ‘quality’ of information on the different contexts will vary. In addition, the relevance of the contexts will be different according to the type of topic chosen.

17 On the notion ‘architecture of language’, see Benot (1890), Flydal (1951) and Coşeriu (1981).

18 Language ideologies have become an established field of research, which approaches language use and language structures as both vehicles and reflexes of language-ideological assumptions and views. For historiographers of linguistics language ideologies are very important, since they pervade, often in a subtle way, the ‘context’ and the ‘content’ of the expressions of linguistic ‘knowledge’. For illustrations, see the contributions gathered in Kroskrity (Ed. 2000), and in Kroskrity; Schieffelin; Wollard (1998).

19 On the field, tasks, and approaches in the ecology of language, see Haugen (1972).

20 One could consider the projection program to be a subprogram of the ‘correspondence’ program, were it not that in the projection program we have (the search for) a correspondence, not between language and thought, but between grammatical structures and logical constructs.

LINGUISTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY AND DECISION-MAKING

Any type of linguistic historiographical activity has to determine a research topic: this is (in most cases) an individual choice, calling for a specific justification. Apart from such specific choices, linguistic historiographical activity has to make a number of (general) methodological decisions. Basically, these are of *four* types.

1. The first one relates to the periodization adopted. Here, the classical opposition has been that between an external (also: 'minimalist') periodization, operating with convenient time laps (such as centuries, or bundles of centuries), and an internal (also: 'maximalist') periodization, based on 'defining characteristics' justifying the chronological segmentation adopted. Probably the most fruitful type is a kind of 'intertwined' periodization, which operates with both 'linear' time development, 'lateral' processes, as well as with aspects of 'anticipation' and 'retention'²¹.
2. The second decision concerns the heuristic component: here the historiographer can choose to focus on 'canonical' source materials, i.e. the sources traditionally taken into account in the study of the topic chosen for research, or one can also include – at least if they are available – 'marginal' sources²², such as manuscript notes, reports, correspondence, archival materials (and for the contemporary period: interviews).
3. An important decision has also to be taken with respect to the expository format²³ that will be used for the presentation of the research results. Here we can distinguish three basically different expository schemes: a *narrative*²⁴ one, which is the form of history writing through which one basically reports 'events', generally in their historical time sequence; a *structural* scheme, which integrates historical information into a patterning based on the organization of the source materials, on the 'architecture' of statements found in the source texts²⁵, or on the relationships between the problems investigated, or on the organization of a domain of study; or an *axiomatic* scheme (often used in science-historiographical work on mathematically slanted disciplines)²⁶, which identifies the underlying presuppositions, the axioms, and the set of statements made within a theoretical model.

In addition to these expository schemes, mention must be made of supporting 'techniques', such as the use of elementary statistics, or the more demanding recourse to historiometry (see Desmet 1996; 1998), involving statistics and visualization formats showing similarities and divergences (between statements made, between socio-professional profiles etc.).²⁷

21 One will note here the parallel with language history, which is also characterized by phenomena of 'retention' and 'foreshadowing'.

22 See De Clercq; Swiggers (1991) concerning the use of marginal or less canonical sources in the historiography of linguistics.

23 On expository formats, types of historiography, and historiographical intentions, see Koerner (1978), and Swiggers (1990; 2004; 2009; 2013).

24 On "narrativity" as a mode of historiography, see Schmitter (1994; 2003); see also Batista (2013).

25 On source texts in linguistic historiography, see Swiggers (2012b; 2013).

26 In his assessment of science-theoretical and science-historical descriptions, Stegmüller (1979) deals with both structural and axiomatic accounts.

27 Desmet's (1996) study offers a standard-setting historiometrical treatment, appealing to statistical analysis and diagrammatical visualization techniques, which result in a grouping of prosopographical information and, especially, of doctrinal contents, as

4. Another decision relates to the attitude that will be taken with respect to the terminology in the sources (and their use in historiographical description). As a matter of fact, the historiographer's source texts will, as a rule, contain (more or less) technical terminology or metalanguage. With regard to this, one will have to decide whether one will adopt an 'emic' or an 'etic' attitude²⁸: with the first option, the historiographer is bound to re-use the terminology found in her/his source texts, approached from an 'immanent' point of view; choosing the second option, the historiographer will have to appeal to an overarching (standardizing) terminology (and terminography), which is better suited for typological or comparative investigations, but which requires – for the readership – a constant re-linking between the historiographer's systematizing terminology and the terminology, or terminologies, found in the source texts²⁹.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL AWARENESS

The issue of decision-taking confronts the historiographer with the inevitable distance between her/his object and her/his personal stance; further reflection on this distance brings us to the epistemological analysis of the crucial stage inbetween heuristics and the historiographical writing activity: viz. the hermeneutic endeavour. We will consider this stage from a twofold point of view: first, from the point of view of its basic conceptual *instrumentarium* or apparatus; second, from the point of view of its 'justification procedure'. The first point of view will be dealt with in this section, the second one in the following section.

A crucial aspect of the conceptual *instrumentarium* of the historiographer – apart from a general concept of periodization, of history-writing and its formatting, and of terminological analysis and terminographical synthesis – relates to what I would call 'historiographical awareness', i.e. the reflexive attitude the linguistic historiographer has to adopt with respect to her/his object of study *as a historical object*.

This awareness³⁰ involves at least three aspects:

1. our 'mental grasp' of historical objects, in our case historical objects which carry 'linguistic knowledge';
2. our view of, and explanation for, the historical development of linguistic knowledge, as embodied in our historical objects;
3. our more distanced view of evolution.

clustering in each of the figures who formed part of the French school of naturalist linguistics.

- 28 For the distinction between emic and etic, see Goodenough (1980, p. 112): "When we speak of the emic aspect of ethnography, we are concerned with precisely the problem in that we want to know how an ethnographer can come to share a set of understandings with the people he studies and how he can in turn share these same understandings with the audience for whom he writes an ethnographic report [...] Emic description requires etics, and by trying to do emic descriptions we add to our etic conceptual resources for subsequent description. It is through etic concepts that we do comparison. And by systematizing our etic concepts we contribute to the development of a general science of culture".
- 29 For more detailed treatments of the problem of (comparative) terminological analysis and terminographical synthesis, see Lauwers (2004), Swiggers (2011), Swiggers; Quijada Van den Berghe (2011), Swiggers; Szoc (2013); Szoc (2013). On terminology and linguistic historiography, see also various contributions in Colombat; Savelli (2001).
- 30 For a thought-stimulating study, from a linguistic-ethnographical point of view, of awareness, see Silverstein (1981).

The first aspect has to do with our construction of, and/or handling of, categories, i.e. interpretative classificatory notions through which we analyse the process of history itself, the role of 'actors' in history (agents, producers, transmitters, witnesses, receivers, ...), and the specificity of 'objects'. The importance of being aware of our use of 'categories' in the historical disciplines has been stressed by Perelman (1963; 1969)³¹.

Nous ne pouvons nous passer de catégories dans l'histoire, à la fois pour organiser les faits que nous connaissons, et pour compléter nos connaissances dans une direction que nos catégories nous présentent comme significative et importante; nous en avons besoin également pour exposer nos résultats de façon à montrer leur importance dans une perspective plus générale. Chaque fois il y aura lieu de confronter les éléments concrets avec les catégories dont ils sont la manifestation ou l'illustration. C'est ce va-et-vient entre les données et les catégories qui donne un sens au travail de l'historien. [...] C'est l'usage indispensable de catégories et la reconnaissance du fait que ces catégories, en tant qu'œuvre humaine, peuvent être conçues de diverses façons, qui rendent le dialogue entre historiens à la fois possible et indispensable. (PERELMAN 1969, p. 145-146).

Studying the history of linguistics – investigating the historical course of linguistic 'knowledge' – raises the question of the internal dynamics of this history. Linguistic knowledge has taken, in the long run of its history, (very) different forms; it has asked and answered quite different questions, and it has been embedded in variegated social and cultural settings. How can we account for this dynamics?

As an answer to this question I have proposed³² – in line with Galison's (1987, 1997) view on the dynamics of microphysics, and revising and adapting Galison's model – to explain the dynamics in the history of linguistics (especially for the modern period, for which we notice a considerable growth of explicit statements and procedures, as well as the establishing of an institutionalized profession). Rather than explain the dynamics as the consequence of temporal progression, or as the result of a struggle between competing views and theories, or as the reflection of a pendulum swing movement between polarized or antagonistic attitudes and approaches in the history of scientific and philosophical thinking (e.g. universalism vs. particularism; realism vs. idealism; inductive vs. deductive reasoning), I have argued that we should approach the dynamics of the history of linguistics from a multiple perspective, thus doing justice to the 'multilateral' nature of scientific (and proto-/pre-scientific ...) development, and that we should embrace a descriptive-explanatory model in which a *layered* account of the development of a discipline can be moulded. Here Galison's ideas (1987, 1997) on the development of microphysics are particularly inspiring. Galison analyses the (relatively recent) history of microphysics by seeing it as the evolution of scientific activity involving three layers³³: an *experimental* layer (referring to

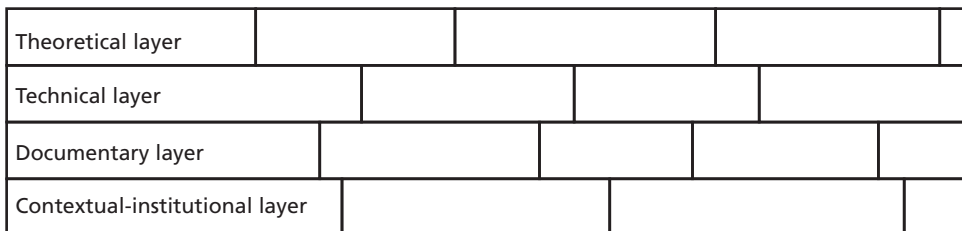
31 See also Swiggers (2012a). For an application of the notion of 'category' to the historiography of ancient linguistics, see Swiggers; Wouters (2004).

32 For a more extensive discussion, see Swiggers (2004, 2006a).

33 Galison's three-layered model is, in essence and in spirit, very different from Laudan's (1984) tripartite model.

laboratory experiments), an *instrumental* layer (constituted by technical equipment), and a *theoretical* layer. The three layers are comparable to layers of bricks in a wall: just like the bricks of the various layers are not exactly superimposed on each other (to make the construction more solid), the blocks within the three layers of scientific activity are not co-extensive in vertical perspective. What is specific for the history of modern experimental sciences is the fact that work within the three layers is normally executed by different persons, or even laboratories (in the Early Modern Period scientists were also builders of instruments and at the same time performers of experiments).

Linguistics, or the field of ‘language study’, is not microphysics; it is, on the hand, less dependent on experiments³⁴, and is, on the other hand, a more ‘integrated’ discipline, with a less strict separation between the constituent layers (or stages). However, the accumulation of roles in a single scholar should not lead us to conclude that linguistic activity is single-layered. I argue for a descriptive-explanatory model for the dynamics of linguistics that includes four layers: a theoretical layer (that of ‘ideas’, ‘insights’, ‘theoretical statements’), a technical layer (in the sense of technical-linguistic work, of which the degree of technicality is theory-linked and time-bound), a documentary layer (which is constituted by the linguistic documentation available at a given time: e.g., which languages were known at time *to*?; what was known about the sociolinguistic diversification of language *L1* at time *to*?; which types of materials (under what form) were available for the study (of the grammar/the vocabulary) of *L1* at time *to*?; etc., and a contextual-institutional layer. The following diagram offers a schematic visualization of the model:



In my view, a layered description and explanation of the dynamics of the history of language study has several epistemological advantages:

1. First, it helps us to understand, to describe, and to explain why theoretical innovations can occur within one and the same temporal segment characterized by institutional, technical and/or documentary *status quo*, and why, the other way round, a change in the documentary level (even a spectacular change) does not necessarily involve a change in theorizing or in descriptive devices; along the same lines, the layered description makes us understand why there are (individual or group) phenomena of

³⁴ Also, the specific relation holding between ‘observation’, ‘discovery’ and ‘explanation’ in the natural sciences (see Hanson 1958; 1971) cannot be transposed to linguistics.

‘anachronistic’ theorizing/descriptive practice, and why there are effects of ‘retardation’;

2. In the second place, the dynamics of the discipline can be linked to ‘intra-layer’ changes, to changes in the relationship between two layers, and, ultimately, to the changing superimposition of the four layers. Overall and radical changes (corresponding to what Thomas Kuhn [1970] identified as ‘revolutions’ in the natural sciences) are probably a case of coinciding changes, or ‘conversions’, in all layers; such cases are quite exceptional in the history of language study, and this may be due to the fact that linguistics has hardly witnessed cases of: 1. radical innovation (and concomitant destruction/eclipsing of the past), and of 2. worldwide diffusion of canonical doctrinal contents.
3. In the third place, this layered model can function as a reference pattern (or touchstone) for various types of linguistic-historiographical undertakings: one can take it as a starting-point for studying the (more or less conservative/typical) place of a particular scholar with respect to the situation of each of the four layers in her/his time, or to study the role of a school/model with reference to these layers (esp. the theoretical and the technical layers, since schools and models in linguistics are usually identified – or have identified themselves – with changes in the theory and practice of the discipline), and the model can be used to study global developments in the history of the discipline³⁵.

The third aspect concerns our awareness of time. Our experience of time is a multiple one: apart from the strictly individual experience, there is the time experience of our environment (al group), in which we participate, and beyond that, there is the general time experience of people all over the world, in which we also participate and of which we have at times a more explicit awareness, and even further there is ‘cosmic time’, the global experience of a vast evolutionary time dimension. We can therefore also speak of a layering of time experiences or awareness, cristallized in our existential experience. This manifold experience as a frame for history writing has been stressed by Ferdinand Braudel in his work (see Braudel 1949; 1958; 1967-70), characterized by the distinction between three evolutionary axes: long duration (*longue durée*), mid-length duration (*moyenne durée*), and short duration (*courte durée*)³⁶.

VALIDITY AND VALIDATION OF INTERPRETATION

The crucial hermeneutic component of historiographical activity requires validation: interpretations of source texts have to be validated. Of course, scientific validation is a question of group consensus, and can as such not be (fully) controlled by the interpreter. However, the latter has to demonstrate the validity of his interpretation, and this installs, as a preliminary, some kind of

35 I cannot enter into the (related) problem of incommensurability (and possible incomparability) of linguistic theories (see Ten Hacken 1997), and how it can be dealt with in terms of the three-layered model. – For Kuhn’s modified view on incommensurability, see Kuhn (1977, 1989); see also Swiggers (2004, p. 135-136).

36 See also Swiggers (2012a). With reference to the ‘programs’ discussed in section 4, one could say that the *correspondence* and *descriptionist* programs are, by now, of *longue durée*, the *socio-cultural* program of *moyenne durée*, whereas the *projection* program is of *courte durée*.

auto-validation. In what follows, I will briefly deal with the issue of validating the hermeneutic component³⁷.

In the first place, the interpreter has to make sure to meet a number of conditions:

1. conditions as to ‘competence’;
2. explicitness conditions as to executive tasks.

Conditions relative to competence³⁸ comprise, in the case of linguistic historiography, a strong background in linguistics (preferably in a wide variety of its branches), and in history; the historical background will have to include, as a rule, not only ‘general’ history, but also (more specialized) socio-economic, institutional history, history of religion and law. Moreover, it will often include history of philosophy and, certainly for more recent periods, history and sociology of science. In addition, the historiographical interpreter will need some skills in rhetoric, argumentation theory, and discourse analysis.

The second type of conditions relates to the fact of making explicit – surely for oneself, but preferably also for the reader – the various facets, or possibilities of hermeneutic tasks and their implementation in a historiographical study; these parameters thus affect both the process of interpretation and that of history-writing. Given a chosen research topic, and a chosen chronological and geographical delimitation, historiographical research has to define itself³⁹ with regard to:

1. *perspective*: a basic distinction here is that between an *internal* history of linguistic thinking, focusing on linguistic views and practices taken on their own, and an *external* history of linguistics, according primacy to institutional, political and socio-cultural factors in the context of which linguistic ideas and products came about (see *supra* [section 4], our remarks on content and context);
2. *depth of analysis*: some types of historiography focus on the collection of data or on making data available (e.g., in a critical edition or in some kind of corpus), while others embark on a critical assessment of the achievements of the past, or try to explain what has happened in the historical course of linguistic knowledge;
3. *expository format and focus*: apart from the distinction between narrative, structural and axiomatic accounts (see *supra* [section 5]), we can distinguish between *sequential* historiography, *topical* historiography (focusing on the analysis of a specific theme), and *detached* historiography (reflecting on general processes in the history of linguistics);
4. *demonstrative purpose*: this refers to the intention of the historiographer, who may want to write a classificatory account, or a polemical, or

³⁷ The issue of validity in interpretation has been thoroughly dealt with by Hirsch (1967) in relation to the interpretation of literary works. While initial conditions of interpretation differ of course in the case of ‘scientific’ texts vs. literary texts, Hirsch’s study makes interesting reading for the historiographer of linguistics.

³⁸ See also Malkiel; Langdon (1969) on requirements for linguistic historiographical work.

³⁹ See also Swiggers (2013; 2015).

teleological, or critical-systematic history of (segments in) the evolutionary course of linguistic knowledge (see Koerner 1978; Swiggers 2004);

5. 'style'⁴⁰: this corresponds to the (at times hardly definable) features of asking (historiographical) questions, of exploiting source materials, of engaging in collateral issues, as well as the personal *modus* of writing up the historical account and addressing one's readership.

Apart from these (preliminary) conditions, there are a number of argumentative parameters which, when properly addressed, will enhance the chances of intersubjective validation. These parameters are:

1. internal coherence of the interpretation proposed;
2. appropriateness of contextual 'accommodation', i.e. integration and thoughtful exploitation of relevant contextual information;
3. intelligent use of the 'hindsight perspective': historiographer's can make use of their '*post factum*' – vantage point, not to write anachronistic history, but to present history with a sense of methodological perspective;
4. coverage of the analysis: this parameter ideally involves the use of text 'series'⁴¹ (or text parallels) as supportive evidence;
5. informed discussion of the secondary literature.

QUANTITY AND QUALITY IN LINGUISTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY: PRINCIPLES OF GROUNDED THEORY

Linguistic historiography, as a descriptive and explanatory research endeavour in which the use of source materials plays a crucial role, has to meet basic quantitative and qualitative requirements and standards.

With respect to *quantitative* requirements, historiographical research should, optimally, investigate the maximal number of source texts (or: text samples) relevant for the research topic as it is delimited by the historiographer – a delimitation corresponding to temporal, geographical and thematic criteria; the complementary epihistoriographical component of the research should also aim at an ideally exhaustive coverage of the relevant data (biographical and bibliographical, and other contextual information on the authors of the source texts).

With respect to the *qualitative* requirements (see the discussion of validation in section 7), historiographical research has to meet the standards of analytic scrutiny, of adequately contextualized interpretation and analysis (avoiding any type of unjustified anachronism), of pertinent linking between source texts, of comprehensive synthesis, and of intelligent (and appealing) exposition, always on the basis of a well-informed and critical dialogue with secondary literature. Historiographers are expected to apply consistency and non-biasedness (their

40 On this concept of 'style' in the philosophy of science, see Granger (1968).

41 On the notion of "text series" and its application in linguistic historiography, see the foundational work of Gerda Hassler (e.g., Hassler, 2008).

source texts are not liable to these conditions !), and to accommodate, with sufficient flexibility, the principle of charity.⁴²

In these regards, linguistic historiography can be said to comply, quantitatively and qualitatively, with the general principles of what has been called *grounded theory* in the social sciences. Grounded theory, developed by Anselm Strauss, in collaboration with Barney Glaser, and subsequently refined by Juliet Corbin, was elaborated as a methodology based on research in sociology, but aims at a general application, not only within the social sciences, but also to sciences outside the domain of the social. It is characterized by a strong theoretical concern, though not in an a priori way: it builds its theoretical concepts on the basis of actual data, and adapts these in the process of research. This explains the link established by its proponents with the pragmatism of John Dewey and of George Mead. Also, grounded theory crucially aims at establishing validated knowledge, as a contribution to a historically shared set of cognitive facts; grounded theory proponents adhere to the general idea of knowledge as (basically) cumulative. And knowledge is seen as a starting point for action, in line with the view held by Dewey⁴³.

The methodology of linguistic historiography presents, to a large extent, the properties of the grounded theory frame:

1. it starts from a(n ideally exhaustive) set of data (relevant to the topic of study);
2. it approaches the data without specific biases – or, at least, the historiographer should control his biases and a priori assumptions;
3. it inspires research with openness to various, alternative approaches, both quantitatively and qualitatively;
4. it develops its analytical concepts in close relationship to the information contained in the data set, and the concepts are adapted, refined, and enriched in the process of investigation;
5. it follows an intersubjectively controllable research path, and guarantees research activities yielding (not always foreseen) results open to discussion;
6. it aims at comprehensive explanations, satisfying the requirements of appropriate contextualization, and of relevant data-linkage (in time and space);
7. it contributes to an increasing body of knowledge, itself constantly open to critical discussion.

Crucially present in linguistic historiography are two basic properties of grounded theory:

42 See Sluiter (1998). The principle of charity (which has gone through a number of adaptations since its first formulation by Neil Wilson in the 1950s) is a common sense hermeneutic procedure, in so far as it ascribes a rational organization to objects of analysis. However, the principle runs the risk of projection of the interpreter's 'rationality' (and of his hermeneutic agenda). In any event, the use of the principle in linguistic historiography should be controlled by the analysis of parallel texts/text series, as well as by other contextual information.

43 See Dewey (1929, p. 245): "The theme, however, is the relation of knowledge and action; the final import of the conclusions as to knowledge resides in the changed ideas it enforces into action"; and Dewey (1929, p. 136): "The test of ideas, of thinking generally, is found in the consequences of the acts to which the ideas lead, that is in the new arrangement of things which are brought into existence".

1. the importance attached to “reflective inquiry”, as triggered by ‘problematic situations’⁴⁴ (the study object of linguistic historiographers essentially involves “problems” in the historical course of the study of language);
2. the use of “theoretical sampling” as a research strategy. Theoretical sampling is defined within grounded theory in the following way:

In theoretical sampling, it is concepts and not people, per se, that are sampled. So when researchers sample theoretically, they go to places, persons, and situations that will provide information about the concepts they want to learn more about. Unlike conventional methods of sampling, researchers do not go out and collect all the data before beginning the analysis. Analysis begins after the first data are collected. Data collection is followed by analysis. Analysis leads to concepts. Concepts generate questions. Questions lead to more data collection so that the researcher can learn more about those concepts. This circular process continues until the research reaches the point of saturation – that is, the point in the research when all major categories are fully developed, show variation, and are integrated. (CORBIN; STRAUSS 2015, p. 135).

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION: A NOTE ON META-AWARENESS

The evaluation yardstick of (linguistic) historiographical work is of course not a matter of methodological and epistemological sophistication and explication; after all, it is the quality of the historiographical product on itself that is at stake and not the theoretical wrapping.

However, explicating one’s options, and taking notice of other possible options, and stating one’s assumptions – thus testifying to one’s historiographical awareness – may be helpful, for both the historiographer and her/his readership.

Beyond that, it may be useful to cultivate some kind of *meta*-awareness, at least in two respects.

1. First, as to the inevitable, universal limitations of historiographical work. Historiographical activity always involves a “conditional interpretation”. This has a straightforward explanation: on the one hand, all historiographical work is source-bound, and thus incomplete, and subject to change; on the other hand, it is always, to some extent, subjective, non-definitive, and non-neutral. In other words, we have to be aware of the inevitable presence of ‘dark holes’ in our documentation, and of ‘loose ends’ in our analysis and synthesis. Or, put more briefly: historiographical work is always a matter of probabilistic approximation.
2. Second, we have to be aware of the (possible) ambivalence or twofoldness of our historical objects. This twofoldness⁴⁵ exists on three levels:

.....
 44 Again, this is a crucial tenet of pragmatism; see Dewey (1929, p. 189): “All reflective inquiry starts from a problematic situation, and no such situation can be settled in its own terms”, and Mead (1938, p. 79): “Reflective thinking arises in testing the means which are presented for carrying out some hypothetical way of continuing an action which has been checked”.

45 Historiographers have to be aware that this twofoldness not only applies to their source-texts, but also to products of historiographical activity.

- 2.1 **Form:** next to the ‘superficial’ form of source texts, there often is a ‘deeper’, ‘hidden’ form (e.g., a rhetorical dimension⁴⁶);
- 2.2 **Meaning:** next to their ‘literal’ meaning, texts may have a ‘figurative’ meaning;
- 2.3 **Function:** next to the ‘direct’ function of texts, we have to take into account possible ‘indirect’ function(s).

The present metahistoriographical synopsis should not be taken as a ‘manual of instructions’ (see Swiggers 2015); its goal is to offer a frame of methodological and epistemological reflections that may be helpful for the historiographer (of linguistics), in order to better define her/his research agenda, as well as to select, adapt, and add questions, principles and criteria which are relevant for her/his own research agenda. As such, the present text is intended to contribute to the general aim of historiographical metatheory: viz. to enhance critical and constructive discussion, dialogue, and ‘commensurability’ between historiographers.

HISTORIOGRAFIA LINGUÍSTICA: UMA SINOPSE METATEÓRICA

Resumo: O presente texto oferece uma visão metateórica da historiografia linguística, focalizando no objeto e na organização da pesquisa em historiografia linguística, e nas decisões que o historiógrafo tem de tomar. Argumenta-se que a historiografia da linguística deve corresponder aos princípios da Teoria Fundamentada em Dados, *ground theory*, nas Ciências Sociais.

Palavras-chave: História e historiografia da linguística. Meta-historiografia. Metodologia e epistemologia da historiografia da linguística.

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⁴⁶ See my remarks in Swiggers (2004). For studies of rhetorical strategies in recent linguistic discussions and controversies, see, e.g., Harris (1993) and Batista (2015).

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Recebido em 06-07-2017.

Aprovado em 13-07-2017.