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The reflexivity of human languaging and Nigel Love's two orders of language[1]

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ABSTRACT

Nigel Love's distinction between first-order language and second-order language exposes the fallacy of the code view of linguistic communication. Persons do not 'use' the forms that are said to constitute a pre-existing language system; they adapt and shape their bodily behaviour, including their vocalizing, in accordance with community-level norms and practices that have historical continuity and thus define the cultural-historical traditions of a community. Individuals normatively orient to these continuities and self-reflexively engage in forms of situated appropriation of them as they flexibly adapt them to the requirements of situations in the pursuance of their goals. Love has shown how the capacity of languaging agents to evoke a linguistic 'same' depends upon their capacity self-reflexively to enter it dialogue with this tradition so that, for example, first-order utterance activity on a given occasion can be referenced with respect to the manner in which that utterance is experienced, to an aspect of how we are engaging with it. First-order languaging is an experiential flow that is enacted, maintained, and changed by the real-time activity of participants. To construe this flow as sequences of abstract forms is a radical misconstrual of what people are doing in their languaging. For a start, it is assumed that 'language' is constituted out of formal entity-like units that can be segmented and identified on analogy with the metalinguistic analytical practices afforded by alphabetic writing. Accordingly, language is seen, in part, as constituents (parts) and their combinations into wholes. Combinations of these constituents thus generate new wholes. This assumption is grounded in traditional entity-based (or substance-based) metaphysics. On the other hand, the term *languaging* serves to direct attention to the fact that processes and their organization across different spatial and temporal scales are fundamental. Bodily and situational processes in the here-and-now of first-order languaging interact with and integrate with cultural processes deriving from population scale cultural-historical dynamics.

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1. Introduction

Nigel Love's (1990) groundbreaking distinction between first-order language and second-order language presents a number of fertile ideas ripe for further development. In showing the agent's belief and faith in the iterability of entities like 'words' and 'sentences' from one occasion of languaging to another, Nigel Love's distinction shows how what languaging agents do on any one occasion—their first-order languaging—is oriented to and shaped by agents' sense of the real effects of virtual second-order patterns that derive from and also serve to evoke the historical-cultural traditions of a community. In so doing, agents draw upon and ground their languaging both in their first-person experience as well as the collective and situation-transcending scale of an entire population. When someone makes a claim about a linguistic same in Nigel Love's sense, they are performing a meta-linguistic operation that interacts with (some aspect of) the flow of first-order languaging. The iterability of linguistic sames identified by Love (1990, 2007) shows the recursivity and reflexivity of human languaging and hence its historical depth: as Love notes we make our own verbal behaviour "an object of contemplation and inquiry." (Nigel Love, circulated Notes, January 2015). Drawing on past patterns and behaviours, selves are able to manage their present and anticipated future languaging activities and to fashion their self-narratives (Ross, 2007) by evoking and adapting the iterated and consolidated habits and routines of the community in their own projects. Love's distinction also raises the question as to the reflexive relationship between the individual social agent and social and cultural resources. In this paper, I will examine some aspects of the intrinsic reflexivity of human languaging in relation to the two orders of language postulated by Love. In doing so, I offer some proposals that illustrate the continuing relevance and potential for further development of Love's important distinction between the two orders of language.

2. The architecture of language according to the code view

Language is usually seen as comprising three coding levels of phonology, syntax, semantics, which, for example, Trager (1958) refers to as the three levels of sound, shape, and sense. There have been many versions of this conception before and since. A core assumption of this view is that the three levels and the relations between them constitute a stable linguistic architecture of verbal language as distinct from the variables of so called 'paralanguage'. Martinet's notion of the doubly articulated character of language is founded upon this principle. He makes a distinction between what is "properly linguistic" and "what is marginally so" (Martinet, 1962: 59) that rests upon the assumption of a doubly articulated linguistic core:

> It is by reference to our distinction between what is properly linguistic and what is marginally so that we may hope to give a sound foundation to the concept of 'normal utterance'. What we consider properly linguistic is what is achieved in matters of communication, by means of the double articulation pattern: double articulation is what protects the linguistic frame against interference from outside, what makes it really independent and self-contained.
>
> (Martinet, 1962: 59)

Double articulation in Martinet's sense is based on the notion of doubly articulated language as an (approximately) invariant core that does not change from one set of circumstances to another. If distinctiveness is what makes it possible for speakers and listeners to distinguish lexicogrammatical units (c.f. Martinet's monemes), many other aspects of languaging reflect the fact that 'language' is not a fixed set of doubly articulated units that do not vary from one situation to another; Instead, languaging behaviour constitutes a flexible, adaptive means for attuning to and adjusting to specific circumstances. It seems odd to define language as a system of invariant doubly articulated units (monemes) and to argue that these units are "properly linguistic" whereas other features of the speech event are only marginally linguistic or not all at. Definitions of 'paralanguage' vary to include non-linguistic aspects of the speech signal and kinesics such as facial expressions, hand gestures and body postures. The basic assumption is that the verbal and nonverbal aspects of speech behaviour can be separated off from each other as distinct phenomena which are 'combined' in speech (Trager, 1958). Language in such a view—e.g., the classical formalist one, but also many contemporary functional and discourse-analytical views—is identified above all with abstract verbal patterns, morphosyntax or lexicogrammar.

In this view, language is a code-like system of inputs and outputs that gets separated from cognitive, affective, and bodily dynamics in real-time (Cowley, 2007, 2008; Cowley and Love, 2006; Thibault, 2008, 2011a, b, c). Until recently, the language sciences have conducted their research in isolation from work in the biological, ecological, and neurobiological sciences. Linguists and discourse-analysts have been content all too often to conduct the 'scientific' study of human languaging on the basis of metaphysical premises and assumptions derived from several millenia of folk-theoretical speculations about 'language' in accordance with predominant intuitions that the world is grounded in and explainable in terms of substances and fundamental entities (Taylor, 1993). Language is form, not substance. This view follows in the tradition of the Aristotelian hylomorphic schema (see Simondon, 2011: 66–71 for discussion of the limitations of the Aristotelian hylomorphic schema). According to Aristotle's schema, transcendent form in the metaphysical sense is imposed on an inert and passive matter. However, this essentialist and constructivist account of the genesis of form can now be discarded in favour of a more realistic and realist one based on the intrinsic morphogenetic properties of the material world and its capacities for giving rise to new forms. On this view, the material world possesses its own intensive resources for the generation of form from within its own dynamics when it is manipulated and interacted with by bodily and technical means that modulate and channel the flows of energy through it and thus give rise to form (Simondon, 2011: 62–66).

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