

LINGO OF LINGUISTICS 1966

Lectures 1-3
Feringer notes
Last edited: 8-98

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Lecture 1

1. "Language is the power to make yourself understood by a person who did not understand you the day before." (p.4) Linguistics, as they are handled today, have nothing to do with this, , because they only speak of people defining their terms.

2. Peace-making is not an act of will, but comes from the ability to give up one's will in an act of love. True peace must be found, rather than imposed. (p.6)

ERH suggests a metaphor: just as thousands of seeds fly through the air, but only a few grow and bear fruit, so it is with sentences.

3. He makes a distinction between speaking and "talking." Talking is uttering words, and speaking is backing up talking with consistent acts. (p.8) It is the same between speaking and politeness. Unless politeness is backed up by relevant acts, it does not reflect "speaking." (p.10)

4. There are three circles of speech, 1) how people speak of you behind your back, 2) how they speak to your face, and 3) how you think of yourself. When these three harmonize, there is peace (the ideal condition). Also, this represents the three problems of human speech. (p.10) Thus, "...language has everything to do with the relationship between the word and the man who utters it."

5. One must learn the distinction between true words, words spoken with one's whole existence and character at risk and the other (empty words unsupported by action). (p.11) Words spoken only for money or acclamation are empty.

6.No linguists can understand the true mystery of speech.

7.Beginning about 1180 at the University of Paris, the seven liberal arts were established, which allowed the study of grammar, the analysis of the structure of language. But there was no requirement for the "Holy Spirit" to guide the speaker, i.e. no insurance that our God-given ability to communicate was not wasted on "prattle." There was no way to distinguish the important from the unimportant. (p.16) "Obedience is something unknown in linguistics in American education. And it is the beginning of wisdom." (p.17)

8.Linguistics allows one to analyze sentences as though they stand alone.

Paganism means that man stands alone, just as science, as an isolated statement fragments knowledge.

Lecture 2

1.Curiosity is to be distinguished from "inquisitiveness." Idle curiosity may not be serious. One must be willing to sacrifice one's time and money in a calling, and then one is inquisitive, and can be transformed. To be "called" opens the door to willingness to sacrifice.

2.To be called is to have a name - professor, biologist, doctor, etc, "...there are not just verbs, and adjectives, and nouns....there are names by which we are called." (p.2) Man has a right to an honorable name. Mere words are spoken of things and people. Names, by contrast, are spoken to people. "A name is something between you and me, from face to face." (p.3)

To mis-speak about "things" may be a simple error, but to mis-speak about a person's name to his face is much more serious, more explosive. "All questions usually are insoluble in the way in which they are presented in our papers. You will never solve the Vietnamese question as long as you do not call Ho Chi Minh by his name...He is the man we have to talk to." (p.6)

3.To be human is to have a given name, and to speak about yesterday and tomorrow. Linguistics does not deal with the humanity behind language.

ERH goes on to indicate other factors of humanity not distinguished in linguistics, for instance, that the future is not created from the past, but the other way around. Time is a social creation, as people speak together who live in the same times. The future as something we strive to achieve impinges, not only on our interpretation of past events, but on our anticipatory actions today. Taking an examination at the university is "...the product of your fear, or your hope for the future, and not the other way around." (p.11). Out of all of this comes the need for language, none of which is the concern of linguistics.

4."Speech rejuvenates us because after I have listened so often to the fact that I'm my father's son, suddenly somebody says, 'Now you are a father. Now you have grandchildren'. And by these actions, we re-create the universe. "Speech takes you from a hoped for future into an

accomplished past....Now all language is built around this necessity to make things future into things past." (p.12,13)

5.Christ came into the world to teach us that the past does not beget the future. "That's the whole Christian doctrine.....The Revelation in Judaism is of the past, and the Revelation in Christianity is of tomorrow." (p.14) This is the imperative and the first form of language.

The second form of language is the subjunctive, the optative, the expression of feelings (the adjective).

The third is the indicative, the narrative about the past.

The fourth is from the outside looking in, the objective, the conceptual.

6.Language allows us to describe this flow of events. "These are the four languages into which all human language is divided and organized." (p.18)

Man is transformed by speech, or he doesn't speak. And all linguists are quite sure that they are not changed, but language is changed by their research....But your and my listening and speaking will bear fruit if you allow yourself to become a different person by this impact... (p.19)

Lecture 3

1.Most people believe they have the power to lie in order to get ahead. ERH IS INTERESTED IN THE QUESTION, "HOW DO WE TELL THE TRUTH?"

We speak to others. Well, then you cannot speak the truth, because others have always different interests from yourself. And only if there is some almighty ruler in the universe who watches you and me will we limit our lying, and our egotism, and our vanities, and ... (p.3)

[RF - I'm not sure how to interpret this. Is belief a psychological game we play on ourselves? And what if "I" believe and others don't? What happens to the community then? In general, if we don't believe others speak truthfully there can be no power in language and it will die, along with the community. His assumption seems to be that we play games with language (lie) too easily if we don't assume a God father is watching over us individually!]

2.Our only access to religion lies through speech. Language is the process (the only process) by which we change and grow, by which we become human. (p.6) Through language we keep alive the memories of others and of events. We are half animal (because we die) and half god because our names beyond our death.

Language is between people! While it can describe other things in the world, it is the relevance of those things to people that defines its importance.

3.ERH defines the notion of "curiosity" as voyeurism, as wanton, destructive, as wanting to know

something just to want to know it, for no other purpose. Inquisitiveness for the scientist may be different. The serious need to know is:

...the only excuse for all interest in humanity, you see:--our identity, our solidarity. And as soon as you break away from this and observe -- you are in great danger of treating the other part which you observe as an anatomist treats a corpse. And this is forbidden. (p.12)

4.ERH speaks of crime and the need for punishment because "...you and I are just as weak as the criminal..." (p.14)

"...the presupposition of speech is that all people are capable of everything." (p.15)

5.Most talking is not speech, it is small talk, "babble." Only when it is absolutely necessary to communicate do we have speech, when our lives depend on it.

6.The true purpose of speech is to identify reality, to understand our experience, to plan for the future. We need to communicate with others to confirm and expand our own experience.

Lingo of Linguistics - 1966 - Review

These lectures were given at a conference on language held at Western Washington University. Against the other speakers at the conference, Rosenstock-Huessy attempts to point out how "their" formal studies of the structure of languages represent abstractions ripped from the larger context in which "life-giving speech" takes place. While he admits some value for such study, he points out how those formalizations omit the true nature of communication, which after all is an action between human beings who are struggling to survive against severe odds. In these lectures he details the essential differences between linguistics and vital speech, between generalizations and flesh and blood.

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