

Betekenis en betekenisstructuur. Nagelaten geschriften van Prof. Dr. A. W. de Groot (ed. by Dr. G. F. Bos and Dr. H. Roose). J. B. Wolters, Groningen, 1966. 158 pp. Dfl. 11.50.

This work is a posthumous publication of a number of essays by A. W. de Groot, collected under the title 'Meaning and Structure of Meaning'. They were written shortly before his death in December 1963, and were edited by his two pupils and followers, Dr. G. F. Bos and Dr. H. Roose.

A. W. de Groot made his name in linguistics in the thirties as an active member of the Prague School. He belongs to the first generation of European structuralists, and all his works show the characteristics of this early structuralism, which is highly classificatory or taxonomic and does not yet aim at a complete, explicit, deductively organized description.

Part A (pp. 15–73) deals with the structure of the meaning of lexical items. Here the word is said to have one primary semantic aspect and a number (zero, one or more) of secondary aspects. The problem of lexical homonymy, i.e., in de Groot's terms, whether one word can have more than one primary semantic aspect, is discussed but not solved. A primary semantic aspect of a lexical meaning is further divided into categorial and non-categorial aspects ("momenten"); very similar to Katz and Postal's semantic markers and distinguishers¹. Secondary semantic aspects are assumed to account for polysemy and metaphors. The same distinctions are supposed to be applicable to flexion morphemes, and even to constructions.

Part B (pp. 75–100) consists of a discussion of the 'structural differences between flexion and derivation', a notoriously delicate problem, about which de Groot gives a number of interesting comments together with a rich variety of material.

Part C (pp. 101–127) deals with the 'Semantic Structure of the Compound', this term being intended to cover all stems consisting of a combination of stems. Cases like *cranberry*, with a unique constituent, are not regarded as compounds. De Groot concludes that compounds have their own meaning, related in some way to the meanings of their constituent stems, but not automatically derivable from them. He thus appears to consider only those compounds which have become part of the lexicon, like *rosebud*, *textbook*, and to disregard new constructional formations, which are made on the spur of the moment and subject to certain generally storable grammatical and semantic rules, like *doorknob wiper*. It is not very clear why, when summarizing part C at the end, de Groot stresses the "free" and "creative" character of compounds.

¹ J. J. Katz and P. M. Postal, *An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Descriptions*, Cambridge, Mass., 1964, p. 13.

Part D (pp. 129–143) is the only part which is not concentrated on the word as a linguistic unit. It is general and theoretical, and deals with ‘Observation and Verification in Linguistics’. Its main conclusion is that introspection is a valid means not only of observation, but also of verification: the ultimate criterion of adequacy of a grammatical description is just whether it is immediately evident to the linguist (p. 139). This is a hackneyed point in continental European linguistics, and it is a pity that de Groot does, in effect, little else than reiterating old points of view, without taking into account the criteria of adequacy proposed in more recent literature (Chomsky).

Part E (pp. 145–158) is entitled ‘The Hierarchical Structure of the System of Word Classes’. De Groot comes to grips here with the problem of subcategories of lexical items. Although he considers syntactic criteria to be more important than morphological ones (p. 155), he only makes a limited use of them (he does not, for instance, take into account data of selectional restriction). Consequently, the divisions and subdivisions which he proposes (p. 148–150) are to a large extent speculative and *a priori*. The lexicon, according to de Groot, is a hierarchical system of more and more inclusive classes. One notices that he shares this view with Katz and Postal, although the latter draw their evidence much more from selectional restrictions, so that their classifications, as would be expected, are very different. Since Chomsky’s *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965), however, we know that the idea of the lexicon as a hierarchical system is inadequate: we will have to adopt a notion of cross-classifications all through every rough category (i.e. “part of speech”) of the lexicon.

Those who know de Groot’s comprehensive work *Inleiding tot de Algemene Taalwetenschap* (Groningen 1962, 2nd ed. 1964) will already be familiar with much that is said in the present book. On the whole the impression is confirmed that, on the one hand, de Groot was an eager but rather restricted and unoriginal theoretician, but that on the other hand, he had a keen feeling for collecting material. If his writings frequently make for pleasant reading, this is mainly due to the surprising variety of the instances quoted: it reminds one of the considerable difficulty of adequately describing even a single construction in a language.

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