

The Philosophy of Linguistics: Its Theoretical Groundings and Examples in Practice

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The philosophy of language is a field that covers all kinds of philosophical reflections on language since Antiquity. In addition to the philosophy of language, there is a much newer branch of philosophy called “philosophy of linguistics.” Just like the philosophy of history, philosophy of biology, etc., the philosophy of linguistics focuses on the structure of linguistics by taking a specific science as its subject. It presents meta-theoretical information by trying to explain the underlying foundations of linguistic theories. In the first part of this article, we review the noteworthy theoretical attempts to ground the philosophy of linguistics. In the second part of the article, we briefly describe Ricoeur’s and Itkonen’s attempts at the philosophy of linguistics in response to the question of “how does the philosophy of linguistics work in practice?” Thus, we have tried to provide two concrete examples for the philosophy of linguistics: the first one concerning the 20th century, and the second, the 21st century. We found that both of them – albeit for different reasons – showed a consensus in putting Saussure, the founding father of linguistics, in the firing line. Whether the emergence of the philosophy of linguistics damaged the legitimacy of the traditional philosophy of language is discussed in the concluding section of our article.

Keywords: The philosophy of linguistics – Saussure – Ricoeur – Itkonen

Introduction

In some current philosophical writings on language, the attentive reader is likely to notice two very similar denominations: “The philosophy of language” and “the philosophy of linguistics.” These two denominations are highly vulnerable to being confused with each other. However, compared to the philosophy of language, which is as ancient as philosophy in general, the

philosophy of linguistics is very young: For the birth of the philosophy of linguistics, it was necessary to wait for the foundation of linguistics in the early 20th century, from whose rib it was to be originated.¹ The philosophy of linguistics is an area for meta-theoretical reflections on linguistics as a specific science, similar to the philosophy of history or the philosophy of biology. Whereas the philosophy of language directly addresses the phenomenon of language. In the philosophy of language, which centers on the question “what is language?” problems such as meaning, reference, proper names, the origin of language, the relation between language and thought, the relation between language and reality, speech acts, etc., are discussed. Compared to the philosophy of language, the philosophy of linguistics is a less popular branch with fewer academic publications – no doubt because it is younger. These two branches of philosophy, which are sometimes intertwined, differ in their focus and the areas they cover.

I. The Noteworthy Theoretical Attempts to Ground the Philosophy of Linguistics

Although there are some commentators who date the birth of the idea of “philosophy of linguistics” a little earlier (more than half a century ago),² we find it appropriate to adopt Itkonen’s interpretation and start with Katz’s (and his co-author Fodor’s) opinion. In a collective article entitled “What’s Wrong with the Philosophy of Language?” Fodor and Katz describe the philosophy of linguistics as “a discipline analogous in every respect to the philosophy of psychology, the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of physics.” According to them, the philosophy of language should be construed as nothing other than the philosophy of linguistics (Fodor – Katz 1962, 207). Four years later, in a single-author book Katz revised this definition on his own behalf. After admitting that he and Fodor had made the mistake of identifying the philosophy of language with the philosophy of linguistics, which they argued was a branch of the philosophy of science, he writes:

¹ We owe this metaphor to a text by Jaroslav Peregrin (2012), whose tag we have included in the bibliography of our article.

² Two of these commentators, Auroux and Kouloughli (1993, 22), cite Victor Henry’s *Antinomies Linguistiques*, published in 1896, as the first work in the field of linguistics philosophy. Since general linguistics had not yet gained an autonomous science identity at that time, we think that this book can only be evaluated within the scope of a literature that can be called “premature” in terms of the philosophy of linguistics. In fact, the term “philosophy of linguistics” is never mentioned in Henry’s work.

Thus, the philosophy of language is a distinct field from philosophy of linguistics, which is that division of the philosophy of science whose major concern is the examination of the theories, methodology, and practice of the descriptive linguist. There may, of course, be considerable interpenetration between these two fields; but nonetheless they have fundamentally different research aims and proceed at different levels of abstraction (Katz 1966, 4 – 5).

Vendler, in a study that has become a “classic” on the subject, reviews the philosophy of language and the philosophy of linguistics, and makes the following determinations:

This [philosophy of linguistics] comprises reflections on such linguistic universals as meaning, synonymy, paraphrase, syntax, and translation, and a study of the logical status and verification of linguistic theories. Accordingly, the philosophy of linguistics is one of the special branches of the philosophy of science, like the philosophy of physics, psychology, and so on....The catch-all phrase, *philosophy of language*, could be retained to label the remainder of the original domain, still containing more or less philosophical works on the nature of language, its relation to reality, and so forth (Vendler 1971, 248).

Although Vendler seems to accept that the philosophy of language is still functional despite the emergence of the philosophy of linguistics in the sentences we quoted above, he argues that it is possible for linguistics and philosophy of linguistics to absorb philosophy of language one day:

It is possible that the science of linguistics and the philosophy of linguistics may jointly come to replace the philosophy of language – in much the same way as the physical sciences, together with the philosophy of science, have replaced, to a large extent, the cosmological speculations of the past (Vendler 1971, 248).

Auroux and Kouloughli argue that a philosophy of language that is indifferent to the information produced in the field of linguistics is no longer a valid understanding (Auroux – Kouloughli, 1993, 22). According to them, an “autonomous” philosophy of language, examples of which are common in the history of philosophy, is now nothing more than a “fallacy” in our age. Because, from their point of view, the philosophy of language is obliged to pass through the mediation of linguistics, just as today’s philosophers have to meet with cosmology, physics or biology instead of being content with pure philosophical speculation to explain the structure of physical reality (Auroux – Kouloughli

1993, 30 – 31). It would be appropriate to interpret this obligation pointed out by Auroux and Kouloughli not as a “scientism” but as a “science-informed philosophy.”³

As a result of their deliberations, Auroux and Kouloughli arrive at the following conclusion:

Of course we do not imagine that philosophers as such could generate, by themselves, new linguistic knowledge. They have to work with linguists in creative interaction, to provide them with relevant pieces of information and suggest possible directions in which to seek solutions, to generate critical discussions, and pose precise questions. The philosopher of linguistics does not have to work in the field of linguistics exactly like a linguist. But as far as the philosophy of linguistics is concerned, his purposes do not basically differ from the linguist's. The basic objective is to help generate new linguistic knowledge. To put it in a nutshell, then, the important thing for the philosophy of linguistics is not to generate philosophical theories about language, but to follow and support the development of linguistic research (Auroux – Kouloughli 1993, 38).

In his study entitled “What is Philosophy of Linguistics?” Roy Harris points out that linguistics is not even mentioned in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, one of the canonical works in the field of philosophy of language (Harris 1993, 8). Harris notes that Russell, who wrote the “Introduction” to the *Tractatus*, was also in the attitude of ignoring linguistics. In order to clarify the issue, it would be appropriate to quote Russell's determination about four basic problematics related to language in the “Introduction” in question:

There are various problems as regards language. First, there is the problem what actually occurs in our minds when we use language with the intention of meaning something by it; this problem belongs to psychology. Secondly, there is the problem as to what is the relation subsisting between thoughts, words, or sentences, and that which they refer to or mean; this problem belongs to epistemology. Thirdly, there is the problem of using sentences so as to convey truth rather than falsehood; this belongs to the special sciences dealing with the subject-matter of the sentences in question. Fourthly, there is the question: what relation must one fact (such as a sentence) have to

³ I owe thanks to the anonymous referee who drew my attention to adding this comment.

another in order to be capable of being a symbol for that other? This last is a logical question (Russell 1922, 7).

Thus, for Russell, language, as Harris (Harris 1993, 8) points out, appears to be a psychological, epistemological, truth-related and logical problem, but not a linguistic problem. Harris notes that when one looks at Russell's four categories, a legitimate question about the status of linguistics comes to mind: "Do the descriptive statements of the linguist about English, French, German and other languages have, for Russell, any truth value?" (Harris 1993, 8). Harris analyzes the implications of the two possible answers to this question as follows:

Let us consider in turn the two possible answers: "Yes" and "No." If the answer is "No," this means that for Russell there simply is no science of language...However, if the answer is "Yes," then problems of linguistics must fall under the third of Russell's four categories. In other words, the basic theoretical question for linguists has to be: "How can we be sure that we are making true statements about this or that language, or about these and these linguistic phenomena?" On this latter alternative, Russell is in a quandary, and the author of the *Tractatus* along with him. For if linguistics has the status of a science, then by Russell's own admission it will be for the linguist to tell the philosopher what a linguistic sign is, and not the other way round (Harris 1993, 8 – 9).

Harris notes that the answers "yes" and "no" to this question have quite different philosophical implications, and that these implications fall within the domain of the philosophy of linguistics. After all, although neither Russell nor Wittgenstein mentions linguistics in the *Tractatus*, what they say there implies the adoption of a particular philosophy of linguistics. In this respect, Harris identifies a very close connection between philosophy of language and philosophy of linguistics: "You cannot do philosophy of language at all without committing yourself to some position or other in philosophy of linguistics" (Harris 1993, 9). Then, asking himself whether the reverse is also true, Harris gives the following answer: "Presumably it must, unless our philosopher of linguistics is going to maintain that philosophy of language is a totally misguided enterprise which fails to identify any genuine linguistic problems at all" (Harris 1993, 9). So, according to him, the reverse is also true. In this way, writing "a prolegomena to any future philosophy of language and also any future philosophy of linguistics," Harris defines philosophy of linguistics as

“a critical scrutiny of the basic assumptions, whether tacit or explicit, on which linguistic inquiry is or might be conducted” (Harris 1993, 17). Another philosopher, Carr, evaluates the philosophy of linguistics within the scope of the philosophy of science as follows:

The philosophy of science asks what counts as evidence in science, how theories are tested, what the nature of scientific knowledge is, and indeed whether there are any clear senses in which scientific knowledge can be distinguished from non-scientific knowledge. The philosophy of linguistics is parallel to these endeavors: it asks what the nature of linguistic inquiry is; what the object of inquiry is; what counts as evidence in linguistics; how theories are tested; to what extent the methods adopted in the various branches of linguistics are parallel to those of the natural sciences (Carr 1997, 37).

After these examples that we have chosen from the literature of the 20th century, let us conclude this section with an example from the literature of the 21st century. Just like Katz, Fodor, Vendler and Carr, Finnish philosopher Itkonen positions the philosophy of linguistics as an academic discipline under the philosophy of science. Itkonen believes that Katz’s attempt in his *The Philosophy of Linguistics* is a good step towards establishing the philosophy of linguistics as an autonomous field (Itkonen 2011, 1). The conception of the philosophy of linguistics “as a branch of philosophy parallel to the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of logic and the philosophy of physics,” which we encountered in Katz (Katz 1985, 1), seems very reasonable to Itkonen (Itkonen 2011, 1). Itkonen makes the following claim:

Philosophy of science (also called “meta-science”) is the analysis of a particular academic discipline. The philosophy of physics and the philosophy of biology, to cite specific cases, are representative examples of philosophy of science. *Philosophy of linguistics* is also a term that is often used.... philosophy of language and philosophy of linguistics are confused.... what characteristics does a genuine philosophy of linguistics have to possess? Analogous to the philosophy of physics or biology, it would have to have as its object of study the already existing discipline of linguistics (Itkonen 2014, 47 – 48).

In the following section of our article, we will see that Itkonen is an example of the philosophy of linguistics in practice as well as in theory.

II. Examples of Philosophy of Linguistics in Practice: Saussure in the Firing Line

It is now time to answer the question “how does the philosophy of linguistics work in practice?” It would be appropriate to answer this question in the light of two particular examples,⁴ namely, Ricoeur’s and Itkonen’s criticism of Saussurean linguistics.

Ricoeur’s reflections, which were aimed directly at language, were mostly accompanied by his deliberations on linguistics. Ricoeur is of the opinion that the progress in structural linguistics, which was the dominant paradigm of that period, came at the expense of the linguistics of forgetting or neglecting some aspects of the language that philosophy dealt with. So what are these aspects of language that linguistics forgets or neglects, according to Ricoeur? There are three aspects: (1) The connection between language and reality – the ontological level. (2) The liaison between language and parole, between language and the speaking subject – the psychological level. (3) The intersubjective dimension of language – the moral level (Ricoeur 1978, 449 – 450). Before moving on to Ricoeur’s assessment of the importance of these aspects of language, let us see his analysis of why linguistics ignores these aspects of language.

Ricoeur argues that the paradigm of structural linguistics, founded by Saussure and systematized by the Prague School and the Danish School, is based on four postulates. First postulate: In order to be made the object of an empirical science, language must be a homogeneous and well-defined object; put the other way round, the study of language must not be dispersed among psychology, sociology and physiology, so that signs are not subordinated to things. In this respect, Ricoeur writes that Saussure, thanks to his famous distinction between language [*langue*] and speech [*parole*], overcame the task of making language the object of a specific science:

The possibility of constituting language as the specific object of a science was introduced by de Saussure himself by means of his famous distinction between language [*langue*] and speech [*parole*]. On the side of speech he places psychophysiological execution, individual performance and the free

⁴ Of course, many more examples of how the philosophy of linguistics is done could be given. For instance: Merleau-Ponty’s and Derrida’s criticisms of Saussurean linguistics. It is also possible to explain the subject through these examples. However, we will limit ourselves to selecting two other examples (Ricoeur and Itkonen) that can be presented in the scope of an article. One may ask why we have chosen these two examples: We have the impression that Ricoeur’s and Itkonen’s ideas, which we will examine, have been the subject of research more rarely than the other two examples.

combinations of discourse. On the side of language [*langue*] he places the constitutive rules of the code, the institution valid for the linguistic community, the set of entities between which the choice is made in the free combinations of discourse. Thus a homogeneous object is isolated: language [*langue*] (Ricoeur 1978, 450).

Second postulate: In language itself, it is necessary to distinguish between a science of system states or synchronic linguistics, and a science of changes or diachronic linguistics. Moreover, the second of these two approaches must be subordinated to the first. The primacy thus given to the system of the language at a given moment over its genesis or evolution is a very important methodological decision: it implies that behind any change we must be able to find a system (Ricoeur 1978, 451). As he will explain in the fourth postulate, Ricoeur points out that this "system" emphasis of structural linguistics has the consequence of limiting the linguist's field of study to a closed universe of signs.

Third postulate: In a state of a system there are no absolute terms, only relations of mutual dependence (Ricoeur 1978, 451). To quote Saussure's characterization of the language system. Saussure sees language as a system like this: "Language is a pure system of values in which nothing is decisive except the momentary state of its terms" (Saussure 1971, 116). Concepts as values arising from the system are only "differential." That is, the concepts are not positively determined by their content; they are only negatively determined in relation to other terms of the system. (Saussure 1971, 162). For this reason, according to Saussure, "there are only differences in language" (Saussure 1971, 166). Saussure emphasizes that there are neither ideas nor sounds in language before the system [of language] (Saussure 1971, 166). Therefore, for Saussure, language contains only conceptual and phonic differences arising from the system (Saussure 1971, 166). As in all other semiotic systems, what constitutes a sign in language is its difference from other signs; that is, the character of the sign is "difference" (Saussure 1971, 168). Thus, Saussure thinks that the values of linguistic signs are determined by their mutual delimitations or, in the same sense, "differences" within an existing language system. Fourth postulate: The set of signs must be considered as a closed system so that it can be analyzed (Ricoeur 1978, 451). Ricoeur interprets the implications of this postulate as follows:

Structural linguistics opts for the systematic study of finite systems. At a higher level than phonology or even the lexicon, structural linguistics will endeavor to find the finite code of rules that underlie the countless

productions of discourse such as tales, myths, stories, poems, essays, etc. In this way, it extends beyond the sentence the search for the finite inventories that preside over the infinite generation of discourse. By thus extending beyond the sentence the search for the finite inventories that preside over the infinite generation of discourse, structural linguistics preserves its fundamental axiom of the closure that governs the analyst's work. Operating within a closed system of signs, the linguist can consider that the system he is analysing has no outside, only internal relations (Ricoeur 1978, 451).

Following these four postulates, which Ricoeur diagnoses as being contained in the methodology of structuralist linguistics, he embarks upon clarifying the causal relation between these postulates and the fact that linguistics neglects the three aspects of language (in short, reality, subject, intersubjectivity). Let us examine them in order.

Reality: According to Ricoeur, it is essentially the fourth postulate that creates the disconnect between language and reality in structural linguistics. Ricoeur refers to this briefly as "the postulate of the closure of the system" (Ricoeur 1978, 452). Ricoeur is quite right in his criticism that structural linguistics' conception of "language as a closed system of signs" fails to encompass the fact of referencing reality outside language through language: "The axiom of closure requires linguistics to make a complete break with the definition of the sign as something valid for something else" (Ricoeur 1978, 452). The postulates of structural linguistics imply a radical critique of both the subject and intersubjectivity for Ricoeur, due to the exclusion of any reference to an extra linguistic reality from the definition of the sign (Ricoeur 1978, 452). Let us elaborate on this point below.

Subject: Ricoeur argues that Saussure neglects the speaking subject by excluding "parole" in favor of constructing the science of language. According to him, the science of language was born in Saussure's time with the parenthesizing of speech, with the treatment of language at a level of abstraction where the question "who speaks?" was not asked. "Language without a speaker, that is the first subject of linguistics" (Ricoeur 1973, 24). Ricoeur says the following about Saussurean structural linguistics' exclusion of "parole" from its scope on the grounds that it is individual and accidental:

In language, it could be said, no one speaks. The notion of the subject, returned to the side of speech, ceases to be a linguistic question and falls back to psychology. The radical depsychologization of the theory of the sign in

structuralism combines its effects here with all the other criticisms of the reflexive subject (Ricoeur 1978, 452).

At this point, it would be appropriate to mention Ricoeur's conception of the "subject" by opening a parenthesis. Objecting to the Cartesian conception of the subject that has not yet been mediated by symbols, language, history, in short, culture, Ricoeur states that "there is no self-understanding that is not mediated by signs, symbols and texts; self-understanding ultimately coincides with the interpretation applied to these mediating elements" (Ricoeur 1986, 29). Ricoeur will use the adjective "broken" (*brisé*) to characterize his *cogito*, which refers to the state of being conscious of mediation by the empire of objective signs (Ricoeur 1995, 41). Ricoeur's subject is thus a subject that is subjected to understanding itself through myths, texts, historical narratives, which are in any case discourses produced by "others." Because, after all, "every hermeneutic is, explicitly or implicitly, understanding itself through understanding others" (Ricoeur 1969, 20). Ricoeur's emphasis on "others" connects well to what he says about the third aspect of language, "intersubjectivity," which he argues has been neglected by structural linguistics.

Intersubjectivity: Ricoeur says that the "effacement of the subject" he diagnosed in Saussurean linguistics brings with it a break from the "others":

This effacement of the relation of language to the subject is complemented by the effacement of its relation to others, considered as the second person to whom the speech is addressed. It is speech, not language, that has an other as its vis-à-vis (Ricoeur 1978, 452).

According to Ricoeur, the act of one speaking to another is the essence of the act of communication. With this characteristic, the speech act is at the opposite pole of the anonymity of the system. "Speech" exists where a subject, in an act, in a singular moment of discourse, is able to reappropriate the system of signs that language makes available to him, and this system remains potential unless it is actualized by someone who is also addressing someone else. The subjectivity of the speech act suddenly becomes the intersubjectivity of allocation (Ricoeur 1969, 88).

Ricoeur argues that structural linguistics ignores something very important in order to achieve the status of an empirical science by making language a homogeneous "object" of research: It ignores the "mediation" function that language accomplishes in the world we experience. According to him, language is not an object but a mediation for the speakers. He considers

this mediation function to have three aspects: (1) Ontological: "Language is first of all mediation of man towards the world, in other words, it is that through which, by means of which we express reality, we represent it to ourselves, in short, we have a world" (Ricoeur 1978, 454). (2) Moral:

Language is furthermore mediation between man and man. It is insofar as we refer together to the same things that we constitute ourselves as a linguistic community, as a 'we.' Dialogue...is like a game of question and answer, the ultimate mediation between one person and another person (Ricoeur 1978, 454).

(3) Psychological: "Language is mediation from self to self. It is through the universe of signs, texts, works of culture, that we understand ourselves" (Ricoeur 1978, 454). Ultimately, Ricoeur defends that in this triple aspect, language is not object but mediation, and that speaking is the act by which language surpasses itself towards a world, towards another and towards a self (Ricoeur 1978, 455).

Following Ricoeur's view of the philosophy of linguistics, let us move on to the view of Esa Itkonen. Within the limits of this article, of course we will not undertake the too large task of providing an exhaustive presentation of the corpus of Itkonen, who is a very productive philosopher in this field. Instead, we will review specifically his reflections on Saussurean linguistics, without neglecting to outline the main contours of his view.

On the first pages of his book titled *What is Language? A Study in the Philosophy of Linguistics*,⁵ which is one of the rare books written exclusively in the field of the philosophy of linguistics that is still up-to-date, Itkonen introduces the subject with a general criticism without mentioning specific names: According to Itkonen, the widespread claim that linguistic entities are also investigated by means of the empirical method used in the natural sciences, and the related view that linguistics is a science methodologically similar to physics, is false (Itkonen 2014, 42). He rejects such a physicalist view of language and linguistics on the grounds that it ignores the social character of language. His rejection is not new and constitutes the critical starting point of his own conception of the philosophy of linguistics, which he has developed since his doctoral thesis in the 1970s. Itkonen has already diagnosed in his doctoral thesis that "the meta-scientific self-understanding of modern

⁵ The title of the English original of this work is: *What is Language? A Study in the Philosophy of Linguistics*. We will give our references from the Spanish translation of the work, revised by Itkonen himself.

linguistics is almost exclusively positivistic" (Itkonen 1978, 55).⁶ Itkonen implies that there is no indication that linguists explicitly problematize their self-understanding: "Linguists have made no detailed statements of their metascientific positions" (Itkonen 1978, 55). Immediately after this, Itkonen sets out to analyze the meta-scientific attitude of Saussure, the founding father of general linguistics. Before we move on to Itkonen's analysis, it is useful to present a recapitulation of the major components of Saussurean linguistics that he will refer to in his analysis.

In the "Introduction" of the *Cours de linguistique générale* Saussure criticizes Whitney's equating language with all other social institutions, saying "this thesis is too absolute" and adds: "Language is not a social institution in all respects similar to the others." But he also justifies Whitney's approach to language in that it points to the fact that language is a convention (Saussure 1971, 26). Saussure, with his famous distinction between the concepts of "*le langage*" and "*la langue*," evaluates "*le langage*" as a quasi-natural⁷ entity (as Itkonen states in 1978, 55), while considering "*la langue*" as a conventional social institution. According to him, our faculty of *langage*, whether natural or not, requires collectivity to move from potential to actuality:

To attribute to *la langue* the first place in the study of *langage*, we can finally put forward this argument, that the faculty – natural or not – to articulate words is exercised only with the help of the instrument created and provided by the community....When we hear a *langue* spoken that we ignore, we perceive the sounds well, but, through our incomprehension, we remain outside the social fact....*La langue* is the social part of *langage*, external to the individual, who alone can neither create nor modify it; it only exists by virtue of a kind of contract between the members of the community (Saussure 1971, 27 – 33).

Saussure asserts that "*la langue*" as a system of signs is the sole legitimate subject of linguistics. Consequently, Saussure classifies linguistics as a sub-branch of *sémiologie*. In his classification of sciences, he positions *sémiologie* as a sub-branch of social psychology and thus of general psychology (Saussure 1971, 33).

⁶ We will state at the end of this section of our article, Itkonen's own conception of the philosophy of linguistics, which he puts forward against physicalist and positivistic views.

⁷ One may ask why Itkonen says "Saussure considers *le langage* to be a quasi-natural entity." This is because Saussure thinks that *le langage* is a natural faculty in terms of its connection with Broca's area in the human brain, as well as the fact that our activity of producing articulated sounds and hearing them is connected to some of our organs (Saussure 1971, 26).

According to Itkonen, Saussure's philosophy of science as expressed in the *Cours de linguistique générale* is not easy to expound (Itkonen 1978, 55). Itkonen draws attention to Saussure's insistence on the conventional character of language, taking into account, on the one hand, the difference between linguistics and natural sciences. On the other hand, he draws attention to the contradiction that Saussure fell into by subordinating the science of language to psychology in his attempt to construct linguistics as an autonomous scientific discipline. (Itkonen 1978, 55). Itkonen argues that, methodologically speaking, conventional or normative data are doomed to disappear if they are presented as data to be explored by the predominantly empirical methods of general psychology (Itkonen 1978, 55). Itkonen considers that it is questionable whether Saussure quite succeeds in his attempt to clearly delimit linguistics against psychology. According to him, although Saussure believes he has "apparently" discovered some methodological differences that exist between linguistics and certain other human sciences (including jurisprudence and political history), these differences he asserts are "fictitious" (Itkonen 1978, 56). Itkonen qualifies these methodological differences – which Saussure believes to have discovered – as "fictitious" on two reasons: (1) Language is clearly not the only object which can be studied both synchronically and diachronically. (2) On the assumption that "panchronic laws" of linguistics are comparable to regularities in nature, it does not make sense to claim that such laws exist, but are independent of any concrete facts (Itkonen 1978, 56). Let us elaborate on Itkonen's criticism of Saussure in the light of these reasons.

Itkonen argues that Saussure's statement about language being a social phenomenon is true in itself, but not explanatory. Itkonen argues that Saussure attempts to answer the question of the character of the (synchronic) "laws" of language; however, his account becomes confusing (Itkonen 1978, 57). Itkonen cogently opposes Saussure's assumption that the laws of language are comparable to regularities in nature. Because according to him, given that *langue* is a social institution, it would be expected to acknowledge that the "laws" of language are analogous to constituents of institutions, i.e., rules (Itkonen 1978, 57). In this respect, Itkonen seems to believe that Saussure was a victim of the dominant positivist paradigm. That is to say, for him, Saussure designed linguistics according to the model of the natural sciences with sleight of hand, even though it is a human science. Itkonen quotes Saussure as correctly observing that "Every social law has two fundamental characteristics: it is imperative and it is general; it is imposed, and it extends to all cases, within certain limits of time and place" (Itkonen 1978, 57). However, he remarks that

Saussure, despite his correct observation, did not sufficiently emphasize the imperative and normative character of language. Itkonen thinks Saussure's methodological statements, which go beyond the description of language as a system of signs, are mere hints and suggestions. In this respect, he states that he fully agrees with the following proposition that he quotes from Koerner:

The social nature of language, *langue as fait social*, etc., do not constitute, anywhere in the whole of the Cours, an integral part of Saussure's theory.... Since Saussure wished to make linguistics a science in its own right and with a frame of reference of its own, sociological explanations of linguistic behaviour were of only secondary or even tertiary importance to him (Itkonen 1978, 58).

Consequently, Itkonen considers it to be apparent that in Saussure's theory linguistic rules are de facto analogous to social rules: "This is in perfect agreement with his view that language is a social institution; and social rules are to be distinguished from regularities in nature, since the latter are not "imperative" i.e., "normative" (Itkonen 1978, 58). He adds that on this issue, which is crucial from the methodological standpoint, Saussure seems to have been misled by the errors in his own analysis referred to above. For Itkonen, at least he has not drawn any explicit methodological consequences from the difference between rules and regularities (Itkonen 1978, 58). Itkonen will build his own view of the philosophy of language precisely by beginning to fortify this weak point in Saussure. His view is based on the following postulate: "Any natural language consists of rules which are inherently social and normative" (Itkonen 2008, 279). According to Itkonen, normativity implies a certain form of intersubjectivity and clarifies the ontology of "the social": common knowledge (Itkonen 2008, 279). While Itkonen does not deny that language has a psychological and biological substratum, he emphasizes that language is *primarily* a social entity (Itkonen 2008, 283). Itkonen argues that the ontology of social entities is fundamentally different from the ontology of physical entities, and so language should be studied from this perspective.

III. Conclusion

In our article, we tried to take a family photograph of the philosophy of linguistics with examples selected from the literature of the 20th and 21th centuries. We are aware that there are faces missing in this photograph we took. Certainly, other examples of what the philosophy of linguistics is and how it is done can be selected and analyzed. Merleau-Ponty's and Derrida's analyses

and criticisms of Saussurean linguistics are notable examples. There are also many philosophical reflections on Chomskyan linguistics.

The views put forward or to be put forward in the philosophy of linguistics do not bring a definitive solution to the problems covered by the philosophy of language. On the contrary, a philosophical reflection which is limited to the philosophy of language will also remain mute in the face of the problems covered by the philosophy of linguistics. Just as the existence of a “philosophy of physics” that has already proved its maturity does not prevent philosophers from meditating on what kind of substance mind and body have, similarly, the ancient philosophy of language is still a legitimate branch in the face of the existence of the philosophy of linguistics, which has made a considerable progress in proving its maturity. We would like to make the following addition to our last proposition and express our opinion more clearly: it is still a legitimate branch provided that it is a science-informed branch of philosophy. In this respect, we agree with Auroux and Kouloughli’s proposition that the philosophy of language is obliged to pass through the mediation of linguistics. The philosophy of language cannot continue on its way by closing its eyes to the knowledge revealed by linguistics. Advocating this does not mean advocating scientism. A Saussurean positivism, as Itkonen’s analysis reveals, would lead linguistics, as a human science, to search for similar general laws of natural science in the field of language. However, like other humanities, linguistics is not a “nomothetic” science like the natural sciences. The generalizations made by general linguistics based on its observations of certain common features between particular languages do not have the status of “law” in epistemological terms. In this respect, Itkonen is quite right. We agree also with Ricoeur in his criticism of the effacement of the subject in Saussurean linguistics.

In conclusion, contrary to Vendler’s conviction that it is possible for linguistics and philosophy of linguistics to absorb philosophy of language one day, we believe that philosophy of language will continue to exist as a separate branch in which problems such as “meaning,” the “origin of language,” the “relation between thought and language,” etc., which have no definitive or ultimate solution, are discussed.

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