MARIANA OLENIAK

THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF DEFINITIONAL AND STATISTICAL UNIVERSALS WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN LINGUISTIC CATEGORIES

INTRODUCTION

Even the most superficial interest of an amateur in linguistic universals problem makes it apparent that the focus will be on certain general features characteristic of all human languages in general. Despite being seemingly elementary, the problem of language universals is not so univocally interpreted by the specialists. Modern linguistics registers several types of language universals: 1) according to the method of formulation – deductive and inductive; 2) according to the logical form – simple and complex, and the latter in their turn are divided into implicationnal and non-implicational ones; 3) according to the axis – synchronic and diachronic; 4) according to the degree of universality – the absolute (full) and statistical (incomplete), which are further subdivided into phonetic, grammatical, lexical ones, etc. Adjacent to statistical universals are 'near universals'– tendencies, which describe frequent, rare and unique language features whose mere functions indicate that they can hardly be regarded in terms of universals, because universalism assumes typicality of elements, which is actually denied by, say, uniqueness. Each of these universals describes some aspect of human language, showing the plane of different languages or even cultures overlap. Thus, the theory of linguistic universals requires a certain understanding of the theory of language, which is not fully agreed upon.

1. NEW LOOK AT THE OLD ISSUE

After the boom caused by the success of structural, functional and generative linguistics, the search for universals became the aim of typological studies involving a large number of languages as an empirical material. Later on, it started to attract general linguistics as well. The various aspects of linguistic universals were in due time studied by J. Casagrande (1963), N. Chomsky (2012), W. Cowgill (1963), Ch. Ferguson (1963), J. Greenberg (1963a, 1963b), Ch. F. Hockett (1963), H. Hoenigswald (1963), R. Jakobson (1963), S. D. Katsnelson (2002), B. Lewandowska-Tomaczyk (1886), N. B. Mechkovskaia (2000), Ch. Osgood (1963), S. Saporta (1963), N. S. Sharafutdinova (2008, 2012), A. V. Shyrokova (2000), S. Ullmann (1963), I. F. Vardul' (1985), U. Weinreich (1963), V. N. Yartseva (1980), etc. However, despite the great popularity of universals search and a large number of scientists, involved in it, there are two main approaches to their understanding: the approach of N. Chomsky and the approach of J. Greenberg. N. Chomsky treats universals as a common biological property of all

DACOROMANIA, serie nouă, XXV, 2020, nr. 1, Cluj-Napoca, p. 66–80

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

people, so, with his usually high level of abstraction, the scientist considers the study of one language to be sufficient enough to formulate universal statements; J. Greenberg, having conducted the research on the material of 30 languages, insists that universals can be distinguished only by analyzing the most possible quantity of languages with corresponding explanations. Both scholars are indisputable authorities and examples for young scientists; each of them has his students and followers, but a completely different approach to the problem of universals: N. Chomsky interprets universals as language laws given to a human naturally, whereas J. Greenberg presents them as empirical generalizations in no way related to physiology. So, what approach is to be considered the truly correct one, as truth can hardly be determined by an overwhelming number of supporters? It is very hard to make any firm decision in this field. The two theories are compatible and there are abundant opinions about what is correct to think about language acquisition and universals, none of which is clearly preferable. It appears likely that no single theory is perfect, but all of them have some grains of truth. Having expanded the grounds of the theory, the two approaches can be seen not as being in conflict, but as harmoniously complementing each other despite all the dissimilarities. To achieve that, it seems reasonable to resort to the principle of purpose and means correspondence and to project it on both theories.

N. Chomsky developed the idea of a generative grammar, the foundations of which are inherent in every person from birth; he convinces that there are universal innate rules of the language operation, the use of which explains why a child learns his/her native language so fast. The whole argumentation is imbued with the idea of the interaction of these rules or innate abilities and the learned material *in the process of language acquisition*. Therefore, the language according to N. Chomsky is *a goal* that a person is trying to reach using the inborn knowledge of its rules, since, if a person tries to master a certain subject, it can be called his/her purpose.

J. Greenberg, a linguist-empiricist, studied languages regardless of their relationship to human physiology; and he did it from the perspective of *the language usage* and not from the perspective of the process of language acquisition. He formulated 45 universals, which prove that the similarities among languages are based on general features of cognition and communication. Thus, the language according to J. Greenberg is *a means* that people use in their life activity.

The unifying factor for both theories, if methodologically different, was emphasized by A. Cooreman and D. Goyvaerts (1980), W. Croft (2002). Mutual informativity of both standpoints was also pointed at by Baker & Mc Closkey (2007) and Hawkins (2004).

In fact, both scientists regard the notion of the language from different perspectives (N. Chomsky – from the whole to its concrete manifestations, J. Greenberg – from the concrete manifestations to the search for the whole) and each of them is undoubtedly right: at first, the language is a goal but when the goal is achieved, it becomes a means. Having mastered the language, a person begins to consciously use it as a means of communication and cognition. But then again, where must one look

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

for universals: in 'the inborn' or in 'the acquired from experience' used as a tool? Obviously, in both. In the case of looking for universals in 'the inborn', we will deal with simple deductive definitional universals, and in the case of looking for universals in 'the acquired' we will obtain statistical universals of various kinds.

1.1. Language and speech correlation

Similar to N. Chomsky, the problems of physiology and language connection attracted Ferdinand de Saussure, who considered the speech of an individual to be external to language system, to be "only the embryo of language" (Saussure 1971, p. 29). His viewpoint was that it is language that brings unity to the human's speech activity and it should occupy a dominant position over speech, despite the fact that speech activity is inherent in us by nature, and the language is something learned and conventional. Indeed, this differentiation between language and speech is crucial with language being an organized hierarchy common for whole societies [paradygmatics] while speech [syntagmatics] being highly personal leaving its "prints" by which forensic linguists can even identify a speaker or a writer. To prove the language over speech dominance Saussure provides the following arguments: 1) a non-proved fact that speech activity is a natural phenomenon, namely, that organs of speech are created for speaking just like legs are created for walking (Saussure 1999, p. 17); 2) the localization of brain areas, responsible for everything that has to do with speech activities (including writing), in one place as well as for the simultaneous effect of various kinds of aphasias and agraphias on the ability to perceive or reproduce both oral and written speech (Saussure 1999, p. 18); 3) the ability to articulate words only with the help of the tool [language] created by a man. On these grounds, Ferdinand de Saussure believes that the activities of different organs are regulated by the ability of a higher rate – the capability for the language (Saussure 1999, p. 18).

The genius of the great scientist is in no way questioned, but science has documented some facts (after the death of Ferdinand de Saussure) that completely neutralize his second, the only scientifically substantiated argument, concerning the dominancy of the capability for the language over speech as such, i.e. the dominancy of the language as a higher order that controls speech. At the present stage of the medical science development, it is known for sure that different areas are responsible for oral and written speech, though they are located in the same part of the brain, moreover, there is a rare aphasia, but, nonetheless, a typical one, present in the classification of Wernicke – Lichtheim termed 'subcortical sensory aphasia'. This form of aphasia is typically characterized by a complete non-understanding of speech (mother tongue sounds like a foreign language), but the ability to read and write remains: In such cases patients communicate through writing (Bogoljubov 2010, p. 365). The third argument does not seem to be convincing enough, if we take into account the fact that many children who are too young to be able to pronounce certain words, or, what is more, basic phrases, speak their 'bable' language, not just cooing but mimicking the speech and intonation of the older. This proves that the articulation is possible without the knowledge of a language. So, the fact

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

that nature grants the man speech (of course, pathological cases are not taken into account) is unconditional, but the fact that speech is subject to a language does not sound so axiomatic, for in the process of life activity in order to learn the language a person has to develop his/her speech in the first place.

1.2. Biological nature of speech vs social nature of language

The proof of the biological origin of speech and not of language lies in the fact that so far neurophysiology has not been aware of brain regions that would be responsible for the "language ability". The usage of terms "language brain areas" or "brain areas responsible for language production" imply nothing but the reaction of brain areas to translating a concept into speech or vice versa. Physiologists and logicians connect thinking with speech and not language; pediatricians and psychiatrists distinguish stages of children's development in speech but not the in language, stating that children are not physiologically able to master the signs of a high level of abstraction; most medical and physiological terminology explanations include the 'speech' and not 'language' component, for example: Broca's area and Wernicke's area (language centers) deal with speech and not language processing and production; 'gnostic speech zone', 'praxic speech zone', 'acoustic gnostic sensory speech center', etc.

So, the point of view concerning the fact that men acquire language via experience definitely has right to exist, which is confirmed by the Pavlov's theory (1951) of human thinking phases, based on two signaling systems. According to his theory, the first signaling system for the nerve processes are objects and their properties, and the second – the words and speech, which he describes as a purely human system arising as a result of the human labor activity. The idea of a non-biological nature of language is also supported by D. L. Everett (2012) who claims that language is not genetically programmed, being nothing but a tool derived from the general human cognitive ability.

A very interesting study was conducted by M. Baker, a N. Chomsky's student, who singled out parameters – certain parts of knowledge from which our language skills emerge. The term 'parameters' comprises all the main characteristics of languages: the parameter of the word order, the subject position parameter, the parameter of polysynthetism, etc. He considers them to be the general principles according to which the languages can be combined and classified, and, ultimately, scientists could get a 'periodic system of languages', a linguistic equivalent to the Mendileev's periodic table. Being a supporter of the generative grammar and a N. Chomsky's follower, M. Baker, however, concludes that „the parameters are obviously a special feature of a human language, but it is impossible to explain their existence from the perspective of evolutionary biology" (Baker 2008, p. 210).

There is no need to decide whose vision of speech activity, in terms of its psychological and linguistic characteristics, is correct: in fact, there are no radical contradictions and all of the aforementioned theories can be considered true at different levels.

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

2. DISCUSSION

One can often hear the assertion that in the process of speech development a child learns the native language and does it surprisingly quickly, unlike learning a foreign language. This is how V. O. Plungian, for example, formulates his ideas in a facile and entertaining form about a human language – „the baby is born mute and helpless, but during the first years of his life, it is as if a wonderful mechanism switches on in him and he learns his language by listening to the adults' speech" (Plungian 2010, p. 4). If the terms 'speech' and 'language' in the above-mentioned quotation are taken not only to intelligibly describe the too complicated terms, then, obviously, it is a baby with some exceptionally rare intellectual abilities. An average child is not half as brilliant in terms of language mastering: a baby is born with a certain capacity for many physical and mental operations; in the process of cognition, he/she hears the speech of others, developing his/her own. The important thing to understand here is that a baby hears certain language patterns (speech) and reproduces them without learning language as such. At a definite stage of the development he/she turns out to be ready to understand abstract concepts, hierarchies, etc., thus he/she begins to understand and learn the language as a system of rules and regulations for speech, which he/she has already been using for several years without realizing that there are certain rules. However, it is not sooner than being a middle school student. This argument can be applied not just to children. A large majority of a population speaks correctly its language without being aware of the rules governing that language.

The child is born with the ability to master not some specific language, but the one she/he hears in her/his environment. As S. Johansson put it: „language does not «automatically follow» from cognitive development, but instead the child uses its cognitive capacity to deduce the rules of the language it hears – precisely the task which innatists reject as impossible, and the impossibility of which they invoke as proof of the necessity of the innateness hypothesis" (Johansson 1991, p. 4). The facts from my personal experience is a proof for that. A three-year-old child, whose parents genetically are native speakers of the Russian and Ukrainian languages, spoke a „genetically foreign" language since from an early age on her mother was talking to her in English; in a dream she said: „Let's go to the shop". At about the same age the same girl, imitating a chair cleaning, said „I have cleanished", contaminating two verb forms (cleaned + finished). Both phrases, given as an example, are grammatically correct, despite the fact that the language, which the child was to have inherited genetically and the one she used in the subconscious and conscious states are of different structure. The fact that a three-year-old child used a „genetically foreign" language being asleep indicates that the foreign language was perceived in the same way as her mother tongue (the father communicated with the girl in Russian). The proper use of a perfect tense form in a corresponding communicative situation cannot prove the fact that listening to her mother's English speech, a three-year-old child came to the conclusion that the

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

present perfect tense is used in English to denote a completed action, the result of which is evident at the moment. The child just repeated what she heard from her mother in other similar situations, she was developing language use skills, but did not study the language as such yet: neither native nor foreign.

On the other hand, one can learn all the rules of a foreign language grammar, but still not be able to speak, read or write it, if he/she does not develop the corresponding skills in the process of learning. Consequently, a person receives a physiological ability to learn and to develop skills – different, not just speech ones. Via experience, as a result of an organized education, he/she can get systematic knowledge about objects and their properties that he/she has already been using. This hypothesis can also be confirmed by the rapidity with which a child masters the use of gadgets: all modern children start to use computers at an early age with relative ease. However, we do not say in such cases that a child got an insight into the computer or that there is latent innate knowledge of the basics of informatics and computing. Knowledge of this level of abstraction can be commensurate with their abilities no sooner than at school age and can only be acquired as a result of an organized learning.

The slow and gradual understanding of language via its usage is brilliantly described by Tomasello (2008) in his theory of how the child acquires language. Its fundamental claim is that language structure emerges from language use. „Ontogenetically, children hear individual utterances and then (re-) construct the abstract constructions of a language. All of this is done with general cognitive processes, and universals of linguistic structure derive from the fact that people everywhere have the same set of general cognitive processes" (Tomasello 2008, p. 85).

The inability to understand language as an organized system at the early stages of speech development is confirmed by various research of psychologists. For instance, Jean Piaget (2001), an expert on the quality specifics of children's thinking and the founder of the research on 'genetic epistemology', claimed that only a seven-year-old child can provide logical explanations, rank items according to a particular feature, classify them into groups and classes – which is, in fact, understanding of systemacity. However, this level of abstraction rests on already developed speech, the formation of which takes place at the age from two to seven. Basically, speech is physical while language is social by nature.

2.1. Language and speech as an aim and means correlation

Thus, there is a reason to believe that having natural abilities to think and speak, the child begins to develop his/her thinking and speech skills in the process of cognition. At this stage, a fully functional speech is the goal, the means to achieve which is the development of vocal cords, listening, memorizing, and eventually, reproduction. At the stage when speech has been mastered, it stops being a purpose and becomes a means in a further intellectual development of a child who, in the process of organized learning, becomes acquainted with various complex systems including language. Thus, language now becomes a goal, and speech is a

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

means to achieve this goal. Having mastered the language or languages, people use it/them as a means to achieve another goal – the production and perception of the more complex, advanced linguistic structures, which, again, enrich their speech. At the stage where the use of both language and speech (both of goals) becomes a means, the aim is the thinking operations involving logical reasoning and abstract concepts (the last phase of thinking operations development according to Piaget (2001)). Having reached this goal, people start to use it as a means to achieve a global objective – understanding the veritas, which is the correspondence of statements to a certain testability criterion, either theoretical or empirical (Aristotelian *conformitas seu adaequatio intentionalis intellectus cum re*). The achievement of each goal raises the man to a higher step of his own development, changing the qualitative status of the objective into the means, which do not cease to exist but complement each other, accompanying the man during his ontogeny as a complex of means.

Thus, at various stages, speech and language may be both the purpose and the means used by the man in the process of cognition. This process can be pictured in the form of a three-storied building, the entrance of which symbolizes the beginning of life and cognition, the ground floor – speech, the first floor – the language, the second floor – the logical forms of thinking, the third floor – the final goal (understanding the veritas). Without the ground floor there cannot be the first, the second and the third one (i.e. no language or logical forms of thinking or understanding the veritas is possible without speech); the absence of upstairs floors would witness the end of the process of cognition at a certain stage. Every upstairs floor is a person's aim unless he/she ascends it; having ascended the stairs, it becomes his/her means for gaining another objective. While reaching every onward aim, the previous floors never vanish but serve as the means to move up in the process of a person's development. In this way a person combines what is given to him/her by nature (the ability to develop speech and learn) and what is gained with the experience (the speech development and language) (Fig. 1).

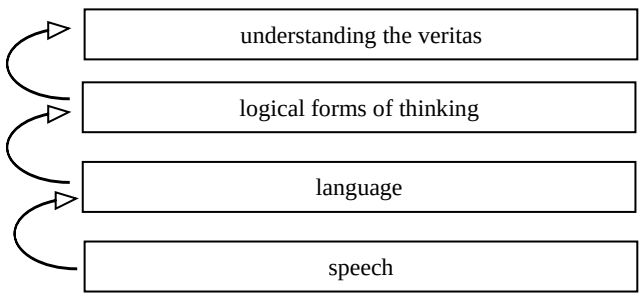


Fig. 1. *The place of a language and speech as a goal and a means in the process of cognition*

The initial stage – the speech development of the child (regardless of the language) is the sphere of physiologists and psychologists' knowledge; the final stage

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

– the understanding of the veritas – goes beyond the limits of linguistics and concerns all the spheres of human activity. Linguistics is destined to deal with speech but only in terms of inseparable connection with the language and logical forms of thinking, which, in their turn, manifest themselves in the people's speech. This is why they deserve our closer look. The connection between syntactical categories and the ways of thinking correlates with Peircean assumption that sentences and their grammar are isomorphic with mental propositions or thoughts: „In the syntax of every language there are logical icons of the kind that are aided by conventional rules" (Peirce 1940, p. 106). The idea of language as an instrument for communication which has to possess certain features depending on logic and pragmatics was expressed by S. Johansson while criticizing the innate grammar approach: „In order to be a useful instrument for communication, a language has to meet certain basic criteria. Is it possible that some principles of Universal Grammar can be explained by their being, logically of pragmatically, necessary features of a language?" (Johansson 1991, p. 4). To explicate the content of a language and the logical forms of thinking in a most generalized way, we get the following scheme (Fig. 2):

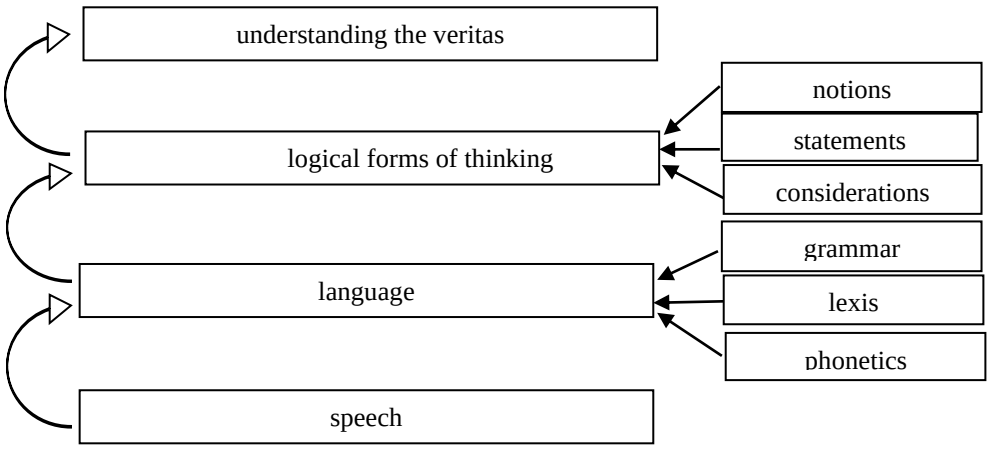


Fig. 2. *The explanation of the content of a language and the logical forms of thinking in the process of cognition*

The above-mentioned logical forms of thinking are singled out in logic; in linguistics they have their own interpretation, though this fact is not relevant for the present research as both notions, statements and considerations are expressed (in linguistic sense) with the help of lexical and grammatical means. The forms of their expression can correspond to different logic-syntactic categories: adversative constructions, specification, generalization, comparison, simile, etc. In other words, to specify, generalize, contrapose etc. certain notions, people use phonetic and lexico-grammatical means of the language they have acquired as a result of speech usage.

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

People use concrete language structures to materialize these logic-syntactic categories which, in fact, in different combinations, represent the units of a higher level of abstraction – logical forms of thinking, that might correspond to certain algebraic formulas (Oleniak 2018, 2019). The aforementioned models of thinking can be described in terms of algebraic relationships[1] as an „underlying abstract order" mentioned by W. L. Abler: „We think we assemble language from its component parts, and we regard a demonstration of continuity as an acceptable substitute for understanding how a thing works. We never entertain the possibility that the components of language might be manifestations of an underlying abstract order... By refusing to construct theories, linguists have convinced themselves that, in principle, language has no underlying order. As a means of discovering the basis of language, the project in universals is wrong-headed and hopeless… Thus, they might try to deduce the underlying mechanisms that generate the nouns, verbs, sentences and assertions that we see in language" (Abler 2013, p. 37, 40).

2.2. The dichotomy of the inborn and the acquired

If the hierarchy based on the principle of the aim-means relationship is correct, then the dichotomy of the inborn and the acquired in terms of language ontogenesis connection can be pictured as a chain of binary oppositions, where the inborn is considered to be permanent and the acquired to be changing, since the former does not depend on a person and the latter is constantly changing while gaining new experience (Fig. 3). Language [linguistic structure] as a dynamic system connected with cultural evolution and being subjected to changes is researched by M. Dunn *et alii* (2011). The necessity to create a model of human language reflecting the correlation two different orders (biological and culturally-historical) was pointed out by Nicholas Evans (2009).

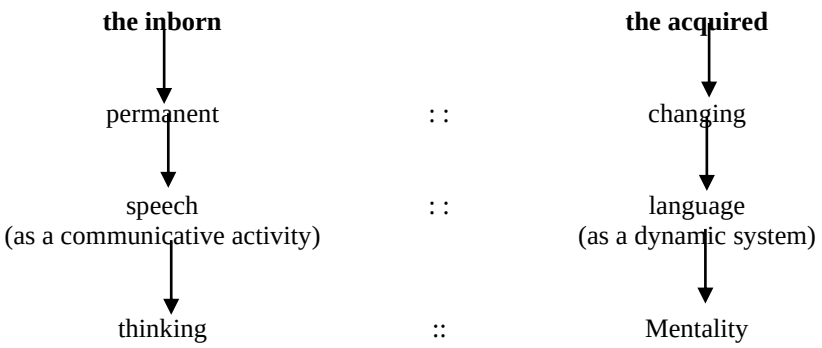


Fig. 3. *The content of the inborn – acquired dichotomy in terms of language and speech*

The physiological ability to speak and think is equally characteristic of all people, regardless of their nationality, origin or believes. Thus, it is but logical to

[1] More information in *The Relations of Equality/Inequality Within Certain Binary Syntax Structures and Formal Coding of Them*, Virtus, Montreal, CPM „ASF", 2017, issue 14, p. 156–161.

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

look for universals in the sphere of the inborn even using the material of only one language. On the other hand, we cannot say that a certain person's experience is so unique that it does not overlap in any way with the experience of other people. The fact that there are about 6000 languages does not presuppose the fact that each language has its unique structures, never overlapping/coinciding with other languages. The existence of proto language(s) is not questioned any more. Being the source of modern languages development, they did not curdle in time and place but developed so multidirectionally that over time their genetic descenders seem to be absolutely alien to a layman. Genetic relatedness together with international communication naturally allow for the usage of the same language means in the process of cognition, in the same way as people of different nations used relatively the same tools in their extralinguistic everyday life: all nations had, say, similar tools for hunting, farming, weight moving, etc., which were independently invented in different parts of the globe; numerous facts are known about individual independent inventions of the same things by different people in different countries. Therefore, we can presume that the man's experience, linguistic or extralinguistic one, can be reduced to some regularities. Thus, it is but logical to look for something common on the material of hundreds of languages in the acquired as well.

2.3. Universals in respect to the inborn and the acquired

Consequently, both major approaches to universals theory do not contradict but complement each other. In fact, J. Greenberg's followers single out universals, which could serve as the means for universals singled out by the advocates of N. Chomsky's approach; for instance, universals concerning SVO order, can be the means to state that every language has a subject.

One should be very careful, though, trying to formulate universals from the sphere of the acquired basing on the small amount of languages, as in that case the singling out of universals can turn from discovery into invention. It seems, for instance, impossible to formulate true verifiable universals concerning value or gender aspects of linguistic units basing the research on two or three languages because evaluation or gender specifics does not show the peculiarities of thinking. It shows the mentality, which is the way of thinking, people's attitudes or opinions about certain concepts. The mentality of different nations, as we know, is different, that is why the search for universals within the categories connected with mentality should be carried out only within the boundaries of typological linguistics. The universals, formulated within the scope of general linguistics, based on the material of one or two languages, should reflect the principles of human thinking in general, thus, they are to accord with bordering disciplines: Logic, Psychology, Physiology, etc.

The understanding of the dichotomy of the inborn and the acquired in terms of linguistics naturally splits the sphere of influence in the search for universals between the typological and general linguistics. The methods of general linguistics are efficient in formulating deductive universals and the methods of typological linguistics are valid for singling out inductive universals of different types since the

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

physiological properties of people are the same, but their experience is different; consequently, the universals, predetermined by biology, would be typical for all languages (simple, deductive, definitional universals) and the universals, conditioned by experience, can be different, yet overlapping in certain aspects (inductive, statistical, implicational, etc.)

It has been occasionally emphasized that inductive universals are more valuable as they are the only ones to realize a cognitive function while deductive universals retell what has already been known from the theory of the language. It is also notified that simple deductive definitional universals are most scarcely formulated (e.g. *Every language has vowels*). Still, if we proceed from the dichotomy of the inborn and the acquired, which manifests itself in people's thinking and mentality, it is but natural that every language has logic-syntactic categories, which reflect the ways of thinking, equally typical of the speakers of all languages. In such a way, the list of simple, deductive, definitional universals will be, not significantly, but still enlarged.

It is stated in psychology that the analytical and synthetical work of the large brain hemispheres is the 'locus' of the general mechanism of the operating activity of thinking, which manifests itself in such processes of mental activity as comparison, analysis, synthesis, abstracting, generalization, classification and systematization. So, we have the grounds to presume that comparison, analysis, synthesis, abstracting, generalization, classification and systematization are typical of all people indiscriminately, which means that having found the linguistic expression of the above-mentioned mental operations, one can formulate corresponding simple, deductive, definitional universals. The cognominality of two mental operations and linguistic categories – comparison and generalization – is immediately noticeable. Unlike generalization, the universal concerning the presence of syntactic construction of comparison in all languages has been worded already, though the comparison character has not been specified (whether or not the degrees of comparison, or logical comparison or even simile are meant is unknown). It goes without saying that the rest of mental operations are reflected someway in speech by means of non-cognominal logic-syntactic categories. Any analysis, synthesis, abstracting, classification and systematization presuppose the juxtaposition of objects, hence, the language or speech categories, based on juxtaposition, will be universal. Here belong adversative constructions, specification, explanation, metaphor, metonymy, allegory, etc.

So, in reliance on the fact that mental operations are physiologically bound and, thus, typical of all language speakers, we can formulate the following simple deductive definitional universals: 1) there is generalization in all the languages; 2) there is specification in all the languages; 3) there are adversative constructions in all the languages; 4) there is explanation in all the languages; 5) there is simile in all the languages; 6) there is metonymy in all the languages; 7) there is logical comparison in all the languages; 8) there is allegory in all the languages. This list can be added to, but it demands additional research concerning the process of objects juxtaposition within the scope of language and speech categories. Due to

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

the fact that universals of this type are predetermined by the character of thinking operations, it seems impossible to deny their existence in a language/speech.

Special attention should be paid to the category of comparison, which is universal in any of its manifestations: either in the case of degrees of comparison of adjectives and adverbs or in the form of logical comparison, or in the form of simile[2]. The existing universal, which is worded *There are syntactic constructions of comparison in all the languages* automatically excludes lexical and morphological comparative units without specification what comparisons are meant: logical ones or similes, which is important as the indicated types of comparative constructions are, basically, different formations in terms of linguistics. The corresponding research might not have been carried out yet and is still waiting for its typologist.

3. THE PROOF OF THE UNIVERSAL CHARACTER OF SIMILE

The presence of simile in all the languages, regardless of the form of expression is natural just like the universality of the comparison in general. As a rule, definitional universals do not have evidentiary effect, for which they have been criticized here and there every so often. I will step away from a non-evidentiary approach to definitional universals proving the existence of simile in all languages, using a reliable mathematical method of proof by contradiction. So, if to admit that there is no simile in some language, it would mean that the speakers of that language do not translate images into their speech (the comparison as such is axiomatic). If there is no translation of images into speech, the image thinking, consequently, is not typical for the representatives of that language. If there is no image thinking, there is no activity whatsoever, since according to the laws of psychology, image thinking is an indiscriminately essential component of all types of people's activity. If there is no activity, there is no cognition; if there is no cognition, there is no development; if there is no development, there is no life; if there is no life, there is no language. Hence, there is no language which would not have simile. Since one cannot know all the languages, the examples of simile are provided only in the languages the authors can speak:

English: *She is as light as a feather*;
German: *Vor Freude grinst er wie ein Honigkuchenpferd* [He is so happy he is grinning like a honey cake horse];
Ukrainian: *Розумний як віслюк* [Clever like a donkey];
Polish: *Gorąco jak w piecu* [It is hot like in the oven];
Russian: *Их языки острые, как бритва* [Their tongues are as sharp as razors];
Spanish: *Claro como el agua* [Clear like water];
French: *Pâle comme la mort* [Pale like death].

[2] In Slavic languages, such as Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, etc. the term *comparison* is used to denote both logical comparison and simile.

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

4. CONCLUSIONS

This approach does not provide us with an overall theory of language universals and does not prove all of them, but it does generalize the discussion and stimulate a further search for ideas as far as their proof is concerned. The cognition is a constant process of transformation of a gained aim into a means in order to reach another aim, the inseparable parts of which are language and speech. Language and speech coexist interdependently as a scientific abstraction, which manifests itself in every person in the forms of the inborn (capability for speech and development) and the acquired (speech development and language). Based on the permanency of thinking and speech as a human ability on the one hand, and the variability of a language, which is acquired with experience and changes over time, on the other hand, we can single out universals of different types: definitional ones (by means of general linguistics methods on the basis of even one language) and statistical ones (by means of typological linguistics methods on the basis of the most possible quantity of languages). Limited amount of analyzed languages makes it impossible to formulate true veritable universals concerning linguistic categories displaying speakers' mentality. Expressing the forms of people's logical thinking, such logic-syntactic categories as explanation, specification, adversative constructions, generalization, comparison, allegory and simile are universal. Simile is the universal typical for all human languages in the world regardless of its surface structure expression.

REFERENCES

Abler 2013 = William Abler, *Sapir, Harris and Chomsky in the twentieth century*, in „Cognitive critique", 2013, vol. 7, p. 29–48.

Baker & Mc Closkey 2007 = Mark Baker & James McCloskey, *On the relationship of typology to theoretical syntax*, in „Linguistic Typology", nr. 11 (1), 2007, p. 273–284.

Baker 2008 = Mark Baker, *Atomy Jazyka: Grammatika v Temnom Pole Soznanija* [The Atoms of Language]. In translation O. V. Mitreninoj, O. A. Mitrofanovoj (ed.), Moscow, LKI, 2008.

Bogoljubov 2010 = Vladimir Bogoljubov, *Meditsinskaja Reabilitatsija*, Moscow, Binom, 2010.

Casagrande 1963 = Joseph Casagrande, *Language Universals in Anthropological Perspective*, in Greenberg 1963, p. 220–235.

Chomsky 2012 = Noam Chomsky, *Chomsky's Linguistics*, ed. by Peter Graff and Coppe van Urk, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2012.

Cooreman, Goyvaerts 1980 = Ann Cooreman, Didier Goyvaerts, *Universals in Human Language. A Historical Perspective*, in „Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire" 1980, nr. 58-3, p. 615–638.

Cogwill 1963 = William Cowgill, *A Search for Universals in Indo-European Diachronic Morphology*, in Greenberg 1963, p. 91–113.

Croft 2002 = William Croft, *Typology and Universals*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Dunn *et alii* 2011 = Michael Dunn, Simon Greenhill, Stephen Levinson, Russell Gray, *Evolved structure of language shows lineage-specific trends in word-order universals*, in „Nature", 2011, nr. 473 (7345), p. 79–82.

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

Evans 2009 = Nicholas Evans, *The Myth of Language Universals: Language diversity and its importance for cognitive science*, in *Behavioral and Brain sciences*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.
Everett 2012 = Daniel L. Everett, *Language: The Cultural Tool*, New York, Pantheon Books, 2012.
Ferguson 1963 = Charles Ferguson, *Assumptions about Nasals: a Sample Study in Phonological Universals*, in Greenberg 1963, p. 42–47.
Greenberg 1963 = J. H. Greenberg (ed.), *Universals of language*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1963.
Greenberg 1963a = Joseph Greenberg, *Kvantitativnyj podhod k morfologicheskoj tipologii jazykov*, Moscow, Izd-vo inostrannoj literatury, 1963, p. 60–94.
Greenberg 1963b = Joseph Greenberg, *Some Universals of Grammar with Particular Reference to the Order of Meaningful Elements*, in Greenberg 1963, p. 58–90.
Hawkins 2004 = John A. Hawkins, *Complexity and efficiency in grammars*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004.
Hocket 1963 = Charles Hockett, *The Problem of Universals in Language*, in Greenberg 1963, p. 1–22.
Hoenigswald 1963 = Henry Hoenigswald, *Are There Universals of Linguistic Change?*, in Greenberg 1963, p. 23–41.
Jakobson 1963 = Roman Jakobson, *Implications of Language Universals for Linguistics*, in Greenberg 1963, p. 208–219.
Yartseva 1980 = Viktoria Yartseva, *Teoreticheskie osnovy klassifikatsii jazykov*, Moscow, Nauka, 1980.
Johansson 1991 = Sverker Johansson, *Universal grammar and the innateness hypothesis*, Sweden, University of Lund, 1991.
Katsnelson 2002 = Solomon Katsnelson, *Tipologija Jazyka i Rechevoe Myshlenie*, Moscow, Editorial URSS, 2002.
Lewandowska-Tomaczyk 1886 = Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaczyk, *Language universals, linguistic theory and philosophy*, in D. Kastovsky (ed.) *Linguistics across Historical and Geographical Boundaries*, Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 1886, p. 77–84.
Mechkovskaja 2000 = Nina Mechkovskaja, *Obschee Jazykoznanie: Strukturnaja i Sotsial'naja Tipologija Jazykov*, Minsk, Amalfeja, 2000.
Oleniak 2018 = Mariana Oleniak, *Semantic representation of similes (based on the Ukrainian, English and Polish languages)* in *Topics in Linguistics*, 2018, 19 (1), p. 18–32. https://doi.org/10.2478/topling-2018-0002
Oleniak 2019 = Mariana Oleniak, *Dialectic interaction of quantity, quality and relation in simile domain* in „Advanced Education", 2019, issue 12, p. 134–141.
Osgood 1963 = Charles Osgood, *Language Universals and Psycholinguistics*, in Greenberg 1963, p. 236–254.
Pavlov 1951 = Ivan Pavlov, *Polnoye sobraniye sichinieniy*, Moscow, Izdatielstvo Akademiï nauk SSSR, 1951.
Peirce 1940 = C. S. Peirce, *The Philosophy of Peirce. Selected writings*, ed. by J. Buchler, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1940.
Piaget 2001 = Jean Piajet, *Teorija, Eksperimenty, Diskussii*, Moscow, Gardariki, 2001.
Plungian 2010 = Vladimir Plungian, *Pochemu Jazyki Takie Raznye*, Moscow, Art-press, 2010.
Saporta 1963 = Sol Saporta, *Phoneme Distribution and Language Universals*, in Greenberg 1963, p. 48–57.
Saussure 1971 = Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Paris, Payot, 1971.
Saussure 1999 = Ferdinand de Saussure, Kurs Obschej Lingvistiki, Ekaterinburg, Izdatelstvovo Uralskogo Universiteta, 1999.
Sharafutdinova 2008 = Nataliia Sharafutdinova, *Teorija i Istorija Lingvisticheskoj Nauki*, Moscow, AST, 2008.
Sharafutdinova 2012 = Nataliia Sharafutdinova, *Lingvisticheskaja Tipologija i Jazykovye Arealy*, Ul'janovsk, UlGTU, 2012.

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)

Shirokova 2000 = Anastasiia Shirokova, *Sopostavitel'naja Tipologija Raznostrukturnyh Jazykov (fonetika, morfologija)*, Moscow, Dobrosvet, 2000.
Tomasello 2008 = Michael Tomasello, *The usage-based theory of language acquisition*, 2008. [www.princeton.edu/~ adele/LIN_106:_UCB_files/Tomasello-BavinChapter09.pdf]
Ullman 1963 = Stephen Ullmann, *Semantic Universals*, in Greenberg 1963, p. 172–207.
Vardul' 1985 = Igor Vardul', O predmete i zadachah tipologii, Moscow, Nauka, 1985, p. 26–32.
Weinreich 1963 = Uriel Weinreich, On the Semantic Structure of Language, in Greenberg 1963, p. 144–171.

TRĂSĂTURILE SPECIFICE ALE UNIVERSALIILOR DEFINITORII ȘI STATISTICE PRIVITOARE LA ANUMITE CATEGORII LINGVISTICE (*Rezumat*)

Lucrarea propune o abordare teoretică a problemei universaliilor lingvistice și a unor perspective filozofice asupra subiectului. Cercetarea încearcă să găsească puncte comune între două abordări ale universaliilor lingvistice și alte discipline care pot fi integrate reciproc într-un punct de vedere echilibrat. Scopul lucrării este să dovedească caracterul universal al comparației, fără a fi necesară exemplificarea tipologică. Rezultatul studiului ar trebui să folosească cercetătorilor în abordarea filozofiei limbajului și a universaliilor independent de limba pe care o studiază. Articolul analizează locul limbii și al vorbirii ca scop și mijloc în procesul cognitiv; de asemenea, sunt trecute în revistă teorii lingvistice din perspectivă interdisciplinară. După definirea dihotomiei înnăscut – dobândit cu privire la limbă, lucrarea descrie specificul identificării universaliilor, utilizând metodele lingvisticii generale și ale tipologiei lingvistice. Pe baza legăturii dintre vorbire și gândire, articolul distinge categorii logico-sintactice prezente în toate limbile. Sunt formulate opt universalii definitorii. Una dintre acestea este dovedită științific pentru prima dată.

Cuvinte-cheie: *universalii lingvistice, limbă, vorbire, comparație, categorie logico-sintactică*.
Keywords: *linguistic universals, language, speech, simile, logical-syntactic category*.

Vasyl`Stus Donetsk National University
21, 600-richya str., Vinnytsia, 21021,
Ukraine
maryana@mail.org

BDD-A30946 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:50:34 UTC)