The Tao of Language

Stanley McCray
Department of Modern Languages
Linguistics and Intercultural Communication
University of Maryland Baltimore County
Baltimore, MD
USA

Abstract

Atomic physics provided the scientists with the first glimpses of the essential nature of things. Like the mystics, physicists were now dealing with a non-sensory experience of reality and, like the mystics, they had to face the paradoxical aspects of this experience. From then on therefore, models and images of modern physics became akin to those of Eastern philosophy.) *The whole world recognizes the beautiful as the beautiful, yet this is only the ugly; the whole world recognizes the good as the good, yet this is only the bad. Thus, Something and Nothing produce each other; the long and the short off-set each other; the high and the low incline towards each other; note and sound harmonize with each other; before and after follow each other.*(Capra 1984:38-39)

LaoTzu, Tao TeChing, II, i--v(trans. Lau 1963:58)

In his impressive work *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra eloquently articulated an interpretation of what one might consider to be one of the "hardest" of the so-called hard sciences in light of Eastern thought. Although perhaps not universally accepted nor well received, it cannot be denied that his effort was a unique, bold step in the philosophy of science. What makes this work so appealing is that it takes its inspiration from an ancient treatise which emphasizes the unity of opposing forces, a comforting idea in a world eternally fraught with so much conflict.

As scholarly traditions occupy, I suppose, a necessary spot in the world, it is only natural that they too are doomed to conflicts which, though of comparatively less importance than general world issues, have remarkable ubiquity and staying power. Even a cursory examination of the history of the field of linguistics reveals that it is similarly afflicted.

The writings on the history and nature of human language are so vast that no one would even approach the thought of compiling a list of the essential works. This is of course due in part to the fact that linguistics touches so many fields: philosophy, anthropology, history, sociology, the cognitive and natural sciences. The vast richness of possibilities for discovery and discussion about language can be at once intimidating and inspiring. The former, as no individual could even imagine controlling more than a small fraction of the totality of knowledge that has been accumulated over the millennia, the latter in that the mere existence of the many avenues of investigation suggests that there may be others to explore which could be equally valid or invalid as those which have come before. The present offering is made in this spirit of awe and wonder.

It has been observed in many versions of linguistic theory that language is based on the existence of infinite possibilities of expression from a finite set of rules. Even before the advent of the now popular Universal Grammar/Parameters theories which have explicated this notion in great detail, the notion of a multitude of *expansions* from a given basic *form* was implied in any endeavor involving language learning or teaching. This notion of expansion from form suggests a certain relation between opposites, of the infinite from the finite. However, when one looks beyond the confines of language and linguistic theory, the symbiotic relation between form and expansion manifests itself so clearly that a universal source is suggested.

For instance, all forms of martial arts begin with a thorough study of a grounding series of formal exercises from which is cultivated the expression of limitless physical applications. In the study of music, regardless of cultural origin, a future performer must control certain basic patterns of tone and/ or rhythm before artistic expression is possible.

And further examination of both these systems reveals many oppositional relationships existing within a marvelous unity.

Thus, the present paper wishes to explore the possibility of placing linguistics within a larger realm of systemic investigation. This relation between form and expansion is part of a larger reality—that of the *unity of opposites*. **It is the tension created by opposition which is responsible for linguistic structure and evolution.** A general theory of systemic interaction will emerge, based on the interplay of oppositions. In a fashion similar to, but not nearly as eloquent as that of Dr. Capra, I hope to show that many linguistic dichotomies, like many in the physical sciences, although seemingly based in paradox and contradiction, are in fact the reality of what I will describe as the **Tao of Language.**

A Preview

I. Hard/Soft:Sanchin/Tensho

In the martial arts, there exist a myriad of formal exercises, both unarmed and armed, designed in one aspect to develop speed, strength, endurance and overall skills necessary to withstand, overcome or even kill a single or multiple enemies. While they number in the thousands, these forms have been basically organized into two groups: the hard and the soft. This arrangement is based on the premise that the "hard" styles, such as Northern Kung-Fu styles, Japanese karate, Tae Kwon Do, are based in large part on emphasizing **external** and physical strength, with a focus on *doing to*, whereas the "soft styles", such as tai chi chuan, hsing-I, pa kua, aikido, find their point of departure in the cultivation and development of the **internal** energy, with a focal point of *doing with*. Thus, the goal of the hard or external styles is largely to incapacitate or disable an opponent, whereas the aim of the soft or internal styles is to harmonize or blend with an opposing force. Perhaps the ultimate goal of both is to avoid one's own personal demise by albeit radically different means, and the relative strength or weakness of the two types of styles is not to be debated here. What is important is the basic dichotomy that appears to separate the two, and, in the spirit of what is being offered here, the possibility of any kind of reconciliation which would lie in a less apparent unity that binds the two.

Certainly the putative origin of these arts hints of such a unity. By many accounts, the arts were derived from a series of physical exercises devised by Bodhidharma. These exercises were not designed with any martial intent or applications, but merely served as a means, through improving physical health, to keep the meditating monks from falling asleep! Later, however, it was found that certain extensions of these exercises could ultimately be applied to developing skills which might be useful during physical conflict. Thus, from an essentially pacific preoccupation grew a set of systems with much more aggressive applications

Sifting through the many forms which serve as building blocks for the various styles, two seem to be found with interesting regularity. These are known in Japanese as the *sanchin* "three battles" and the *tensho* "rotating hands" kata, both of which having origin in earlier Chinese forms *samchien* and *rokkishu*. They have been treated by several authors (most notably Johnson 2000) as two of the founding forms of unarmed martial arts. Although these forms may be discussed in terms of their combat *bunkai* (applications), their primary goal appears to be more aimed at physical, mental and spiritual unification through the development of internal energy or ki (chi). Cultivating this tripartite metamorphosis in the practicing martial artist was deemed essential by the founding masters to the goal of developing not only effective fighters but holistically sound human beings as well.

Sanchin exists in several forms, but all are similar in several essential aspects: 1) rooting of stance to provide a firm basis; 2) slow, linear stepping; 3) slow, deliberate isometric delivery of "strikes" and "blocks" (I use quotation marks here as there is much debate over the true nature of these movements—see Johnson 2000 *passim*; 4) slow, powerful and intense breathing methods coordinated with the physical movements.

Tensho, also, manifested in several dialectal variations (and I use the word "dialectal" not coincidentally), contrasts significantly with sanchin in several ways: 1) although emphasis is placed on stability of stance and slow linear stepping, the "strikes" and "blocks" are markedly circular, and non-isometric. 2) the breathing patterns, though slow and intense and coordinated with physical movement, is much more relaxed, featuring forceful exhalation at only specific points in the kata. Due to the vast differences in the nature of the performance of the kata, the one (sanchin) featuring severe dynamic tension and forceful breathing techniques, the other (tensho) involving flowing, circular movements and more relaxed respiration, they have been classified as "hard" and "soft", respectively.

This is directly reflected in the actual name of one Okinawan style, the Goju-ryu style, which employs these kata as bookends surrounding the volumes of kata that typify the style, and is therefore translated as "hard-soft style", featuring both angular and circular, aggressive and passive, *yang* and *yin* techniques. It is significant that these entirely opposite kata describe a unified the whole of the system which defines this and several other styles of arts. Perhaps it is also important that both kata terminate their respective series of movements with a double, rotating circular movement of the hands. The symbolic nature of this movement, one hand pointing down towards the ground, the other up toward the sky, has not been lost, indicating the unity and co-existence of opposites earth and heaven. And it may be said that these kata represent the archetypes of all kata in all martial systems, symbolizing the hard and the soft.

II. Euphony/CacaphonyScales/ Modes

This reconciliation of opposites holding together a system is seen again if we take look at music. Oppositiondichotomies exist throughout the general organization of musical systems, regardless of cultural background and history. Of course, one rather obvious parallel to martial arts is the existence of formal primitives from which an unlimited array of possibilities of expression comes forth. Without the basis of grounding form— whether based in scales or modes, in mono or polyrhythms, tonally-centered or non-tonally centered— improvisation and personal expression cannot exist. We cannot appreciate, for instance, the jazz-oriented notion of "playing outside", unless we are aware of the "inside".An Indian raga cannot be seen as a product of Hindustani origin without the prior understanding of the Carnatic system. A "major" key means nothing without an associated "minor". Harmony cannot exist without dissonance, euphony without cacophony (although our idea of these latter must be considered as culturally influenced). These opposite ends of the musical spectra go on and on in a non-ending symbiosis, evolving and changing as the cultures change and interact with one another, but are re-established and reborn.

One of the most important of these oppositions referred to above, scales versus modes, deserves special mention within the context of the comparison made above between the sanchin and tensho kata. These two organizational systems of musical notes lie at the very core of many types of music, Eastern and Western. Together they provide one kind of lens through which to view the structure of contrasting musical styles because they neutralize the concept of dependence upon specific melodic hierarchies. Similar to the contrasting kata which metaphorically represent all kata both hard and soft, scales and modes represent a very large part of melodic and harmonic organization of all music, regardless of whether the music is arranged around a specific tonal center or not.

It is reasonable to suggest that these oppositional pairs taken from apparently disparate fields may be viewed together as representing *certain essential archetypal categories central to the creativity expressed within their respective systems.* After a brief excursion into the notion of opposites within language and linguistics, I will return to this important idea.

III Language and Theory 1

The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way; the name that can be named is not the constant name. The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth; the named was the mother of the myriad creatures. Hence always rid yourself of desires in order to observe its secrets; but always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its manifestations. These two are the same but diverge in name as they issue forth. Being the same they are called mysteries.

Lao Tzu, Tao TeChing I, i—iii (Lau 1963:57)

The notion of dichotomy at first glance is obvious as regards matters of human language structure and its use. These oppositions have been both explicit and implicit in the history of linguistics. A few examples will suffice.

 1. *synchrony vs. diachrony*. This fundamental division of the areas of linguistic investigation into language structure at a given moment vs. language development over several epochs has been a staple of linguistic analysis since de Saussure, who felt it necessary that linguistic investigators be precise as to exactly what parameters of investigation they were pursuing. It is interesting, in light of the present paper, that what came to be recognized as diachronic linguistics ultimately gave birth to synchronic study.

2*. language vs.dialect*. This distinction is dates back even before Dante's observation in *De VulgareEloquentia* that the languages of the Gaulic region of his era could be divided into the parlances of "oc" and "oil" (words for "yes" in Modern Occitan and French respectively).

The notion of specific regional variants belonging to a larger generic entity obviously served as a basis for early work into dialectology. This construct was later extended by sociolinguists to include not only regional variations but also those of ,class, age and gender.

3. *"emic" vs "etic"*. This construct of which the provenance is structuralism articulates notion that an actual set of related variants may constitute a concrete class existing within a more abstract unity. This idea is of course responsible for the structuralist concepts of phoneme vs. allophone, morpheme vs. allomorph, etc.

4. *underlying vs. derived structure*. A dichotomy achieving its zenith with the advent of the transformational-generative paradigm, the notion of the existence of a deep level of grammatical relations, of varying degrees abstractness depending on the theoretical orientation, which is ultimately responsible for a specific phonological surface output, has proven to be as valuable as it is polemic to modern linguistic investigations.

5. *acquisition vs. learning*. This distinction has become common both in applied linguistics and to a degree in cognitive-science-based linguistic theory. It posits acquisition as a primary, unconscious experience, contrasting with learning, viewed to be a secondary and conscious event. Thus, acquisition is often associated with first language, whereas learning is usually associated with later linguistic experiences, such as second-language learning.

6. *competence vs. performance.* Very similar to the Saussurean distinction between language and parole, this dichotomy also became prominent in the linguistic literature dedicated to the generative paradigm. Chomsky quite notably (1965) stresses that the primary goal of linguistic investigation should be competence, the innate system of grammatical relations, rather than performance, that which actually happens in communication.

Of course, the list of dichotomies is seemingly endless, and we can point to those that relate to language structure, development and use as well as to   linguistic theory: hypotactic/paratactic, free/bound, epenthesis/syncope, assimilation /dissimilation, context-free/context sensitive, universals/parameters, even something as basic as rule vs. constraint. However, it appears that this familiarity of recognition has bred the contempt of the exploration of its heuristic possibilities. Theoreticians of language have grown so accustomed to, even if bothered by, the notion of opposition that they in large part have not explored the actual beauty of the unity that exists within opposition and the fact that these opposites may be viewed, *both structurally and theoretically*, as essential to the integrity of the phenomenon of language.

IV. Language and Theory 2

It can be safely said that the acknowledgement of dichotomy often forces us to make some kind of evaluative decision. Which of two poles seems to be more important in terms of use, or strength, or value? This is true both on the level of language itself as well as of metalanguage or linguistic theory. For instance, if we accept the existence of say analytic vs. synthetic language typology, it is natural to discuss which of the two is more prominent in a language when studying its morpho-syntactic structure. The same may be said of the categories of tense and aspect, which are often typologically opposed. Similarly, in devising a theoretical framework within which to analyze language, linguists are often asking us to choose between opposing views. Is semantics generative or interpretive? Is the phoneme a viable construct or should we opt more for feature-based notation? Should theory merely describe or should it explain? These are all natural questions, but asking these questions in fact begs another: are we obliged to choose between opposites, or can we have the best of both worlds?

4

Even in the seemingly harmless, apparent dichotomy between what is linguistically acceptable and what is not, "rule" vs. "constraint" as alluded to above, there is some discomfort that cries out for reconciliation. Hale and Reiss (2008:195) note for instance that it has been argued that "due to basic logical equivalencies, the oft –drawn distinction between rules and constraints loses all significance once we recognize that both rules and constraints express propositions". So, must we, should we, can we make such choices or can some kind of common ground be found? We may begin finding a possible answer to this question by examining briefly the issues referred to in 1—6.

The divide between linguistic structure at a given time and its development over time is not as wide as it may appear. Certainly, it is methodologically comfortable, at least from an organizational standpoint, to separate synchronic and diachronic investigation. Yet certain phenomena of grammar tend to be observable in both realms. For instance, phonological realities such as assimilation and dissimilation where one segment causes a neighboring one to become either similar or dissimilar to itself, epenthesis and syncopy, i.e. the insertion or omission of a segment, have been attested within the rule structure at any given moment of a language or dialect as well as during the phonological evolution of linguistic systems.

The same is true of lenition, the weakening of a consonant in intervocalic position (And it is interesting to note that the first two these pairs of phenomena constitute contrastive sets yet are clearly related manifestations of phonetic interaction among segments).These processes have been observed both synchronically and diachronically across a wide variety of languages. In the realms of morpho-syntax, syntax and semantics, similar interweaving of synchrony and diachrony may be seen. This is often manifested in a cyclical fashion. For instance, the opposition between tense and aspect is expressed in the morpho-syntactic structure of several verbal systems, yet when we examine their history we may often observe a kind of ebb-and-flow relationship between the two. Thus Modern French is largely a tense-dominated language, with vestigial aspectual relations seen in the compound-past/imperfect distinction (and marginally in the so-called "passé surcomposé" and certain gnomic uses of the imperfect). However, as I have shown elsewhere (McCray 1984: 170-179), there is strong evidence that aspect, rather than tense, was a much more prominent feature in Old French, as well as in Old Spanish and quite possibly in Early Romance in general, as the above-mentioned verbal forms appeared with a functional freedom which would go against the grain of modern stylistics. Thus, in both systems—early and modern—we have a situation of variance between +/- ASPECT/TENSE which must in reality be described neither as purely synchronic nor purely diachronic. In fact, such morpho-syntactic phenomena relating form and function is implicit in the paradigm of Jerzy Kurylowicz (McCray 1978) and may be termed *panchronic*. A similar situation obtains when we look at the relationship between paratactic and hypotactic clause structure. Again, Indo-European evidence indicates that, although both types of structure exist, there is no real need to regard them as irreconcilable opposites. Although in Ancient Greek the joining of clauses favored subordination or hypotaxis, there is evidence that paratactic constructions with similar syntactic function and parallel semantic force were also possible,cf. Smyth (1974 edition: 486) who has observed that "there exists many traces in Greek of the use of the older coordination in place of which some form of subordination was adopted, either entirely or in part, in the later language".This compares quite favorably to the situation in Classical Sanskrit which allowed rather loose joining of clauses via the *iti* particle. We can also note that in reviewing the diglossia of syntactic unions in Modern English, paratactic syntax is permitted Low domain constructions, such as "He was the guy [who] did it", or "I was like, 'what happened?'". Given this situation, it is highly plausible to reconsider a category of simply TAXIS, pointed out in functional linguistics studies, notably Halliday (2004, 373)joining the para-and hypo. More on this to follow.

It has been useful to establish a division between an abstract notion such as "language" and something called "dialect", the latter having several possible connotations. Generally linguists use the term to refer to structurally related systems which vary based on region, social class, age, and more recently, gender and ethnic origin (due to substrate influence). However, Romaine (1994) has pointed out that sometimes this distinction is not so clear-cut. In her treatment of the language/dialect situation in Papua New Guinea Romaine (1994: 3-5) cites the example of thirteen utterances, some of which seem very similar and virtually identical to one another, others very structurally distinct from each other. She indicates that, from the point of view of traditional linguistics, the structurally similar utterances would be considered dialects of the same language, whereas the dissimilar ones would be considered as belonging to separate languages. She reveals, however, that for the speakers of these idioms each utterance is considered to represent a separate language.

She thus indicates that variants, when considered as social constructs, have a different value than when considered as linguistic constructs. The line between language and dialect is therefore not as plain as has been previously thought.

The distinction between the class of objects and its members dates from the early days of structuralism. The concept of phoneme and associated allophones was a pillar of traditional linguistics for quite some time. Obviously, as subsequent theories of phonology have been developed, the value, even existence, of the "emic" concept has been questioned. Of course, one important aspect of the concept which seems to beg the question of plausibility of existence is the notion of the simultaneous state of the abstract—"emic" versus the concrete—"etic". And the existence of exceptions to certain basic premises upon which the distinction is made, such as the biuniqueness criterion, or strict complementary distribution of allo-segments, have led some linguists to abandon the distinction altogether. The invention of the concept of "archiphoneme" and the preference of the use of features rather than phonemes may be viewed as attempts to relieve the conceptual stress caused by this enigma. But the usefulness of the concept cannot be refuted, and demonstrates that one can accept the simultaneous existence of an abstract class as well as its concrete components, even if some exceptions may be pointed to.

Moreover, as Hale and Reiss (2008: 144) demonstrate, one of the most recent theories of phonology, Optimality Theory, has come to reassess the relation between phonetics and phonology, to the extent that the distinction has become blurred. We have seen above how sometimes the dichotomy of language and dialect is not as clear as we might like it to be, yet is it not fruitful to talk about a concept of an abstract "language" being nothing more nor less than the sum total of its "dialects" (either socially or linguistically viewed)? A paradoxical relationship need not be rejected out of hand simply because of its perhaps conceptually challenging nature. Nevertheless, it is very interesting that more general notions such as "archiphoneme" have been invented. For it is similar in concept to the above-mentioned notion of "taxis".

In the analysis of syntax and to a slightly lesser degree phonology, it has proven useful to discuss several levels of structure. That certain alternations which appear separate on one level but related on another level is a reasonable conclusion drawn out of the study of various syntactic and phonological phenomena. Hence the notion of a "deep" structure where primitive relationships are revealed, and a derived "surface" structure which represents the actual utterance. These two are said to be related via transformation. Even though the acceptance of this abstract vs. concrete situation might in fact be in line with a Taoistic viewing of a seemingly paradoxical situation, the problem for linguistics has been, and continues to be, an ambivalence over the nature of these opposing structures, to the degree that their very existence is sometimes questioned. The debate over the role of semantics in deep structure led to the great divide between classical transformational-generative linguistics and generative semantics. The recognition of the increasing importance of semantics led to theories of case grammar; however such developments did not quell debate over the notion of abstractness and its relation to real utterances. Thus, more theories were developed, such as relational grammar, and dependency syntax, to avoid over-reliance upon the deep/surface distinction. A similar trend can be seen in the evolution of phonological theory, where the paradigm of natural phonology attempted to eliminate the need for abstract deep levels of phonological representation. Rather than maintain conflict over the existence or exact nature of structural levels, a more constructive attitude would be to explore how the possible existence of multiple layers of structure is at the basis of the concept human language as being held together by such contrastive layers. As will be presently discussed, it may be fruitful to seek a more general, primal and unifying category.

In modern applied linguistics it has become accepted to make a distinction between the primary process of acquiring a native language versus a secondary process of learning a second. Acquisition has come to be associated with an unconscious process, whereas conscious effort is associated with the learning process. However, is it too difficult to believe that both processes can be involved in both types of language activity? This is obvious when we take a look at the so-called "communicative" approaches to foreign language teaching (although it is hard to imagine anyone promoting a "non-communicative" approach since the death of grammar-translation methodology). Several approaches, such as Total Physical Response (TPR), the Natural Approach, and others, have succeeded in creating an environment in the classroom which allows for a certain amount of first-language acquisition-like absorption to take place. Nevertheless, conscious learning has also been shown to take place as a complementary activity.

The fact   is that acquisition and learning can be so closely related as to almost be terminologically indistinguishable. Notice how, in a chapter entitled "Phonological UG [universal grammar] and Acquisition", the Hale and Reiss (2008:30) use the some form of the words "acquisition" and "learning" almost synonymously:

"Linguists attempt to model the path of *acquisition* under the assumption that the *learner* does not get negative evidence".[emphasis added]

" At the end of the grammar *acquisition* process, the *learner* will finalize the grammar…"[emphasis added]

Thus, perhaps rather than speak of a LAD as the "Language Acquisition Device", it might be more useful to speak of a more general "Language Absorption Device" which allows for both ends of the acquisition-learning spectrum. I will return to this later.

The distinction between the linguistic system, or competence, and how it is used, "performance" has proven an organizationally useful construct. As is the case in all dichotomies, it allows intense focus on specific questions or problems occurring in a specific realm. However not all theorists are convinced of the value of keeping competence separate from performance. Especially within the field of pragmatics, the value of the study of communicative competence, the appropriateness of an utterance based on context, is emphasized, and may be viewed as a middle-ground between pure competence and pure performance.

Once again, a reconciliation of opposites is implied; in fact, Romaine (1994)consistently maintainsthat, particularly as regards linguistic phenomena *in society*, the Chomskyannotion of pure competence must be replaced by one based on communicative competence. Just as the hypothetical LAD as "absorption" device suggested above, perhaps the notion of communicative competence comes close to a similar useful, more general term joining the competence-performance dichotomy.

In review, then, we are left with an uncomfortable situation where on the one hand seemingly polar opposites of structure and theory are recognized, yet on the other efforts have been made to obliterate or at least minimize them. I strongly believe that if linguistics goes beyond itself into a more general theory of knowledge and experience, an honest effort may be made not to resolve opposition or bicker over minute details of its description, but rather to *embrace* it, since language may be viewed as existing within a realm more wide-reaching and general than matters purely linguistic. .

One notable problem in dealing with paradoxes within language structure is found in an apparent confusion over exactly what linguistic theory is supposed to be doing. For instance, in their survey of several syntactic theories, Edmonson and Burquest (1998) that there have been almost as many goals as theories: Does linguistics aim to describe (e.g. tagmemics) or explain (transformational-generative)? Is observation also important (tagmemics, transformational-generative) or simplification through generalization (stratificational grammar)? How important is classification(tagmemics)? Many times it seems virtually impossible to maintain clean, clear distinctions or even definitions of goal.Perhaps a more important question lies in defining the very nature of linguistic theory itself. This concerns whether the linguist is involved in writing a **functional**or a **formal** grammar. They observe: "It is a commonly held assumption that the purpose of language is communication, and it is this position that lies behind functional models….By contrast, there is another view that emphasizes the formal properties of sentences over their functional properties…. Formal theories commonly take the position that the goal of linguistics is to account for the facts of language acquisition…" (1998:26)

Given these complications of definition of goal, it is small wonder that linguistics may have a problem dealing consistently with problems of paradox or anything else for that matter as regards human language. Since searching *within* linguistics itself has led to so many procedural problems, it is suggested in this brief paper that we may be well-served by looking *beyond* linguistics, comparing the structure of human language to phenomena found within the dynamics of other systems.

The integration of ideas from diverse fields of thought is not a new concept in the history of science. This is what motivated Ludwig von Bertalanffy to articulate a **general system theory.** He was well aware of the danger of making useless comparisons between diverse systems,
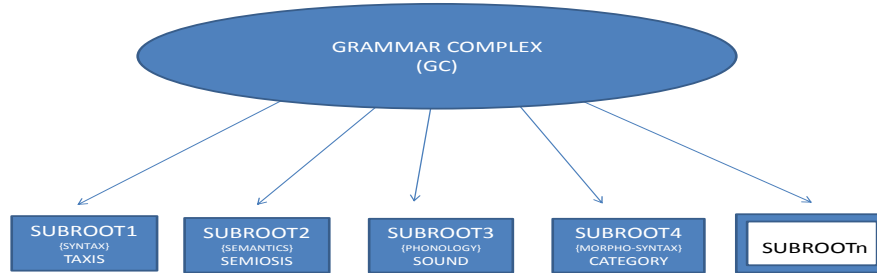
" but general system theory is not a search for vague and superficial analogies. Analogies as such are of little value since besides similarities between phenomena, dissimilarities can always be found as well.   The isomorphism under discussion is more than mere analogy. It is a consequence of the fact that, in certain respects, corresponding abstractions and conceptual models can be applied to different phenomena" (1968:35-36).

This general system theory may be compared to what have been called **world hypotheses** which are discussed in Edmonson and Burquest (1998) in the context of a warning against them by philosopher Stephen Pepper. The authors describe such hypotheses as deriving from **root metaphors**, "which are attempts to understand the world by using knowledge of one area as a pattern for understanding other areas" (1998:5).   They are careful to distinguish non-restrictive hypotheses from restrictive theories, and thus von Bertalanffy's work must be regarded in that light. However, what is interesting is the notion of a root metaphor which may unite seemingly disparate phenomena.   It is suggested here that following a path (Tao) of opening one's thinking to exploring a root metaphor can produce advantages with regard to dealing with human language, whether this "dealing" be description or explanation, classification or generalization, etc. In what follows I will trace the beginnings of a taoistic model for language.

A Look towards "Deixis"

In the above presentation I have implied the existence of archetypal categories within marital arts and music which serve as formal roots whose function is to unify opposites and make infinite expression possible. I have suggested that certain hypothetical primitives may also exist in language, like "taxis", or the "modified" LAD that serve a similar purpose.

The search for such archetypes of unity defines the Tao of Language and receives one source of inspiration from the heuristics responsible for the work of those who have investigated phenomena associated with world hypotheses, general systems theory, and Eastern-based physics. Another source of motivation comes from within linguistics itself, in the study of the category called **deixis.** Typically, this category has been divided into several subcategories: person, time, space, universe (see especially Lyons (1977:636-724) for an excellent summary discussion. In the spirit of the present work the concept is particularly attractive because it encompasses syntax, semantics, and morphology *at least.* I added the latter qualifier because I would like to extend the notion a bit. Etymologically, deixis means "to point out" from Proto-Indo-European **deik*-(cf.Gk. *déiknumi*). This notion of pointing something out, whether it be a person, an event, a physical area, etc. implies at least a duality, consisting of a starting and end-point. I suggest that the very idea of deixis as expressing "I" / "other", "now"/ "then", "here"/ "there" etc. is a prime example of the *unified oppositional* pair, the primitive, archetypal concept that we are seeking for language, very similar to the hard-soft of sanchin/tensho or the scalar-modal dichotomy. At the very least, it could serve as a model for viewing several oppositions within language and linguistics. I would posit the existence of a general arch-root or GRAMMATICAL COMPLEX (GC) ,which would be the basis of grammatical creation, wherein all unified grammatical oppositions are contained. This complex is composed of specific SUB-ROOTS which would be responsible for the ontogeny of various components of grammar as defined in both traditional and recent theory (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, etc.) Within these sub-roots, various unified oppositions would obtain as well. I would suggest the following preliminary schematic representation:

Obviously, as a preliminary model, the exact ordering of these proposed sub-roots is not important. The main points are that the relationship between the GC and the sub-roots is similar to the deictic complex in the sense that a starting point-of-reference is assumed which is paired with an ending point (the ending points being the sub-roots), and that this relationship is not limited by time, although it may be affected by it. The outline here is thus panchronic in scope. Obviously, the bulk of linguistic theorizing has been in agony over what to do with these sub-roots, in terms of description, explanation, observation, etc, and exactly how to articulate a theoretical structure. The crucial point however is that what I have suggested here is a kind of super-structural framework based on the natural tendency towards unified opposites.

The notion of GC and SUB-ROOT as representative of the gravitation of natural language to exploit opposition is confirmed empirically and theoretically. For instance, in several languages both ancient (cf. Sumerian) and modern (cf. Inuit or practically any polysynthetic language) the very concepts of "word" or "clause" at least in the commonly accepted sense, are not as clear-cut as one might like, a fact which strongly suggests the emanation of grammatical relations from a complex unified form (cf. Edzard 2003:23 ff. in his account of the Sumerian "word"). The cyclical alternation between synthetic and analytic constructions within the history of a language or language family points to the existence of a more abstract unity that encompasses the two typologies (cf. the evolution of the future tense formation in the Romance languages, originating in a Standard Latin synthetic construction such as *cantabo,* morphing into an analytic *cantare habeo,* which becomes synthetic again in French *chanterai*, Italian *cantarai*, etc,). If one wants to consider a deep/ surface level construct for syntax or phonology, one could maintain that within the syntactic sub-root a complex of *level* and *alteration of level* exists, such thata clear distinction between levels may not always exist (as per the debate over generative vs.

Non-generative models of each field) : compare the notion in some martial arts where it is maintained that there is no real difference between a block and a strike, that they or may become one and the same. Similar observations can be made regarding competence/performance (note already the construct already found in the idea of communicative competence) and acquisition/learning.

The ultimate value of promoting the use of a grammar of the unity of opposites lies in its providing an apparatus to view the totality of language in a way that has perhaps, if at least implied, not ever really been consistent. It allows one to question certain apparent aberrant developments. For example, the existence (synchronic) or development (diachronic) of irregularity may be viewed in the light of a natural entropy towards establishing symbiotic pairs of opposites. It is thus to be expected for instance that an ablauting(strong) verbal class should come to existed alongside a dentally- suffixed non-ablauting (weak) one in Indo-European. Or that Semitic would feature two types of nominal plural formations, the broken and the non-broken. The very notion of rule and constraint s addressed by this notion of taoistic relationship between opposites. I find it extremely interesting and to the point that Hale and Reiss not only imply a relationship between synchrony and diachrony in phonology, but also use the familiar yin/yang symbol to mark an ambiguous feature of phonetic description (2008: 144 and 146, respectively).

Conclusion

The major goal of the preceding discussion has obviously not been to resolve the innumerable confusions and conflicts which exist within the study of human language. As with any investigative endeavor there will always be theories and counter-theories. I have merely tried to suggest, not an alternative path to follow, but merely a supplemental one, perhaps one that will be thrown onto the heap of others which have been previously rejected. However, I take the firm position that since linguistics deals with humans and their interaction with other humans, it is of necessity and by definition a *social science*, born of a multiplicity of disciplines, which many times resists absolute quantification, but by its very nature begs to be put into a rich and interdisciplinary context. The only thing certain is the uncertainty inherent in human endeavor. I hope that I have at least successfully posited a path, a *nameless way* to follow that will allow tolerance of, and perhaps, ultimately relief from, some of the frustration that inevitably results from its investigation.

References

Bertalanffy, Ludwig von. 1968. General System Theory. New York: Brazell.

Capra, Fritjof. 1984. The Tao of Physics. Toronto: Bantam.

Chomsky, Noam. 1965. Aspects of the Theory of Syntax.Cambridge:M.I.T Press

Edmonson, Jerold A. and Donald Burquest. 1998. A Survey of Linguistic Theories. 3rd

Edition. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics.

Edzard, Dietz Otto. 2003. Sumerian Grammar. Leiden:Brill

Hale, Mark and Charles Reiss. 2008. The Phonological Enterprise. Oxford: University Press.

Halliday, M.A.K. (revised by Christian M.I.M.Matthiessen) 2004.An Introduction to Functional Grammar. 3rd. ed. Hodder Education (Hachette)

Johnson, Nathan. 2000. Barefoot Zen. York Beach: Weiser.

Lao Tzu.Tao TeChing.In Lau, 1963.

Lau, D.C. (trans.)1963. Tao TeChing. London. Penguin.

Lyons, John. 1977. Semantics 2. Cambridge: University Press.

McCray, Stanley. 1978. Jerzy Kurylowicz: Towards a Panchronic Linguistic Theory. In Thomas Markey and Stephen Tyma (eds.) Studies in European Linguistic Theory II: The Analytic and the Descriptive. . GiessenerBeitrageZurSprachwissenschaft. 52-64

McCray Stanley. 1984. Process and Motivation in Early Romance. Romanitas. Ann Arbor: Michigan Romance Studies. 170-179.

Romaine, Suzanne. 1994. Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics. 2nd Edition. Oxford: University Press.

Smyth, Herbert Smyth. 1974 (1920) Greek Grammar. Harvard, University Press.