

Chapter One

Introduction: the general context

1.1. The scope of this book

This book presents aspects of a functionalist model of language which has been proposed by M.A.L. Lamb, on the basis of J.W.F. Mulder and S.G.J. Hervey's axiomatic functionalism (Mulder 1968; Mulder — Hervey 1972; Hervey 1979; Mulder — Hervey 1980; Hervey 1982; Mulder 1989). Useful summaries of standard axiomatic functionalism are to be found in Lamb (1980), and Shimizu and Lamb (1985).

The current model introduces a number of extensions to that of Mulder and Hervey. Like Mulder and Hervey's model it is conceived as an axiomatic theory; a provisional set of postulates is provided in the Appendix to this book. Like Mulder and Hervey's model the current model may therefore be regarded as an axiomatic functionalism. To distinguish between the two theories, Mulder and Hervey's model is referred to throughout this book as standard axiomatic functionalism, while the current model is referred to as extended axiomatic functionalism. This terminology is suggested in Shimizu and Lamb (1985: 118), and is adopted throughout in Dickins (1989), and Heselwood (1992). The term axiomatic functionalism is used where the notions considered apply equally to standard axiomatic functionalism (the "standard version") and extended axiomatic functionalism (the "extended version"). Two published versions of the postulates for standard axiomatic functionalism exist. These are both organised in the form of axioms, and definitions (abbreviated as Def.). The first version of the postulates (in Mulder — Hervey 1980: 40-63 and 203-211) includes postulates for axiomatic-functional semantics. The later revised version of the postulates (in Mulder 1989: 435-457) does not include postulates for the semantics. Where I refer to the postulates for standard axiomatic functionalism in this book, I refer to both versions, in order to make it easier for readers to compare the two versions.

This book has as its major theme the network of relationships between the abstractions of linguistic theory, and the phonetic and semantic facts of language reality. This network of relationships is treated in the standard version by the ontology (also known as sign theory, or signum theory), and the semantics. In the extended version, it is treated by what is termed the signum ontology (a term suggested by Barry Heselwood). The book also discusses, though in less detail, what is known in standard axiomatic functionalism as the systemology, and what I propose be termed in extended axiomatic functionalism the system ontology: that is the internal organisation (and analysis) of phonology and grammar in the standard version, and the internal organisation (and analysis) of phonology, lexology, and delology in the extended version. I have chosen to focus on the signum ontology of extended axiomatic functionalism (and the corresponding ontology and semantics of standard axiomatic functionalism) because the signum ontology can in some respects be regarded as more fundamental than the system ontology. That is to say, a linguistic theory of the current type depends crucially on the coherence of the relationship of its abstract models to linguistic reality (cf. Mulder 1989: 74-75). If this relationship does not make sense, the entire theory fails to make sense, regardless of the ingenuity and apparent adequacy of the analyses which may be produced within the system ontology (as it is termed in extended axiomatic functionalism) or the systemology (as it is termed in standard axiomatic functionalism) (cf. however, Chapter Two, Section 2.2.3

for a discussion of the logical relationship between the ontology and the systemology). Within the confines it sets itself, the current book concentrates on those aspects of extended axiomatic functionalism which yield descriptions significantly in contrast with those of standard axiomatic functionalism, focusing in particular on the treatment of allomorphy, polysemy and figures of speech.

The book is divided into six chapters. In the main part of this Chapter (Sections 1.2-1.5), I address a number of general preliminary issues. In particular I consider and defend the position of axiomatic functionalism in four broad areas which I believe are particularly relevant and interesting with regard to its overall orientation as a theory. These areas are: wide-scope vs. narrow-scope approaches to semiotics (Section 1.2-Section 1.2.3), the relationship between semiotics and linguistics (Section 1.3), the psychological, sociological, and “pure-systematic” approaches to linguistics (Section 1.4), and linguistic relativism vs. linguistic universalism (Section 1.5).

Chapter Two, *Standard axiomatic functionalism*, starts with a consideration of fundamental metatheoretical issues. I discuss Mulder and Hervey’s Popperian-based criteria for a scientific linguistics, supporting their contention that a scientific linguistic theory should yield descriptions which are consistent, adequate to the data, simple, and in principle refutable. I also point out the acceptability of introducing non-scientific elements into a theory where no scientific elements are available, and I suggest that a further criterion for an acceptable linguistic theory is its wider interfaceability with other language disciplines, such as historical linguistics, text-linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics.

The remainder of Chapter Two presents the three components of standard axiomatic functionalism: the ontology (or sign theory, or signum theory), the semantics and the systemology, focusing on the two components which are of direct relevance to the relationships between theoretical abstractions and language reality: the ontology and the semantics. I highlight features of standard axiomatic functionalism which involve asymmetricality, and a consequent reduction in potential theoretical simplicity, and suggest ways in which greater simplicity can be achieved along with greater descriptive scope. I consider forms of variance with respect to allomorphy and allophony, and discuss Mulder and Hervey’s rejection of free allomorphy in the light of their acceptance of free allophony. I consider the notions of form and allomorphon, and show that despite Mulder’s claim that these notions lack descriptive applicability (Mulder 1989: 304), they can be brought to bear to yield coherent formal models for what has come to be known as incomplete neutralization (Port — Crawford 1989), and more generally for cases of “imperfect homonymy” of which incomplete neutralization is a sub-type. I then suggest a modified version of standard axiomatic functionalism, which involves the use of protocolised models for the data on the content side of the signum, as well as the expression side, and I develop a proposed framework for semantic protocolisation. I show that this modified standard axiomatic functionalism allows for analyses of the connotational semantic phenomenon of “imperfect synonymy” (Geeraerts 1988; termed “nuance” in Hervey 1971) which parallel those for the analysis of imperfect homonymy.

Chapter Three, *Extended axiomatic functionalism*, presents extended axiomatic functionalism as a theory. Under an extended axiomatic-functionalist approach the three components of standard axiomatic functionalism - the ontology, the semantics and the systemology - are reduced to two components: the signum ontology, and the system ontology. The resulting theory is fully symmetrical and therefore maximally simple, allowing for the development of a theoretical terminology which is in many areas itself symmetrical and semantically transparent. Chapter Three concludes with an assessment of the terminology of extended axiomatic functionalism in the light of general terminological principles.

Chapter Four, *Signum-ontological considerations*, considers phenomena which

partially parallel those discussed in Chapter Two. By accepting the notion of free allomorphy, extended axIomatic functionalism provides accounts of variance at the allomorphic and allophonic level which precisely parallel one another. The same notions can also be applied to forms of variance in semantics. Traditional notions such as polysemy and homonymy are coherently differentiable, and criteria derived from the overarching theoretical principle of distinctive function are provided and illustrated for differentiation between polysemy proper and polysemy (plurireferentiality). I uphold Mulder's contention that the acceptance of free allomorphy and polysemy introduces non-scientific elements into the theory. Within an extended axIomatic-functional approach, however, these non-scientific elements are controlled and kept within defined boundaries; they do not compromise the scientificity of other aspects of the theory, and are therefore acceptable in terms of the criteria outlined in Chapter Two. I also show that the exclusion of these phenomena (as in standard axIomatic functionalism) itself gives rise to major problems, particularly with regard to the semantic analysis of utterances involving everyday metalanguage. In the same light, I consider the implications of an extended axIomatic-functional approach to the analysis of idiom and proverbs.

Chapter Five, *Canonicity and figures of speech*, proceeds from the discussion of idiom and proverbs in Chapter Three, and focuses on figures of speech, including metaphor, simile, irony, hyperbole, and understatement. I suggest that a consistent distinction needs to be drawn between dead (specific-conventional) and live (generalized-conventional) variants of each of these figures. A coherent and adequate description of both dead and live figures of speech can be achieved by interfacing (cf. Chapter Two) models from the semantic aspect of the signum ontology with what is strictly speaking the extra-theoretical notion of canonicity. According to this analysis, different figures of speech originate at different levels within the signum ontology; they all, however, share the common feature of marked non-canonicity. This approach makes it possible to reconcile the traditional "internal" concern with the way in which metaphor is distinguished from other figures of speech (the signum-ontological aspect) with the more modern "external" concern with the way in which metaphor and other figures of speech are distinguished from literal language (the canonicity aspect) (Cooper 1986: 12). With respect to live metaphor in particular, I argue that a modified and more precisely defined version of the so-called comparison theory (originally proposed by Aristotle, and extensively developed by the Arab rhetoricians among others) is adequate to account for the data of English and possibly other languages.

Chapter Six, *Wider implications*, looks at a number of more general issues arising from the analyses presented in the book. These include the relationship between the notions of canonicity and prototypicality (Taylor 1989), the interface between core-linguistics and psycholinguistics, the potential linguistic universality of figures of speech, types of connotation, metaphor understanding (particularly the relevance theory approach of Sperber and Wilson (1986)), the notion of connotational context, the multiple conventionality of metaphor, the distinction between figures of speech and figures of attitude, the interface between core-linguistics and text-linguistics, and the implications of extended axIomatic functionalism for lexological ("connotational-grammatical") analyses, with particular regard to the treatment of functional sentence perspective and ellipsis.