

# THE LINGUISTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF 'GRAMMAIRE GÉNÉRAL ET RAISONNÉE'\*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

C. Lancelot and A. Arnauld in Port-Royal published 'Grammaire Générale et Raisonnée' (abbr., G.G.R) in 1660. This grammar book attracted a good deal of public attention not only in France, but in many countries of Continental Europe.

This particular book of grammar created a favorable influence on many schools of grammar in the modern ages. So influential was the book that it is possible to assume that most European books of grammar published between the 18th and the 19th century were written on the basis of the analytical method suggested by that noted book of grammar. For instance, in the German grammar of the 19th century, the dividing line to classify a word either as a "verb" or an "adjective" was to see whether the word was an assertion or not. Such a way of classification may be clearly considered to have derived from the GGR theory of grammar. The reason why the particular book of grammar gained such a wide support or respect in Europe was the fact that unlike the conventional Latin grammar that had interpreted all grammatical phenomena only superficially, this grammar book shed light on the way our cognition works behind all grammatical phenomena.

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## 2. THE ESSENCE OF LANGUAGE

The authors of G.G.R. defined grammar as follows :

“Grammar is a speaking technique. Speaking means giving an idea of thinking by means of the signs which one individual uses to put his thought into words.” (Lancelot and Arnauld 1960 : 5)

This definition represents a grammatical view inherited from ancient Greece. Such a view may be also found in Jespersen’s words as follows :

“The essence of language is human activity — activity on the part of one individual to make himself understood by another, and activity on the part of that other to understand what was in the mind of the first. These two individuals, the producer and the recipient of language, or as we may more conveniently call them, the speaker and hearer, and their relations to one another, should never be lost sight of if we want to understand the nature of language and of that part of language which is dealt with in grammar. But in former times, this was often overlooked, and words and forms were often treated as if they were things or natural objects with an existence of their own — a conception which may have been to a great extent fostered through a too exclusive preoccupation with written or printed words, but which is fundamentally false, as will easily be seen with a little reflexion,” (Jespersen, 1924 : 17)

Jespersen was quite right in his definition of every language as a human activity in essential character. However, his view of languages has gone astray by his reasoning not to consider the language as an expression in itself, but to expand that consideration as far as to think that the language is a human activity to understand the meaning of every expression, including the expression itself. Besides, his view was also defective in that it did not distinguish between expressions in general and the language. Nonetheless, his philological

theory was sounder and healthier than those structural schools of philology originating in Saussure. Such philologists' prevailing belief is that a language is not a simple expression by words, but a linguistic norm (viz. cognition) conveyed by the medium of words. The structural grammarians, and the transformational generative grammarians, a still more perverted variety of the structuralists, are apt to be carried away by that theory of linguistic norm because they deal with languages only in the latter's static phase to focus only on the apparent system of a given language, that is, its linguistic norm. Thus, they allow themselves to be bound up or restricted by their study target and, unconsciously or inadvertently, fall into the wrong position, mistaking the linguistic norm for the very essential target of their studies.

Basically speaking, language is a human activity by words, which, in turn, is none other than a series of linguistic processes of expression of an idea one has perceived through the linguistic norm (i.e., the art of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary). Thus, any language, in its essential character, means the contents (the idea) of what is expressed, that is, something prior to every linguistic expression (by pronunciation or by letters) is to be realized by means of the linguistic norm (mode or style of expression).

### 3. THE STANDARD CLASSIFYING WORDS

The kind of expression called the "language" exists in the form of an assembly of a number of words. When classifying those words, the standard of classification will inevitably undergo a basic change, depending on how one understands the essential characters of words.

C. Lancelot and A. Arnauld gave their highly suggestive view as to the "relative" words (including relative pronouns) and their usage, though in their own empirical or intuitive ways. What was particularly notable about their view was the way they classified words.

They probed into how a cognition was working at the bottom of each word. They thus divided all such cognitions into two kinds, that is, “the object of thinking” and “the mode or style of thinking.” Words are, after all, a code by which, one expresses one’s thinking. Therefore, words may be classified into one kind that expresses “the object of thinking” and another kind that expresses “the mode or style of thinking”, depending on how one’s thought, the basic prototype of one’s language, is working. This way of classifying words, as C. Lancelot and A. Arnauld have suggested, is doubtless a remarkable idea. (Miyashita 1980 : ch.6)

Since ancient times, the copula, the kind of words conveying the judgment in the basic proposition of “A is B”, that is “is”, whether in philosophy, logics, or grammar, has been widely recognized as a unique kind of verb different in character from any other kind of verbs. However, C. Lancelot and A. Arnauld have clarified that the judgment expressed by the copula and the judgment expressed by the predicate are different from each other in the way the basic conceptions are standing or working. According to the conventional structural philology or logic, the subject (word or words) “A” and the predicate word (s) “B” in the “A is B” proposition are confronting each other.

Now, as far as I have found C. Lancelot and A. Arnauld, and also J. Locke are possibly the only three scholars who have lumped together the concept of subject and predicate as the “objects of thinking” and brought the copula representing the “judgment” into a position to confront those two objects. Here, as I reason, such a state of things is attributable to two kinds of circumstances : (i) the fact that the structural philologists have been inevitably in a position to be unable to understand the epistemological theory of three-dimensional structures ; and (ii) the West European languages in general are “inflectional” in their formative character, and have a three-dimensional function in their internal character, and thus, in their expres-

sional structure, they usually do not separate "the object of thinking" from "the style or mode of thinking."

The three scholars named above have opined that both the subject and the predicate are equally the "objects of thinking", and the copula should be the very expression of the human spiritual (psychological) action to give the clinching judgment between the subject and the predicate, though they have admitted that the classification of the parts of speech may be problematical in itself. Such a clear way of classification of words into two categories as put forth by the three savants is certainly worth citing here as an innovational achievement.

C. Lancelot and A. Arnauld, in their common identification of all verbs as words of assertion, have opined that the verbs are essentially assertive in function. Accordingly, their grammatical theory has come to distinguish between verbs and gerunds or infinitives by the assertion to be found in verbs. But they have failed to set a distinction between the judgment expressed by the copula and the judgment expressed by other verbs in general. They thus have classified all sorts of verbs into a single category of "subjective expression". But, here, J. Locke has proved to be uniquely right and justifiable by his own way of classifying only the judgment-giving copula "is" into the "subjective expression" category and shutting out all other verbs from that category. This achievement of J. Locke is apparently attributable to the fact that he did not pay much attention to the style or form of words, but concentrated on the content of each word, thus keeping himself almost free from being carried away by the obstructing pressure of West European languages with so many inflections and such inner 3-dimensional structures as to make it usual to prevent clear identification of such judgments. (See Locke : 1986)

Whatever the theoretical developments of the kind, the GGR theory of grammar proved epoch-making in its achievement to have clearly divided words into two major categories. For all that, this grammatical theory has regrettably failed to gain enough appreciators as well

as successors among the grammarians of subsequent historical periods. On top of that, the West European science of grammar has come to be taken over by the grammar of the structural, that is, a formalistic philology, starting with the rise of the historical and comparative philologies of the 19th century. Thus, the valuable GGR theory of grammar has eventually come to be buried into oblivion.

Now, it should be borne in mind that every language has a structure to create a succession of processes of the object giving rise to a cognition, and the cognition giving rise to an expression (See Miura : 1977). It is unusual that our cognition directly appeal to our sense. Therefore, it is best to reconstruct the way our cognition stands following a clue to be found in the way the object stands as the prototype of our cognition and in the way the expression stands as a reflection of our cognition. The GGR should have been given a much higher reevaluation for its decided merit of having studied the way our cognition stands, divided the cognition into “the object of thinking” and “the mode and style of thinking (judgment)”, thereby classifying words into two major categories.

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