The Formal Apparatus of the Enunciation
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All linguistic descriptions devote an often important place to the "use of forms." By this phrase we understand a set of rules that fix the *syntactic* conditions under which [linguistic] forms can or should normally appear, provided they belong to a paradigm that delimits the possible choices. These *rules of use* are coupled with previously specified *rules of formation* to establish a certain correlation between the morphological variations and the combinatorial possibilities of signs (agreement, mutual selection, prepositions and regimes of nouns and verbs, place and order, etc.). Since the choices are limited on both sides, one thereby obtains an inventory that could, theoretically, be exhaustive of the uses as well as of the forms, and consequently, obtains an at least approximative image of the language in use.

However, we would like to introduce a distinction here in a function that has been considered solely from the angle of morphological and grammatical nomenclature. In our opinion, the conditions of the *use of forms* are not identical to the conditions of the *use of language*. In reality, they belong to different worlds, and it may be useful to insist on this difference, which implies another way of seeing the same things, another way of describing and interpreting them.

The use of forms, a necessary part of any description, has given rise to a great number of models, as varied as the linguistic types from which they proceed. [80] The diversity of linguistic structures, to the extent that we know how to analyze them, cannot be reduced to a small number of models that would comprehend, always and only, the fundamental elements. But at least in this way, we have some precise enough representations, constructed by means of a tested technique.

The use of language is quite another matter. What's in question here is a total and constant mechanism that, in one way or another, affects the whole language. The difficulty is to grasp this phenomenon, so banal that it seems to be confused with language itself, so necessary that it escapes from view.

The enunciation is this functional deployment of language by an individual act of utilization.

Isn't the discourse that is produced each time that one speaks, this manifestation of the enunciation, simply "speech"? — One must be careful with the specific conditions of the enunciation: our object is the act itself of producing what is enunciated and not the text of

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[1] [A brief translator's note can be found at the end of this article explaining some of the translation decisions and conventions.]

what is enunciated. This act is the fact of the speaker who mobilizes language on his own behalf. The relation of the speaker to language determines the linguistic characteristics of the enunciation. It must be envisaged as the fact of the speaker, who uses language as an instrument, as well as in the linguistic characteristics that mark this relation.

This process can be studied from a number of angles. We note principally three of them:

(A) The most immediately perceptible and the most direct — even though it's not generally put into relation with the general phenomenon of enunciation — is the vocal realization of language. The emitted and perceived sounds, whether studied in the context of a particular idiom or in their general manifestations, like the processes of acquisition, diffusion, alteration — these being so many branches of phonetics — proceed always from individual acts, which the linguist catches as much as possible in native production, within speech. In scientific practice one strives to eliminate or diminish the individual traits of phonetic enunciation by resorting to different subjects and by multiplying the recordings, in order to obtain a median image of the sounds, whether distinct or linked. But everyone knows that even for the same subject the same sounds are never reproduced exactly and that the notion of identity is only approximative even when the experiment is repeated in detail. [81] These differences stem from the diversity of situations where the enunciation is produced.

(B) The mechanism of this production is another major aspect of the same problem. The enunciation supposes the individual conversion of language into discourse. Here the question — very difficult and still seldom studied — is to find out how "sense" is formed in "words", to what extent one can distinguish between the two notions and in what terms to describe their interaction. It is the semanticization of language that is at the center of this aspect of the enunciation and it leads to the theory of the sign and to the analysis of *signifiance*[2]. We include under the same consideration the processes by which the linguistic forms of the enunciation are diversified and engendered. "Transformational grammar" aims at codifying and formalizing these processes in order to disengage a permanent framework, and, from a theory of universal syntax, proposes to reconstruct a theory of the functioning of the mind.

(C) Finally, another approach is to define the enunciation in the formal framework of its realization. This is the proper object of these pages. We will attempt to sketch the formal characteristics of the enunciation interior to language starting from the individual manifestation it actualizes. Some of these characteristics are necessary and permanent, while others are incidental and linked to the particularity of the chosen idiom. For the sake of convenience, the data used here are drawn from ordinary French and the language of conversation.

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[2] This question is particularly treated in a study published in *Semiotica*, I, 1969 ("Semiology of Language").

In the enunciation we will consider successively: (a) the act itself, (b) the situations in which it is realized, (c) the instruments of its achievement.

The individual act by which one utilizes language first introduces the speaker as a parameter in the conditions necessary for the enunciation. Prior to the enunciation, language is only the possibility of language. After the enunciation, language is effectuated in an *instance of discourse*, which emanates from a speaker in a sonorous form that reaches a listener and solicits an enunciation in return. [82]

As an individual realization, the enunciation can be defined, in relation to language, as a process of *appropriation*. The speaker appropriates the formal apparatus of language and enunciates his position as a speaker by means of specific indices on one hand and accessory procedures on the other.

But immediately, from the moment the speaker declares himself as speaker and assumes language, he implants the *other* in front of him, whatever the degree of presence he attributes to this other. Every enunciation is, explicitly or implicitly, an address; it postulates an addressee.

Finally, in the enunciation, language is used to express a certain relation to the world. The very condition of this mobilization and appropriation of language is, on the part of the speaker, the need to refer through discourse, and, on the part of the other, the possibility of co-referring identically, in the pragmatic consensus that makes each speaker a collocutor. Reference is an integral part of the enunciation.

These initial conditions will govern the entire mechanism of reference in the process of enunciation, creating a highly singular situation of which we scarcely take notice.

The individual act of appropriating language introduces the one who speaks into his speech. This is a constitutive fact of the enunciation. The presence of the speaker in his enunciation turns each instance of discourse into a center of internal reference. This situation will manifest itself through a set of specific forms whose function is to place the speaker in a constant and necessary relationship with his enunciation.

This somewhat abstract description applies to a linguistic phenomena that is familiar in use, but whose theoretical analysis is only just beginning. It is, in the first place, the emergence of the *indices of person* (the *I-you* relation) which is only produced in and through the enunciation: the term *I* denoting the individual who proffers the enunciation, the term *you* denoting the individual who is present as addressee.

Of the same nature and relating to the same structure of the enunciation are the numerous *indices of ostension* (*this*, *here*, etc.), terms that involve a gesture designating the object at the same time that the instance of the term is pronounced. [83]

The forms traditionally known as "personal pronouns" and "demonstratives" now appear to us as a class of "linguistic individuals", forms that always and only refer to "individuals", which concern persons, moments, places, as opposed to nominal terms that always and only refer to concepts. But the status of these "linguistic individuals" derives from the fact that they are born of an enunciation, that they are produced by this individual and, if one may say, "semel-native"[3] event. They are engendered anew each time that an enunciation is proffered and each time they designate anew.

A third series of terms relating to the enunciation is constituted by the entire paradigm — often vaste and complex — of temporal forms which are determined in relation to the EGO, the center of the enunciation. The verbal "tenses" — whose axial form, the "present", coincides with the moment of enunciation — are a part of this necessary apparatus[4].

This relation to time deserves our attention, our meditating upon its *necessity*, and our inquiring into its foundations. One might believe that temporality is a framework innate to thought. In reality, it is produced in and through the enunciation. The establishment of the category of the present proceeds from the enunciation, and from the category of the present comes the category of time. The present is properly the source of time. The act of enunciation alone renders this presence in the world possible, for, if one reflects on the matter, man has no other means of living the "now" and making it actual than by inserting discourse into the world. The central position of the present can be shown by means of the analysis of the temporal systems of various languages. The formal present merely makes explicit the present inherent in the enunciation. The latter is renewed with every [instance of the] production of discourse; and it is starting from this continuous present, coextensive with our own proper presence, that the sentiment of a continuity which we call "time" is imprinted upon consciousness. [84] Continuity and temporality are engendered in the incessant present of the enunciation which is the present of being itself; they are delimited, by means of an internal reference, between what is about to become present and what has just ceased to be present.

Thus the enunciation is directly responsible for certain classes of signs that it literally brings into existence. For they can neither originate nor find employment in the cognitive use of language. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between entities that have full and permanent status within language from those that, stemming from the enunciation, only exist in the

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[3] [derived from the latin expression "simul et semel" meaning "together and at once"]

[4] The details of the facts of language that we touch upon here from a synthetic point of view is presented in multiple chapters of our *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, I, (Paris 1966), which relieves us of having to insist upon them here. [translator's note: see in particular "Les relations de temps dans le verbe français"]

network of "individuals" created by the enunciation and in relation to the "here-and-now" of the speaker. For example: the 'I', the 'this', the 'tomorrow' of grammatical description are only the metalinguistic "names" of *I, this, tomorrow* produced in the enunciation.

In addition to the forms it commands, the enunciation provides the necessary conditions for major syntactic functions. As soon as the enunciator uses language to influence in some manner the behaviour of the addressee, he has at his disposal, for this purpose, an apparatus of functions. First of all, there is *interrogation* which is an enunciation constructed to elicit a "response" by means of a linguistic process that is at the same time a double-entry behavioral process. All lexical and syntactic forms of interrogation (particles, pronouns, sequences, intonation, etc.) relate to this aspect of the enunciation.

Similarly, the terms or forms that we call *injunction* [fr. '*intimation*'] must also be attributed to this aspect: e.g. commands or appeals conceived within categories like the imperative; the vocative, which involves a living and immediate relationship between the enunciator and the other in a necessary reference to the time of the enunciation.

Perhaps less evident, but no less certain, is the fact that *assertion* belongs to this same repertoire. In its syntactic turn as in its intonation, assertion aims at communicating a certainty. It is the most common manifestation of the presence of the speaker in the enunciation. There are even specific devices for its expression or implication: the words *yes* and *no* assert positively or negatively a proposition. Negation as a logical operation is independent of the enunciation; it has its own form: *not* [*ne...pas*]. But the assertive particle *no* [*non*], being a substitute for a proposition, is classed with the particle *yes*, whose status it shares, in the forms that belong to the enunciation. [85]

More broadly still, albeit in a less categorizable manner, all sorts of formal modalities are included: some belonging to the verb, such as "mood" (e.g. optative, subjunctive) which express the attitude of the enunciator with regard to what he enunciates (e.g. expectation, wish, apprehension); others to phraseology ("perhaps", "no doubt", "probably") which indicate uncertainty, possibility, indecision, etc., or, deliberately, the refusal of assertion.

The enunciation is characterized in general by the *accentuation of the discursive relation to the partner*, whether real or imaginary, individual or collective.

This characteristic necessarily poses what one may call the *figurative frame* of the enunciation. As discursive form, the enunciation entails two equally necessary "figures": the source and the target of the enunciation. This is the structure of *dialogue*. Two figures positioned as partners

are alternatively protagonists of the enunciation. This frame is necessarily given with the definition of the enunciation.

One might object that there can be dialogue outside of the enunciation and enunciation without dialogue. These two cases need to be examined.

In the verbal jousting that is practiced among various peoples, a typical variety of which is the *hain-teny* of the Merinas, there is in reality neither *dialogue* nor *enunciation*. Neither partner is named [ne s'énonce]: everything consists in the citation and counter-citation of proverbs and counter-proverbs. There's not a single explicit reference to the object of the debate. Whichever of the two jousters commands the greatest stock of proverbs, or makes the most clever, most malicious, and least predictable use of them puts the other at a loss for a response and is proclaimed the winner. This game only has the outward appearance of dialogue.

On the other hand, the "monologue" does indeed proceed from the enunciation. Despite appearances, it must be regarded as a variety of dialogue — which is the fundamental structure. The "monologue" is an interiorized dialogue, formulated in "interior language" [langage intérieur] between an I-speaker and an I-listener. Sometimes the I-speaker is the only one speaking; [86] the I-listener however remains no less present. His presence is necessary and sufficient for the I-speaker's enunciation to become signifying. Sometimes the I-listener intervenes with an objection, a question, a doubt, or an insult. The linguistic form of this intervention differs according to the idiom but it is always of a "personal" form. At other times the I-listener substitutes himself for the I-speaker and expresses himself in the "first person". Thus, for example, in French the "monologue" will be interrupted by remarks or injunctions such as: "No, I'm an idiot, I forgot to tell him that …" ["Non, je suis idiot, j'ai oublié de lui dire que …"]. Sometimes the I-listener addresses the I-speaker in the "second person": "No, you shouldn't have told him …" [Non, tu n'aurais pas dû lui dire que …"]. An interesting typology of these relations could be established; in certain languages the I-listener predominates as the substitute for the speaker and poses itself in turn as *I* (French, English), while in others, the I-listener acts as a dialogue partner and employs *you* (German, Russian). This transposition of dialogue into "monologue", where the ego sometimes splits in two, sometimes assumes two roles, lends itself to psychodramatic figurations or transpositions: e.g. conflicts between the "deep *self*" and "conscience", doublings provoked by "inspiration", etc. This is made possible by the linguistic apparatus of self-reflexive enunciation, which comprehends an interplay of oppositions between pronoun and antonym (*je/me/moi*)[5].

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[5] See the article "L'antonyme et le pronom en français moderne" in *PLG II*, p. 197. Originally published in *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 60 (1965), fasc. 1, p. 71.

These situations call for a two-fold description: that of the linguistic form, on one hand, and that of the figurative conditions, on the other. We are all too easily content to invoke the frequency and practical usefulness of communication between individuals to admit that the situation of dialogue results from a necessity, and, as a consequence, we dispense with the analysis of its many varieties. One of these varieties presents itself in a social condition that is among the most banal in appearance, yet is in fact one of the least studied. B. Malinowski indicated it under the name of *phatic communion*, thereby qualifying it as a psycho-social phenomenon whose mode of functioning is linguistic. He sketched out its configuration starting from the role that language [le langage] plays in it. It is a process in which discourse, under the form of dialogue, grounds a rapport between individuals. [87] It's worth citing some passages of this analysis[6]:

> The case of language [du langage] used in free, aimless, social intercourse requires special consideration. When a number of people sit together at a village fire, after all the daily tasks are over, or when they chat, resting from work, or when they accompany some mere manual work by gossip quite unconnected with what they are doing—it is clear that here we have to do with another mode of using language, with another type of speech function. Language here is not dependent upon what happens at that moment, it seems to be even deprived of any context of situation. The meaning of any utterance cannot be connected with the speaker's or hearer's behaviour, with the purpose of what they are doing.
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> A mere phrase of politeness, in use as much among savage tribes as in a European drawing-room, fulfills a function to which the meaning of its words is almost completely irrelevant. Inquiries about health, comments on weather, affirmations of some supremely obvious state of things—all such are exchanged, not in order to inform, not in this case to connect people in action, certainly not in order to express any thought ...
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> There can be no doubt that we have here a new type of linguistic use—*phatic communion* I am tempted to call it, actuated by the demon of terminological invention—a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words ... Are words in Phatic Communion used primarily to convey meaning, the meaning which is symbolically theirs? Certainly not! They fulfill a social function and that is their principal aim, but they are neither the result of intellectual reflection, nor do they necessarily arouse reflection in the listener. Once again we may say that language does not function here as a means of transmission of thought.
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> But can we regard it as a mode of action? And in what relation does it stand to our crucial conception of the context of situation? It is obvious that the outer situation does not enter directly into the technique of speaking. But what can be considered as *situation* when a number of people aimlessly gossip together? It consists in just this atmosphere of sociability and in the fact of the personal communion of these people. But this is in fact achieved by speech, and the situation in all such cases is created by the exchange of words, by the specific feelings which form convivial gregariousness, by the give and take of utterances which make ordinary gossip. The whole situation consists in what happens linguistically. Each utterance [énonciation] is an act serving the direct aim of binding hearer to speaker by a tie of some social

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[6] Excerpt from *The Meaning of Meaning*, Ogden and Richards, 1923, p. 313.

sentiment or other. [88] Once more language [le langage] appears to us in this function not as an instrument of reflection but as a mode of action.

Here we are at the limit of "dialogue". A personal relation that is created and sustained by a conventional form of enunciation turning in on itself, satisfied with its own achievement, carrying neither object, nor goal, nor message: a pure enunciation of conventional speech repeated by each enunciator. The formal analysis of this form of linguistic exchange remains to be carried out[7].

Many other developments would have to be studied in the context of the enunciation. There remains to consider the lexical transformations that are determined by the enunciation; the phraseology that is the frequent, and perhaps necessary, mark of "orality". It would also be necessary to distinguish the spoken enunciation from the written enunciation. This latter operates on two planes: the writer enunciates himself by writing and makes certain individuals enunciate themselves in his writing. Far reaching perspectives open up towards the analysis of the complex forms of discourse starting from the formal framework sketched out here.

Translator's note: This article was translated from the second volume of É. Benveniste's *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, 1974, Gallimard. The article was originally published in the French journal *Langages*, March 1970. A few translation decisions must be noted here:

> **(a)** Because the French word 'signifiance' is a key term in Benveniste's work and there is no adequate current English equivalent to it, we have decided to leave it simply as 'signifiance'. What supports our decision is that 'signify' + '-ance' is a valid noun formation in English (e.g. 'appear' + '-ance') and the OED does attest to the occurrence of the word in Middle English. Now, in the French context in question, this word is opposed to 'signification'—even though both are action nouns formed from the same French verb 'signifier' (to signify). They both designate the action of signifying, but they do so in different senses. 'Signification' designates the action of signifying from the standpoint of its result or achievement (hence 'signification' tends to indicate what is meant or signified). On the other hand, 'signifiance' designates that property or process by virtue of which a linguistic element is said to signify at all (i.e. said to be a signifier), irrespective and independently of what it may signify or even whether it signifies anything unique and determinate. At stake in 'signifiance' is therefore the necessary and sufficient conditions for the source and production of

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[7] So far it has only been the object of a few references, for example Grace de Laguna, *Speech, its function and development*, 1927, p. 244; Roman Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale*, trad. N. Ruwet, 1963, p. 217 ("Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics").

meaning as independent of the uniqueness and determinateness of this meaning. It is important to note, and to confirm, that Benveniste never succeeded in formulating an adequate theory of 'signifiance'. This is because, for him, 'signifiance' encompasses two equally necessary but irreconcilable modes: the semiotic and the semantic (see Benveniste's "Semiology of language" for the account of this difference). In certain important respects, this article on the enunciation is an attempt to go beyond this irreconcilable difference: since the structure of the enunciation is the very condition of the production of meaning.

(b) We oppose translating 'énonciation' as either 'utterance' or 'statement', as is sometimes done. Firstly, because 'enunciation' is a perfectly good English word that is very close to the French. Secondly, because 'statement' tends to designate more what is stated rather than the act of stating (not to mention that it is used mostly for declaratives). Thirdly, because 'utterance' has a specific usage in analytic philosophy and pragmatics which should not be hastily conflated with the notion of 'énonciation'. Furthermore, contrary to usual practice, we have also decided to carry over the definite article of 'l'énonciation' into English, i.e., as 'the enunciation'. This might seem odd to whoever is familiar with the fact that in French, articles are almost always obligatory for nouns and adjectives, while in English, the definite article can be dropped when the general term is meant: e.g., "L'homme est un animal sauvage" becomes "Man is a savage animal" instead of "The man is a savage animal". We can only briefly note the reason for this decision, leaving it to the reader to judge whether our decision is valid. In Benveniste's article, 'l'énonciation' cannot be considered a general term encompassing particulars. As the text makes clear, the enunciation is the constant and necessary horizon of all language use; furthermore, it is singular (as opposed to particular) in the sense that it designates the concrete instance of discourse as the fundamental reference site around which all indexicals are coordinated. Consequently, a certain unity between the universal and the singular is expressed in the notion of the enunciation; it constitutes something like a universal singular or singular universal. By retaining the article, we have attempted to prevent the notion from being construed along the general–particular axis.

(c) Lastly, because the occurrence of the French word 'langage' as opposed to 'langue' is rare in this article (indeed most of the instances of 'langage' occur in the French translation of a passage from Malinowski), we have decided to only indicate the places where 'langage' is used by adding the French in square brackets—everywhere else 'language' translates 'langue'.