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THE ONE FORM/ONE MEANING PRINCIPLE.
THE CASE FOR CASE. PART I

> *It is improper not only to keep apart that which from the linguistic point of view belongs together, but also to combine, artificially, that which from the linguistic point of view is separate. Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kasuslehre / Contribution to the General Theory of Case*
>
> (Roman Jakobson 1936/1984a: 62)

Abstract

The main topic of the paper is the problem of validating linguistic procedures aimed at representing the meaning of cases as they are employed in two invariant-oriented approaches to language and grammar: in Roman Jakobson's 'feature-based' framework and in Gustave Guillaume's Psychomechanics of Language. Also taken into account are trends within the cognitively-oriented approach to grammar, whose proponents object to procedures based on the structuralist principle: *one form/one meaning*. Ultimately, by invoking the methodological prerequisites of cognitive linguistics, as introduced in Ronald Langacker's version of *cognitive grammar*, the author claims that, inasmuch as cases are concerned, there seems to be, in principle, no contradiction between introducing a stable relationship between the linguistic sign and its meaning, and positing the prototype-centered and network-based structuring of a linguistic category, as advocated in cognitive linguistics. The conclusion is that any of these three linguistic traditions could benefit by taking into account the findings of the other two approaches.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics; form; grammar; meaning; linguistic case; linguistic sign; psychomechanics of language; prototype; radial category

1   Introduction

The main topic with which I will be dealing here is the matter of justifying or validating linguistic procedures which aim to represent the meaning of cases as employed in two distinct — but, in a sense, similarly invariant-oriented — approaches to language and grammar. The first of these is Roman Jakobson's 'feature-based' framework, and the second is Gustave Guillaume's Psychomechanics of Language (cf. Guillaume 1964, 2003, 2004; *Principes...* 1973). In the following discussion I will attempt to throw some light on the rationale behind the techniques used in the

investigation of case phenomena via each of these approaches, and on the methods by which their meaning is represented as well.

Paradoxically enough, this paper was inspired by the appearance of new studies on cases (cf. Campe 1995; Dahl 1987; Janda 1990, 1993; Nikiforidou 1991; Rudzka-Ostyn 1992, 1996; Smith 1985, 1987, 1988, 1993; Wierzbicka 1980, 1988 — for detailed information see Campe 1994), instantiating various trends within the cognitively-oriented approach to grammar, whose proponents regularly raise objections against the procedures applied when investigating case phenomena within frameworks standing on the well-known structuralist principle of *one form/one meaning*. These objections, however, require examination of the rationale behind the criticism as well as of the motivation behind this principle. Thus, in the course of the argument to follow, I will briefly discuss the two aforementioned theoretical positions, then I will invoke the methodological prerequisites of cognitive linguistics as introduced in Ronald Langacker's version of *cognitive grammar* (cf. Langacker 1987, 1991a, 1991b, 1999, 2009), and, ultimately, I will make the point that, insofar as cases are concerned, there seems to be, in principle, no contradiction between introducing a stable relationship between the linguistic sign and its meaning, and positing the prototype-centered and network-based structuring of a linguistic category as a whole which is advocated in cognitive linguistics. My conclusion is that any of those three linguistic traditions could benefit by taking into account the findings of the other two.

The argument here is thus constructed in such a way as to allow the proponents of each framework to speak for themselves. This opens the possibility of exploring the three dimensions of linguistic phenomena, which any approach should take into account if the nature of these phenomena is not to be distorted: (i) the topological dimension (cf. Jakobson's findings concerning an invariant structure of linguistic categories); (ii) the operational dimension (cf. Guillaume's operational rendering of linguistic representations), and (iii) the 'psychological' dimension (cf. Langacker's claim that linguistic investigation is an empirical enterprise whose findings constitute a substantive hypothesis about the actual cognitive representations of language and, therefore, should be tested against the facts of cognitive structure). As this is but an introductory study and my aim is only to highlight the methodological specificity of the selected approaches, no attempt will be made to scrutinize their subtleties and peculiarities. Likewise, detailed explanations and arguments concerning the three theoretical positions will be omitted. That said, before the actual analysis, preliminary clarifications should be made concerning the methodological differences between the concepts under discussion.

2

From the linguistic point of view, the main dividing line seems to be drawn between the semiologically, or sign-oriented, approaches to linguistic phenomena and the combinatorically, or syntagmatically, *sensu largo*-oriented ones (generative, functional, and cognitive frameworks). Admittedly, they are different, not only with respect to the manner in which the very question of language is posed, but also in the conclusions that the adherents to these options draw from a key premise concerning the status of language — that is, they differ significantly in considering the aims, means and methods proper to linguistic research. Investigating this issue Yishai Tobin wrote:

> It is here — in the theoretical and methodological emphasis placed on the dichotomy between invariant meaning versus contextual messages — that sign-oriented schools of linguistic analysis differ from traditional and neo-traditional sentence-oriented schools. The latter implicitly or explicitly choose to define language from the point-of-view of the sentence and its component parts. [...] Therefore, for all practical purposes, they have either abandoned or overlooked the sign-oriented notion of invariant meaning. By either ignoring or rejecting invariance, they subsequently have placed their theoretical and methodological emphasis on the alternative concepts of contextual messages, speech acts, truth value, logic, and the like (Tobin 1991: 63).

Generally speaking, what I classify as semiologically-oriented approaches are those schools which adopt the sign (a linguistic unit) as a proper object of linguistic scrutiny. According to Tobin (1991), there are significant convergences in this respect between three linguistic sign-oriented schools founded respectively by Roman Jakobson, Gustave Guillaume and William Diver. Tobin states that the keystone of these three approaches is "the dichotomy between the invariant meaning of a linguistic sign versus the various contextual messages inferred from that invariant meaning" (Tobin 1991: 61). Thus, the advocates of this principle: "view the postulation of a single invariant meaning for the linguistic sign as (a) the fundamental theoretical task of the linguist, and (b) the basis of the methodological model of the sign-oriented linguistic paradigm" (Tobin 1991: 62). In this study, I will avoid discussion of the Diverian school's concept of invariant meaning, due to its strong tendency towards quantitative validation of findings in linguistic analysis. Rather, I will focus on the qualitatively-oriented linguistic approaches: the Jakobsonian and the Guillaumean. To get into the *medias res* directly, I will first examine the application of the sign principle to the phenomenon of grammatical meaning in these two approaches.

If one disregards the technical differences between Jakobson and Guillaume, one can say that, with respect to the study of language and grammar, both scholars appear to be following the same guidelines. Guillaume states that: "for the study of language, the only suitable point of view is one that sees the dyadic relation physical/mental throughout language, and is able to trace its distribution among partial physical/mental dyads" (Guillaume 1984: 70). This finds its counterpart in Jakobson's claim, according to which: "the semantic minimums of a given language can be stated only with reference to their formal counterparts, and *vice versa*, the minimal formal units cannot be determined without reference to their semantic counterparts" (Jakobson 1971b: 105). Consequently, in Jakobson's own words: "meaning can and must be stated in terms of linguistic discriminations and identifications, just as, on the other hand, linguistic discriminations are always made with regard to their semantic value" (Jakobson 1971b: 493). This principle of 'formal determinism' (the term coined by Rodney Sangster (1982)) has succinctly been put in the form of Sangster's linguistic aphorism: "there can be no *signans* without a *signatum*, and conversely, no *signatum* without a *signans*" (Sangster 1982: 5). It is here, however, that these two scholars part company.

3

Jakobson's approach is 'the quest for the ultimate invariants in language' (cf. Sangster 1982), governed by the principle of 'formal determinism'. As a result, meaningful phenomena — which are at stake here — are treated as if constituted by topological (cf. Andrews 1989) and relational properties essentially the same in nature as those displayed by phonological categories. Thus, the search for a semantic invariant or a common denominator of meaning of a particular linguistic category can be handled by means of a gradual decomposition of its 'substance' into underlying, abstract features, paired in correlations and oppositions. In *Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kasuslehre* (1936), when embarking on his well-known analysis of the Russian case system, Jakobson posed — referring to L. Hjelmslev's *La catégorie des cas* — three central problems in the analysis of case meaning: basic meaning, system, and empirical procedure (cf. Jakobson 1984a: 62). According to Hjelmslev, whom Jakobson quotes extensively: "A case, like a linguistic unit in general, does not mean several different things; it means one single thing — it carries a single abstract concept, from which concrete applications can be derived" (Jakobson 1984a: 62). Having acknowledged this, Jakobson states: "I take issue only with the term basic meaning (*signification fondamentale*), which can easily be confused with the designation principal meaning (*signification principale*), while what the author has in mind is more accurately expressed by the term general meaning (*signification générale*)" (Jakobson 1984a, 62).

3.1

In the course of the argument Jakobson insists on the necessity of carrying out research on grammar in an empirical (meaning, for him, an "immanent and language-internal") and system-oriented way. Assuming, in the spirit of structuralism, that "the word in language is a functional unit, which differs fundamentally from a phrase" (Jakobson 1984a: 62) — and concurrently recognizing the importance of the methodological requirement to keep linguistic phenomena apart from various levels of the grammatical system — Jakobson views research on cases as an essentially morphological examination aimed at uncovering intra- and intercategory correlations which underly the system of declensional paradigms of the investigated language. On the basis of these correlations the component features, constituting the general meanings of particular cases, are to be identified and explicated. From out of those principles subsequent choices follow, due to which, in turn, the search for a general meaning of the category of case focuses, first and foremost, on investigating paradigmatic relationships. Thus, in *Beitrag...*, Jakobson writes:

> The question of the general meanings of cases belongs to morphology while the question of particular meanings belongs to syntax, since the general meaning of a case is independent of its environment, while its particular meanings are defined by various combinations of surrounding words involving both their formal and their real reference — the particular meanings are therefore, so to speak, combinatory variants of the general meaning (Jakobson 1984a: 69).

In a study published over twenty years later (1958), he reinforces this position, arguing that:

> Whatever the diversity of semantic variations dependent upon purely syntactic and lexical conditions, the unity of the case itself remains real and inviolable. [...] All of the specific contextual meanings of any case can be reduced to a common denominator. In relation to the other cases of the same declensional system each case is characterized by its own invariant general meaning. (Jakobson 1984b: 107).

At the same time, as he clarifies:

> [...] the general meaning of any one case can only be defined in relation to all the other cases of the same linguistic system (Jakobson 1984b: 130).

Therefore, recognizing the differences among the specific contextual meanings of case exponents in their multifarious uses, Jakobson nevertheless claims that "a syntactic analysis of the usage of cases cannot exhaust their interpretation [...] since case is primarily a morphological category" (Jakobson 1984b: 127). Consequently, he maintains that "the problem of syntactic variation in case meanings is indissolubly connected with that of the invariant semantic value of each case in relation to the other cases of the same morphological system, as well as with the problem of the exact relationship between the cases and the other morphological categories of a given language" (Jakobson 1984b: 127).

3.2

What is derived from this survey is an unrevealing, yet often underestimated, truth that, in a semiologically and structurally-oriented approach, the procedure for dealing with morphological categories, including cases, is motivated not only by the results obtained through a 'pure' linguistic investigation, but also by epistemological and methodological idiosyncratic assumptions adopted before embarking on the very analysis of the empirically observed linguistic phenomena. This linguistic and methodological inspiration, which underlies Jakobson's approach to cases, can easily be traced in his citations. As might be expected, the scholar himself was aware of the tension inherent in the very nature of the case category. In his opinion:

> It goes without saying that bridges must be built between the two grammatical disciplines, morphology and syntax; but at the same time it does not follow that we should [...] reduce the morphological problem of word inflection — in particular, the questions of the external and internal structure of cases — to the syntactic problem of phrase structure" (Jakobson 1984b: 130–131).

Still, putting semiology before linguistics resulted in the reification of working distinctions into disjoint grammatical categories, a process by which the subsequent discovering of grammatical meaning would be tailored to meet the requirements of the adopted framework. Hence, configurations of abstract, relational semantic features — obtained through the semiologically-guided modelling of case phenomena and postulated by Jakobson for the particular cases of the Russian declension system as invariants which remain unchanged in various contextual configurations — are open to criticism in several points. Generality (cf. Wierzbicka 1980, xvi), abstractness (cf. Plewes 1977, 64; Weinreich 1966, 469) and vagueness (cf. Wierzbicka 1980, xv–xvi, 157 f) are among the deficiencies most commonly ascribed to the proposed solution; equally, objections as to the procedure of arriving at the invariants have also been raised, pointing out the elements of circular reasoning (Birnbaum 1978, 29; 1984, 414) inherent in this technique as well as a lack of direct (or independent) evidence for the stipulated theoretical constructs (cf. Brecht and Levine 1986, 21) However, that which from a methodological point of view seems to be a crucial shortcoming of this framework is the absence of an explanation of how contextual variants are actually produced (cf. Janda 1993). In fact, no 'mechanisms' or operations linking invariant, representational constructs to 'surface' or contextual phenomena have been proposed in Jakobson's approach (Sangster 1982; Waugh 1976). The existence of this gap renders the phenomena with which this framework deals underspecified with respect to their functional or operational value; this, in turn, diminishes the explanatory power of the model itself.

Admittedly, the psychomechanical inquiry into the meaning of linguistic forms and grammatical categories — which finds itself between 'the morphological problem of word inflection' and 'the syntactic problem of phrase structure', and is simultaneously guided by the semiological principle of unity of sign and its meaning — may also be susceptible to criticism similar in kind to that launched against the proponents of the Jakobsonian framework. There is, nonetheless, a significant difference between the two linguistic schools: the Jakobsonian approach concentrates on a search for the more or less stable configurations of features constituting the invariant meaning of a particular linguistic category, whereas the psychomechanical procedures are, first and foremost, aimed at representing the operational aspects of the meaning phenomena. Thus, contrasting the psychomechanical solution to the question of cases with that advocated by Jakobson and his followers may be of some assistance in better understanding the very problem of the representation of the meaning of that category and in identifying, in this respect, the pros and the cons of these two frameworks.

4

The two principal topics around which Guillaumean linguistic thinking revolves might be identified as follows: (i) from where (and how) do the various contextual senses of a morpheme come; and, provided that the answer to this question points to a potential meaning, (ii) from where (and how) does such that potential meaning subsequently arise? These questions lead to the very heart of Psychomechanics — i.e. to the 'operational morphology' (cf. Hirtle 1993: 56) whose underlying assumptions will be revised insofar as they contribute to the main objective of this argument.

4.1

The constant aim of Guillaumean research is "to discover the system constituting tongue, and the plan of its architecture" (Guillaume 1984: 3) — or, to state it more precisely: "to reconstruct

the great systems of tongue as they exist in the depths of the mind, before being called into use"
(Guillaume 1984: 51). As a result, a special new branch of linguistics with its own object of study
was posited by the scholar: the psycho-systematics of language. In like manner, as an instrument
for the analysis of linguistic phenomena, a singular technique, called positional linguistics, was
developed. In Guillaume's own opinion, it allows for "regarding each linguistic phenomenon from
the basic point of view of its longitudinal development, and analyzing it exactly the way the mind
itself does: by cuts which intersect the longitudinal development" (Guillaume 1984: 51). Thus,
the psycho-systematics of language was aimed at studying "the mental mechanisms defined and
constructed to enable the mind to apprehend its own activity" (Guillaume 1984: 52) as they
are reproduced in tongue, which is seen to be "the set of means the mind has systematized and
established in itself to ensure that it will always be able to make clear, rapid (immediate, if possible)
apprehension of what is developing in itself" (Guillaume 1984: 52). These means are, according
to Guillaume, of a mechanical nature. In consequence, what a linguist is confronted with here are
"psycho-mechanisms, whose constructive principle is their suitability for ready apprehension and
also, once this has been made systematic, a higher degree of organization ensuring this suitability"
(Guillaume 1984: 3).

4.2

In Guillaume's thinking this 'representational' or 'analytic-interpretational' approach to language
is usually complemented by a 'genetic' or an 'institutional' perspective. Regarding the process by
which the tongue emerges "as a continuing accretion of fleeting impressions linked to formative
elements which agglutinate to provide the physical counterpart of the mental accretion" (Guillaume
1984: 70), the scholar viewed the words of a language in a necessarily twofold way. On the
mental side, they are perceived "as a set of more or less fleeting impressions with accretive powers
causing them to fuse together" (Guillaume 1984: 70); on the physical side, they are perceived
"as a set of corresponding formative elements to which the impressions are attached" (Guillaume
1984: 70). Accordingly, what emerges as an outcome of this cumulative development is tongue
which, as a whole, is considered to comprise everything that, in the course of recurrent usage,
has been established as part of the mind's residuum of expression. As the scholar maintained:
"there is good reason to state as a general principle that in our language expression 'absorbs'
expressiveness. Through frequent use, the resources of expressiveness in the language become
codified and established as resources of expression. To the extent that a means of expressiveness
becomes established, it becomes a resource of tongue, a means of expression" (Guillaume 1984:
87).

4.3

For Guillaume, however, the very question of the representation/expression relationship is more
complicated than it would appear to anyone who seeks clear-cut dichotomies. What is really
at stake here is the problem of balancing these phenomena. According to the principles of the
Guillaumean approach, tongue is established through acts of representation whereas discourse
realizes itself via acts of expression. Thus, the resources of expressiveness, as they appear in
discourse and through frequent use, become codified and established in tongue as resources of
expression. But, as Guillaume observed:

> it is often difficult to measure exactly to what extent any of these resources have become es-
> tablished in tongue, and to what extent they still depend upon improvisation. Full integration
> into tongue has certainly been achieved by those notions which have developed correspond-
> ing signs. Integration is less complete in those cases where what has been incorporated into
> tongue is the way of using signs (Guillaume 1984: 87).

Considered from this perspective, *resources of tongue* or *means of expression* may vary with
respect of their entrenchment within tongue itself; thus, they may not naturally fall into discrete,

non-overlapping classes of grammatical forms, belonging to the separate modules or levels in tongue. As Guillaume succinctly and insightfully put it: "a sentence that becomes established in the mind, and so is no longer felt to be ephemeral, becomes a word in tongue" (Guillaume 1984: 90). Seen from this perspective the very problem of balancing representation and expression finds its solution in Psychomechanics by adopting the principle (which in Guillaume's opinion is a constant, characterizing of the praxeogeny of language — cf. Guillaume 1984, 88) that expression starts with what has already been represented (cf. Guillaume 1984: 94). Consequently, another distinction, accompanying the one between *tongue* and *discourse*, comes to the fore: the one between *potentiality* and *actuality*:

> Representation is in tongue: tongue consists of acts of representation, each of which is represented by a *unit of potentiality* called a WORD. What is expressed belongs to discourse: discourse consists of acts of expression, each of which when finished results in a *unit of actuality* called a SENTENCE. In the languages we are more familiar with, the sentence arises from a grouping — not an agglutination — of units of potentiality. These units, which consist of lexical substance with grammatical form, result from an instantaneous *lexical prehension* that precedes the *sentence prehension*. This lexical prehension gives rise to and results in the word. [...] Sentence prehension comes into play after the lexical prehension [...]. The sum of all the lexical prehensions of notional substance carried out by the human mind constitutes tongue. [...] The sum of all sentence prehensions, which are prehensions of units of potentiality, constitutes discourse. [...] Tongue is something established; discourse is not established. (Guillaume 1984: 89–90).

A series of distinctions invoked here provide an account of the essential tension between various modes of the subsistence of linguistic phenomena. To make this point clear, tongue is viewed in the psychomechanical approach as an essentially mental construct "seated at a deep level in the mind, at the level of potentiality" (Guillaume 1984: 91), whereas discourse, belonging to the level of actuality, has no permanent, mental existence. Consequently: "the tongue, which dwells within a person [...] is an all-inclusive representation of the thinkable subjected to a certain internal systematization. [...] Discourse is quite different. It can exist only if the speaker [...] has momentarily constructed some thought with the help of the thinkable" (Guillaume 1984: 92).

Language, in turn, in accordance with the methodological standards of this framework, appears as a *symphysis* (cf. Guillaume 1984: 71) of the two means, normally matching each other: the mental means of interiorizing and the physical means of exteriorizing. The symphysis is represented via psychosystematic techniques such as "a mechanism for commuting what has been thought into something said" (Guillaume 1984: XVIII). It operates in the act of language wherein the units of representational potentiality — i.e. words (re)constructed from the formative elements: lexemes and morphemes, constituting resources of tongue — become converted into sentences, the units of actuality. For Guillaume, the act of language consists primarily "in conveying from tongue to discourse the lexemes [units of lexical meaning] and morphemes [units of grammatical meaning] required for thought to be expressed" (Guillaume 1984: 80).

On the other hand, however, this act concurrently comprises the environment wherein those resources of expressiveness, which are insufficiently established in tongue to be treated as part of the residuum of formative elements, institute their meaning through frequent use accompanied by the process of a 'sedimentation of meaning' within morphologically-marked, formal or systemic 'containers' (lexemes, morphemes, words or phrases). Consequently, an act of language provides a proper environment in which the antinomical nature of tongue manifests itself.

4.4

A linguist *qua* linguist, however, has no direct access to the mental resources of tongue. These can only be modeled or represented via interpretive techniques and methods that necessarily start from the only source of immediate and linguistically valid knowledge about tongue: the mental activity of the language user himself / herself and its verbal exteriorization, i.e. the user's linguistic activity

in the very act of language. Paradoxically enough, drawing conclusions about the hypothetical 'true nature of tongue' on this basis is not an easy task because of the difficulties in discerning between the established and the non-established parts of language. As Guillaume himself warned:

> systems exist only in the established part. Let no one argue that the sentence belongs to discourse and yet is a system; the system of the sentence is in fact an integral part of tongue. It is not the system, but the use of the system along with the free, momentary choice of the ideas the sentence is to express that makes the sentence. [...] Only the use of the system, within its set limits, belongs to discourse. The line is not easy to draw: the system governs usage, and usage becomes established (Guillaume 1984: 105–106).

Therefore: "the theoretical linguist must be careful to remember that [...] a tongue is an antinomical construction always striving to achieve opposing aims. If a sentence, for example, is to have meaning, the words must be distinguishable, and yet their distinctiveness must also be erased for a brief moment" (Guillaume 1984:104). To overcome these difficulties one should simultaneously take into account both tongue and discourse. Thus, Guillaume insisted that:

> The act of language does not begin just at the moment when words are uttered to express thought. It starts with an earlier, underlying operation, when thought, seeking expression, resorts to tongue, a permanent resource of the mind. [But] only the very last instants of the act of language can be observed. The first instants, when contact is established between thought seeking expression and tongue, the mind's permanent resource, are instants that defy direct observation.
> Any knowledge of them must be acquired through analytical interpretation of later instants, an interpretation which must take into account both what occurs in discourse and also what has become permanent in tongue in the form of lexemes, morphemes and systems. (Guillaume 1984: 79).

Therefore, units of language or units of tongue should be observed in the very environment of their formation where the psychomechanisms of language operate. Therefore, in the psychomechanical approach great emphasis is placed on modelling the dynamic and operational aspects of linguistic phenomena. As the scholar maintained:

> Everything in tongue, in fact, is a process. And the results that we observe are, if I may say so, illusions of sorts. There is no substantive; in tongue there is simply a substantivation that is arrested early or late in its movement. There is no adjective; rather, there is an adjectivization [...]. There is no word; rather, there is an extraordinarily complicated genesis of the word, a lexigenesis. (Guillaume 1984: 133).

4.5

When applied to the questions of morphology and granted the psychomechanisms of language, this line of reasoning results primarily in paying close attention to the very process of emerging words as they are (re)constructed. This, as a consequence, leads to considering the processual or operational form of the existence of morphological phenomena as 'canonical'. Hence arises the idea of turning the well-known static morpho*logy* of the word into an 'operational morphology' — a discipline aimed at studying linguistically relevant mental processes of (re)constructing words — i.e. morpho*genesis*. Before examining the outcomes ensuing from the Guillaumean perspective in the resolution of the problems of case, I will attempt to sketch the systemic prerequisites involved in the psychomechanical framework.

According to the principles of Psychomechanics, lexemes and morphemes — which "are, in a sense, corporal, represented in tongue by signs whose role is to carry them into discourse when the need arises" (Guillaume 1984: 80) — constitute the residuum of the instituted, formative elements which are borrowed when thought-seeking, proper linguistic units of verbal expression resort to tongue. The very assumption that lexemes and morphemes are an integral part of the tongue-constituting sub-systems is a *sine qua non* for the psycho-mechanisms of mental scanning

and word-construction to be operational. According to Guillaume, "*before* it can choose the appropriate morpheme, the thinking mind seeking expression must 'see' the morpheme within its system, the system which lends the morpheme its meaning according to its position therein" (Guillaume 1984: 80).

The point made is also of crucial importance in resolving the balance of representation and expression in the process of modelling linguistic phenomena. This is accomplished in the psychomechanical approach by positing a meaning potential for semantic and grammatical categories and their sign-exponents. Starting from the self-evident truth that the language user's mind cannot apply meaning to the linguistic form unless that form possesses a meaning to be applied *before* the very act takes effect, Guillaume argues that "it would be a mistake [...] to postulate that forms have no meaning in themselves but acquire their meaning only when used in discourse. Such reasoning would imply that that which has no meaning in itself could, when applied in a context, mean something" (Guillaume 1984: 81). Equally, in his opinion:

> Meaning can be applied only if some basic meaning is available. Zero meaning cannot be 'applied' to anything. At the level of the system, it is the contextual meaning of the form that is at zero grade; only in discourse will this contextual meaning be determined. On the other hand, the systemic meaning, which exists prior to any contextual meaning, is at full grade in the system where each form represents a different moment of the system's mental construction, or, to be more precise, in the single homogeneous act of definition that the system represents. (Guillaume 1984: 81).

Accordingly, per the psychomechanical approach, "each systemic meaning makes possible a certain range of contextual meanings in discourse", from which follows the dictum that "the role of tongue is to permit a fairly wide variety of contextual meanings in discourse by presenting forms in systems" (Guillaume 1984: 81). As a result, a methodological prerequisite for any sign-and-system-oriented approach to language is envisaged:

> Before examining the contextual sense of a form one should first make a point of reconstructing the system of which the form is an integral part and from which it derives its essential meaning — a meaning which, prior to any contextual meaning in discourse, exists in the mind even though we cannot become aware of it directly. (Guillaume 1984: 82).

If those elucidations are applied to the question of cases in the Guillaumean framework, then, from the previously mentioned, genetic perspective they are treated as phenomena that "involve fleeting impressions linked to signs recognized as suitable to represent them. These impressions have strong accretive powers enabling them to group together mentally, to cluster under signs considered apt to signify their mental combination" (Guillaume 1984: 70). From the analytical perspective, in turn, they are treated in a twofold manner: firstly, as linguistic signs (morphemes) represented in tongue, the residuum of formative elements and bearing grammatical meaning of their own; secondly, as the so-called *pre-conclusive* or *vector forms* enabling the mind to complete mental operations of word constructions carried up to the point wherein they are ready to accomplish their *conclusive* (i.e. word-as-a-part-of-speech) form. However, before going into further details, it would be worth pondering the introduced concepts and terms more extensively. Of special interest would be those concerning the principles of 'operational morphology' according to which cases are supposed to be dealt with. The task of elaborating these tools, explaining how they operate within the analyzed framework and measuring their explanatory power against the background of the cognitively-oriented approach to language and grammar will be undertaken in the second part of the paper.

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