

## Semantic Functions of Language

A Study of General Semantics with Reference to  
S. I. Hayakawa's *Language in Thought and Action*

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(Received September 30, 1985)

### 1. Introduction

Language and other symbols are so deeply interwoven in human life that it may not be too much to say that the affairs of man are conducted by our own man-made symbols. Especially language, the most complicated and the most developed of all symbolism, is closely related with human activities. In other words, language is counted as one of the most characteristic forms of human action. Therefore, a study of language amounts to a study of man.

Various studies of language have contributed to explaining the nature of man. Some of them have taken a mentalistic standpoint and assume that language is a "reflection" or an "innate capacity" of human mind. Others have been engaged with an opposite one, which leads them to consider language as a physical and mechanical behavior of human beings. What is common in their approaches to language and man is that they divide them into certain aspects, and lay stress on one or the other. Such studies of language have values; however, it can hardly be said that either one of them is the only adequate way to pursue the essential nature of language and man. We are concerned with language not as an isolated phenomenon

but as a living human activity which integrates all aspects of his life. In tackling such a broad subject, our first attempt is to examine general semantics, because we believe it suggests so many crucial problems for those who are interested in language in relation to human thought and action.\*

The aim of this paper is to examine general semantical approach to the problem of language and man in reference to S. I. Hayakawa's *Language in Thought and Action*, evaluating his attempts made in his book, and pointing out both their merits and defects. Samuel Ichiyé Hayakawa (1906-), one of the main proponents of general semantics, applied Korzybski's theory in his well-known book, *Language in Thought and Action*.<sup>1</sup> This book translates some of the implications of Korzybski's work into the language of college students, the perplexed citizens, and the teachers, giving various examples which can be observed in American society.

Hayakawa assumes that general semantics is the study of the relation between language, thought and behavior, i.e., between the way we talk, and the way we think and act. *Language in Thought and Action* consists of two parts: the first part deals with the functions of language, namely with "how we talk"; and the second part is concerned with the problems of thought and action, namely with "how we think and act." The present paper discusses mainly the theme and problems of the first part, focussing on the use and variety of language.

#### 1.1 Symbols

Throughout this book, Hayakawa emphasizes the

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\* We introduced Alfred Korzybski's theory of general semantics, sketching its underlying assumptions and methodology, and giving our brief evaluations and contemporary significance of his thought in *The Bulletin of Tokyo Kasei Daigaku* (1985), No. 25, pp. 41-52.

first basic assumption that human thought and behavior are largely dependent on the way how we use language. Since we take words for granted like the air we breathe, we do not fully realize that we are greatly influenced by language and our unconscious assumptions about it. Nevertheless, such unconscious assumptions determine the effect that words have on us, which, in turn, determines the way we think as well as the way we act. As a matter of fact, language does play such an important role in shaping man's beliefs, prejudices, ideas, aspirations, etc. In short, they constitute his *semantic environment*.<sup>2</sup>

The first basic assumption inevitably leads to the second that the fundamental mechanism of human survival is the intraspecific cooperation through the use of language. In other words, human communication by the use of language enables us to cooperate for survival. Hayakawa insists on the importance of linguistic awareness in solving social, cultural, political, or psychological problems of today and in bringing about better mutual understanding among people. Thus, in Hayakawa's terms, the ultimate goal of general semantics is the human cooperation for survival.

In order to bring about widespread cooperation, Hayakawa proposes two approaches which are closely interconnected. The first method is the effective uses of language through an understanding of its different uses: language to convey information, language to express feeling, language to control behavior, language to bring about social cohesion, etc. The other method is the extensional orientation through an understanding of the role that language plays in our thinking and evaluation.

The symbolic process is the process by means of which human beings can arbitrarily make certain things stand for some other things. We are uniquely free to create symbols of any assigned value. This inherent capacity makes possible language, i.e., the most highly developed, most subtle, and most complicated of all forms of symbolism. However, the symbolic process makes possible at the same time such complexity as created by slanted news stories, advertising agencies, public-relation counsels, etc. If we are to guard against being driven into complete bewilderment

by such absurdities, we need to be systematically aware of the power, possibilities and limitations of symbols, especially of words.

Using Korzybski's famous analogy of map and language, Hayakawa points out two things about the relation between a map and its territory.<sup>3</sup> One is that the map is not the territory, and the other is that when we use the map for planning a trip, it should represent the territory accurately. The first point is concerned with the denial of "is" of identity, that is to say, it warns of the habitual confusion of symbols with things symbolized. The word is not the thing it stands for. There is an undeniable gap between these two dimensions. Hayakawa's notion on this point further implies that the symbol and the thing symbolized are independent of each other and hold an arbitrary relation. Since the map and the word are considered to be equivalents, the word involves a symbolic process, in which we can arbitrarily make a certain word standing for a certain object, and there is no necessary connection between them. In this sense, there are two worlds in which we live – the world of "map" and the world of "territory." Namely, we live in the verbal world and the extensional world. This verbal world ought to stand in relation to the extensional world as a map does to the territory it represents when we are planning a trip by the map. The useful map for a traveler should have a practical value. It should be above all an accurate description of the structure of the territory. If we follow Hayakawa's analogy, then, we no doubt have to confine the function of language to describe and report our experiences or the world accurately, precisely and objectively. Admitting that its report function is very important, as we shall see later, it seems inadequate to overweigh this function, because it is nothing but *one* of many functions of language, and not the only function.

## 1.2 Reports, Inferences, Judgments

Hayakawa introduces three categories by which our statements are classified.<sup>4</sup> They are reports, inferences, and judgments. The basic symbolic act for the interchange of information is the *report* of our first-hand experience. Reports are capable of verification; and they exclude, as far as possible, *inferences* and *judgments*. Here are some examples which

illustrate these three types of statements.<sup>5</sup>

Mary Smith didn't get in until three last Saturday night. (report)

I bet she was out tearing around! (inference)

She's nothing but a tramp. I never did like her looks. I knew it the moment I first laid eyes on her.

(judgment)

The language of reports, which he calls "map" language, requires accurate representations of the "territory." In this respect it should be modeled after the language of science. Korzybski points out mathematics as an example of a language which has a structure similar to the empirical world.<sup>6</sup> Though mathematics appears as a language of the highest perfection because it is a language of relations which are also found in this world, it is at the lowest level of development as language since what we can say with it is as yet very little. Our language, on the contrary, appears at the other extreme – the lowest level of perfection because of its dissimilarity to the world and the highest level of development since we can speak about almost everything by it. Korzybski's attempt seems to be to revise some structures of our language on the model of mathematical languages and adjust it to the empirical world.

An *inference* is a statement about the unknown made on the basis of the known. It is a guess as to what is going on in other people's minds or about some matters which are not directly known. Since inferences are made quite carelessly and automatically, we should be alert to the inferences we make in order not to confuse them with reports.

*Judgments* are expressions of the writer's approval or disapproval of the occurrences, persons, or objects he is describing. When hasty or premature judgments are given, they prevent us from seeing what is directly in front of us and stop our thoughts. Needless to say, it is very important to be aware of these three categories of statements and to try not to confuse them with one another.

However, our actual reports often fail to be objective and correct, since it is extremely difficult to attain complete impartiality while we use the language of everyday life. Most reports are, as we shall see in the subsequent sections, already colored or "slanted" by

the speaker's own interests, opinions, judgments, evaluations, etc. The report-writing practice is quite helpful to increase our linguistic awareness that our reports often contradict Hayakawa's basic assumption. Our experiences may come to us already biased by our own interests which are not always the products of reports but often those of inferences or judgments. Our actual symbolic behavior is presumably based not on reports but on self-sufficient judgments. Thus, in one view the priority order can be converse. That is to say, priority should be given not to reports but to inferences and judgments. Yet, Hayakawa's argument is still convincing, because slanting cannot be noticed unless we see the extensional facts on which the reports are based. If we cling to the words alone, and never check them with actual facts, serious problems of misunderstanding or misevaluation might occur, because our reports are already slanted and such slanting deliberately makes certain judgments inescapable.

## 2. Meaning

Hayakawa classifies meaning which a word or utterance may have into two types: extensional meaning and intensional meaning.<sup>7</sup> Intensional meaning is divided into informative connotation and affective connotation. Denotation and definition constitute informative connotation. The distinction can be interpreted as in the following diagram.

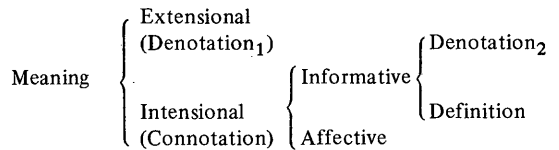


Figure I Hayakawa's Notion of Meaning

The extensional meaning, i.e., denotation<sub>1</sub> is defined as that which "... points to in the extensional (physical) world, ... That is to say, the extensional meaning cannot be expressed in words because it is that which words stand for."<sup>8</sup> An easy way to give an extensional meaning is "to put your hand over your mouth and point"<sup>9</sup> the object. As to denotation<sub>2</sub>,

though not being clearly explained, Hayakawa just gives as an example the word "pig" as "pig<sub>1</sub>, pig<sub>2</sub>, pig<sub>3</sub>, . . ." Obviously, denotation<sub>2</sub>, which is included in the informative connotation, is expressed by words. Hayakawa also writes "of course, we cannot always point to the extensional meanings of the words we use. Therefore, so long as we are discussing meanings, we shall refer to that which is being talked about as the denotation of an utterance. For example, the denotation of the word 'Winnipeg' is the prairie city of that name in southern Manitoba; the denotation of the word 'dog' is a class of animals which includes dog<sub>1</sub>, dog<sub>2</sub>, dog<sub>3</sub>, . . . dog<sub>n</sub>."<sup>10</sup> In this passage, he seems to take the denotation as Denotation<sub>2</sub>.

Consequently, it seems to me that the term "extensional meaning" is used when Hayakawa's discussion deals with the presence of the object or the verification of the statement. He thinks of the extensional concrete reality which we can physically experience first-hand. On the other hand, he uses the term "denotation of a word" when he refers to the object in general terms. That is, he abstracts the object by means of words. Thus, Hayakawa's notion of *denotation* can be interpreted as implying two kinds of denotation: Denotation<sub>1</sub> (the extensional meaning) which cannot be expressed in words, and Denotation<sub>2</sub> (the informative connotation) which is expressed by words.

The intensional meaning of a word or utterance is that which is "suggested (connoted) inside one's head."<sup>11</sup> An easy way to give intensional meanings or connotations is to "put your hand over your eyes and let the words spin around in your head."<sup>12</sup>

The informative connotations of a word are its socially agreed-upon, "impersonal" meaning, insofar as meanings can be given at all by additional words. It may include both the definitions of a term and its denotation, although some terms have a definition only. For example, a "pig" means by definition a "domesticated mammalian quadruped of the kind generally raised by farmers to be made into pork, bacon, ham, lard. . . ."<sup>13</sup>

The affective connotations of a word are the aura of personal feelings that it arouses. For example, a person who dislikes pigs may react to the word "pig"

as "Ugh! Dirty, evil smelling creatures, wallowing in filthy sties."<sup>14</sup> All verbal expressions of feeling make use to some extent of the affective connotations of words as well as other affective elements of speech such as the tone of voice, rhythm (rhyme and alliteration), etc. Words with built-in judgments are those which arouse both informative and affective connotations simultaneously. For example, the word "communist" communicates simultaneously a fact that the person so designated is "one who believes in communism," and a judgment that he is "one whose ideals and purposes are altogether repellent." Besides, in English there are certain words dealing with excretion, sex, money, death and anatomy. They have such strong affective connotations that they cannot be used in polite discourse nor in public. These verbal taboos have both positive and negative value. They sometimes prevent us from discussing frankly taboo subjects like sexual matters, and producing serious problems, on the one hand, but on the other, by uttering these forbidden words, we can substitute these relatively harmless words for our violent actions of hatred and fear.

After all, we should sharpen our sense not only for the informative connotations of words but also for the affective elements in language, since this double task confronts us in our everyday uses of language. The difference between the extensional meaning and the intensional meaning is indicated in the following table.

Table I Extensional Meaning & Intensional Meaning

	Extensional meaning	Intensional meaning
that is	Denotation	Connotation
Dictionaries	do not deal with	deal with
----- of an utterance	is that which it points to in the extensional (physical) world.	is that which is suggested (connoted) inside one's head.
as to words	----- cannot be expressed in words. ----- is what words stand for.	----- can be expressed in words.
Utterances without ----- are	not operational; therefore, they lead to "non-sense arguments."	meaningless noises.

As to the important difference between them, Hayakawa further writes that ". . . when utterances have extensional meanings, discussion can be ended

and agreement reached; when utterances have intensional meanings only and no extensional meanings, arguments may, and often do, go on indefinitely. Such arguments can result only in conflict.”<sup>15</sup> This way of thinking leads us to judge that utterances which have extensional meanings are more important than those with no extensional meanings in our communication, because such utterances with no extensional meanings may cause “non-sense arguments” and can result only in conflict. Having extensional meanings means that it is operational, so that we can see, touch, photograph or detect the presence of the things in a scientific manner. As to the past and present events or utterances, we can ask their extensional verifiability. However, it is impossible to ask the verifiability of future events because they are not yet happening. Nevertheless, talking about the future is one of the main vocal activities that we do in everyday life. Finally, his way of discussing the double task of language seems biased by his own assumptions about the function of language.

### 3. Uses of Language

#### 3.1 The Informative Use

According to Hayakawa, the function of language is, as I mentioned repeatedly in the earlier chapters, binary in nature. Report language which is instrumental in character *informs* us, while the expressive uses of language *affect* us. In his framework the former takes precedence over the latter. The primary function of language is to exchange correct information about the world of experiences. For example,<sup>16</sup>

The longest waterfall in the world is Victoria Falls.

There aren't any fish on this side of the lake, but there are on that side.

The newspapers say that there was a smash-up on Highway 41 near Evansville.

These statements which match with the facts in reality should be regarded as fundamental in communication.

#### 3.2 The Affective Use

Hayakawa, though regarding an informative function – reports – as having “greatest general usefulness,” does not neglect other functions of language. Rather, he might think that the affective function is highly

crucial for both social and personal aspects of the human problem.

In English as well as in other tongues there are expressions, so-called “purr-words” and “snarl-words.”<sup>17</sup> These are the simplest and most extreme forms of judgments. Purr-words are specified as our responses to stimuli that agitate us pleasantly. They can be compared to the body actions of animals such as purring the throat or wagging the tail which expresses the happy state of mind. For example, the sentence “She’s the sweetest girl in all the world!” is not the statement about the girl at all. It is nothing but the expression of the speaker’s inner feeling about her. The sentence can simply be understood as “I love her very much.”

In the meanwhile, snarl-words are our vocal responses to powerful stimuli that make us very angry, such as “You dirty double-crosser!” or “The filthy scum!” These utterances may correspond to muscular activities such as “the contracting of fighting muscles, the increase of blood pressure, a change in body chemistry, clutching of our hair,”<sup>18</sup> and growls and snarls of dogs, cats, or other animals. Not accompanied by any reports, they describe nothing about facts in the extensional world, though by the impressive power of those words, we are likely to feel as if something were being said about something. They are strongly characterized by emotion or subjectivity of our heart. It is not the information but the feeling that counts in these cases. Therefore, by calling the both extremities either love or hatred, we should be careful to allocate the meaning correctly.

Hayakawa shows very explicitly how our reports are “affected” in the following examples.<sup>19</sup>

AGAINST	FOR
His teeth were uneven.	He had white-teeth.
He rarely looked people straight in the eye.	His eyes were blue, his hair blond and abundant.
His shirt was frayed at the cuffs.	He had on a clean, white shirt.
He had a high-pitched voice.	His speech was courteous.
He disliked children.	He liked dogs.

These examples indicate that even when we make reports on the same facts or experiences, each report is varied for different writers, and is slanted consciously or unconsciously according to the different interests or evaluations or likes or dislikes of each writer. What is important in this respect is that we should be aware of the favorable or unfavorable feelings that certain words and facts can arouse, so that we could balance the implied favorable or unfavorable judgments against each other.

The same sort of things can be said about the relationship of affective statements and informative statements. For example:<sup>20</sup>

AFFECTIVE

INFORMATIVE

Finest quality filet mignon.

First-class piece of dead cow.

Cubs trounce Giants 15-3.

Score: Cubs 15, Giants 3.

French armies in rapid retreat!

The strategic withdrawal of the French forces to previously prepared positions in the rear was accompanied briskly and efficiently.

She has her husband under her thumb.

She takes a deep interest in her husband's activities.

These examples readily illustrate how affective connotations can be changed while extensional meanings remain the same.

Likewise, in each of the following statements the person being referred to remains unchanged. But great changes take place in affective connotations in accordance with the change of grammatical subjects.<sup>21</sup>

I am sparkling. You are unusually talkative. He is drunk.

I am firm. You are obstinate. He is a pig-headed fool.

I am beautiful. You have quite good features. She isn't bad-looking, if you like that type.

When someone says, "I am sparkling," the person being talked to may say to him, "You are unusually talkative." In someone else's eyes he is just drunk. The affectivity increases to the highest level in the sentences with the third person subjects, generating harsh remarks.

What is commonly observed in our daily uses of language is the duality of meaning, or so to speak, the contrast between "message and metamessage."<sup>22</sup> The message about a message is technically called a metamessage. For example, two men meet and talk. When they are about to leave, one of them says to the other, "It was a pleasure meeting you." Then the other replies, "We must get together for lunch." Does he really mean it? Or, is it simply another way of saying, "Good-bye. I don't care if we never meet again."? How do we know whether or not I should believe what is said? What is literally and explicitly meant is the message, and what is rhetorically and implicitly meant is the metamessage. The most decisive factors under the circumstances may be the tones of voice (eager or indifferent?), the touch of the handshake (cordial or limp?), the feature of the smile (warm or feeble?), and other nonverbal interchanges. Normally we all make such interpretations intuitively without making any analysis. But there is no denying the fact the metamessage superimposing the message adds special complexities and ambiguities to our communication.

Extensional attitudes also suggest that the context of an utterance plays a very important role when we interpret its meaning. That is, the meanings of words or utterances are not in words, but in use. They are determined by the full context – verbal, historical, social, physical, cultural, psychological, etc. Thus, in general semantics, language is investigated not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a living human action in the totality of verbal and non-verbal contexts.

Here it should be noted again that one of the important and instructive points of general semantics is that it does not believe in mere symbolism or verbalism, but deals with symbols in relation to their referents, pointing out the pitfalls of linguistic habits such as the confusion of words with things, of levels of abstraction, etc., and their harmful influences upon human thought and action. In other words, the extensional attitude toward symbols or statements is of great importance in general semantics, because such attitude is considered to be helpful in avoiding word fallacies, and therefore, helpful in promoting better communication among people.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.3 The Presymbolic Use

Another meritorious point of Hayakawa's attempt is that he directs our attention to social aspects of language use. Hayakawa developed and applied Korzybski's implications to the point where language interacts with our society. *Language in Thought and Action* illustrates in a very convincing manner how language functions in establishing communion among people, in forming and controlling society, and so forth.

Presymbolic uses of language coexist with our symbolic systems. When words are used as vocal equivalent of expressive gestures, we say that language is being used in a *presymbolic* way. Presymbolic elements projected in language are the loudness and the tone of voice, facial expressions, "body language," and other symptoms of the internal conditions of the speaker. The effectiveness of such presymbolic functions of language does not depend on the use of words (symbols), but on the quality of the voice, which has the power of expressing hidden feelings, unstated wishes or unspoken appeals for attention or love, etc.

The meanings of the words used are almost irrelevant when we make noises for presymbolic reasons. Since we talk in social conversations simply because it would be impolite not to, the purpose of this presymbolic talk for talk's sake is not the communication of information as the symbols used would imply, but the establishment of communion. These linguistic events were given a special name of *phatic communion* by Bronislaw Malinowski, late professor of anthropology, University of London. He attributed it to the primitive, prelogical nature of human mind. He defined it as "a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words."<sup>24</sup> Let us see one of the typical examples of presymbolic talk.<sup>25</sup>

"Nice day, isn't it?"

"It certainly is."

"Altogether, it's been a fine summer."

"Indeed it has. We had a nice spring, too."

"Yes, it was a lovely spring."

It is indicated that in this type of presymbolic talk nothing important is said in terms of information. The speakers are just playing with words as Hayakawa insightfully mentions: "We talk for the sake of hear-

ing ourselves talk; that is for the same reason that we play golf or dance. The activity gives us a pleasant sense of being alive."<sup>26</sup> The enjoyment of such presymbolic chattering is similar to that we experience in play activities.

If we are careful to select subjects about which agreement is immediately possible, for example, the weather or sports, we can enlarge the possibility of friendship. The togetherness of the talking reduces the fear and suspicion of the stranger, and creates favorable feelings among people. Being affective and uninformative combine to reinforce its function. Great emphasis should be put on "how to say" rather than "what to say" in the presymbolic use of language. Ritualistic utterances are also regarded as largely presymbolic in nature. Speeches which are included among ritual activities promote the reaffirmation of social cohesion.

The affective connotations and the presymbolic elements are both affective but the main difference presumably lies in the fact that the affective connotations are partly symbolic in nature. Their affectiveness does depend on the words themselves as well as on other affective elements which attach to the utterance. On the contrary, the effectiveness of the presymbolic function of language does not depend on the contents of words, but on vocal equivalents of gestures expressed by affective elements in speech such as the tone of voice and rhythm. The above discussion can be shown more clearly in the following figure.

Symbolic		Presymbolic
Informative	Affective	
Informative connotations	Affective connotations	Other affective elements

Figure II Functions of Language

Finally, it seems that informative and affective connotations are mainly symbolic functions of language, while other affective elements in speech such as voice, rhythm, etc., are presymbolic functions of language. Nevertheless, our speech activity is too complicated to be divided sharply as in the figure above, since one word or utterance may have all these functions at the same time.

### 3.4 The Directive Use

In connection with social aspects of language use, the most fruitful contribution of Hayakawa seems to be that he reveals the mechanism of directive language.<sup>27</sup> Considering the social character of language, the notion of "directive language" is very insightful. It is the problem which goes beyond the structure of language which various schools of modern linguistics have been concerned with. He points out that we human beings can control, direct, or influence the future actions of fellow human beings by means of words. In order to influence our future conduct, directive language not only uses affective elements in language, but also it uses nonverbal affective appeals of many kinds like facial expressions, etc. The language of social cohesion and control usually affects our feelings before conveying information.

What we call "orders," "commands," "requests," "pleas," etc., are the explicit ways we have of making things happen by words. However, there are more implicit, roundabout ways. When we say, for example, "Milk contains vitamins," we are not only stating a fact, but may also be influencing others to drink milk. Likewise, the language of politics such as "Our candidate is a great American," or the language of advertisement like "Somehow you feel more important on TWA," "It's the real thing, Coke," etc., more or less includes directive uses of language.

Since almost all directive utterances say something about the future, they are "maps" of "territories-to-be." In this sense, there are stated or implied promises in directive utterances, that if we do as we say in directive language, certain consequences will follow. When our predicted consequences do not follow on account of ignorance and error or with conscious intention, there is disappointment which serves to break down our mutual trust. Directive sentences being as such, we have to be very careful in uttering and interpreting them; otherwise, they give rise to serious problems of disappointment, which, instead of leading smooth social lives, are destructive of mutual understanding. Thus, Hayakawa deals with language not in isolation but from the viewpoint of living human action in our actual society. Considering that it is this social character of language that promotes cooperation and

units people tightly into a society, his contributions should be highly valued. We can conclude that Hayakawa's attempts are quite helpful and suggestive in calling our attention to the problem of language in relation to our thought and action. Especially, he applied Korzybski's theory very fruitfully to the social aspects of language use, where his examinations are considered to be unique and instructive.

### 4. Semantic Reactions

The chief concern of Korzybski's is not with the structure of language itself but rather with the close relationship between language and human behavior, between structural implications of language and our semantic reactions. He considers that the organism works as-a-whole; thus, his theory of meaning is based on non-elementalistic semantics. He explains how he deals with the problems of meaning non-elementalistically by the following semantic experiment.

If we inquire about the "meaning" of a word, we find that it depends on the "meaning" of other words used in defining it; then, we ask the "meaning" of the words used in the definitions, and this process is continued usually for a while, until the victim begins to speak in vicious circles. When this stage is reached, we have come usually to the undefined terms of a given individual. At this stage, we can guess vaguely the meanings of such undefined terms, but cannot tell them exactly. In fact, we have reached the un-speakable level, which represents first order affective effects such as those called "wishes," "intentions," "intuitions," "evaluations," and many others.

In this way, Korzybski thinks that what lies at the bottom and is the foundation of the meanings of undefined terms represents the un-speakable first order effect, the affective personal raw material. Our ordinary meanings are built out of such un-speakable affective states, only after a sort of nursing which gives the shape of a verbal expression to the affective states. These processes, or the reactions of the organism-as-a-whole, must never be split or treated as separate entities like "emotional" and "intellectual (logical or conceptual)," because such reactions involve conjointly the "emotional" and "intellectual" factors. From



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this point of view, "all affective and psycho-logical responses to words and other stimuli involving meanings are to be considered as *semantic reactions*."<sup>28</sup> In other words, the terminology of semantic reactions covers in a non-elementalistic way all psychological reactions which are formerly covered by elementalistic terms of "emotion" and "intellect," the reactions themselves always being on the objective levels and unspeakable.

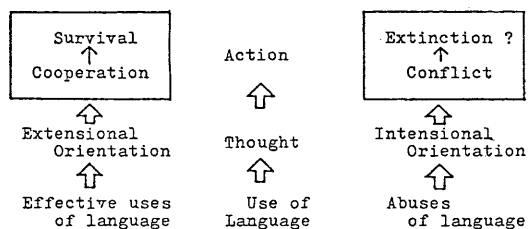
Therefore, Korzybski's concept of semantic reactions clearly shows that he sees meanings dynamically as living reactions of the organism-as-a-whole, that is, an integration of the emotional and intellectual reactions of our nervous systems. We should notice in this respect that Korzybski is not concerned with meaning itself but with the relation between language and semantic reactions, because he thinks that language involves automatically the interconnected semantic reactions, or more precisely, that the structural implications of language unconsciously affect our types of semantic reactions. Whether we can behave sanely or not depends on the proper use of language and appropriate evaluations. He claims that the use of language controls our semantic reactions. Hayakawa supports his predecessor's comprehensive notion faithfully and illustrates it with abundant examples, not only for the purpose of theoretical development but also for practical training and application to which we should be accustomed in everyday life situations.

### 5. Criticism

Although I do not intend to belittle Hayakawa's contributions or devalue his book, I would like to comment here in place of conclusion on one of the insufficiencies of his theory.

My question is concerned with the view of language as a tool, which underlies the whole theory of general semantics and the map/language analogy in particular. General semantics takes it for granted that language is a tool for communication, i.e., an instrument for conveying correct information. In fact, the notion of functions (or uses) of language presupposes that language is an instrument and that man is a user of that instrument. It is then suggested that he should use it

effectively for the purpose of cooperation. In my opinion, general semanticists too optimistically assume that the effective *uses* of language lead to a survival of man. We may be able to summarize and formulate Hayakawa's scheme and methods as follows:<sup>29</sup>



**Figure III Mechanism of Language and Survival**

However, how can man have a voluntary wish to cooperate only by using effectively a tool of language? It is hardly convincing that the use of language generates the motivating power of cooperative action. The effective use of language as an instrument might be insufficient for motivating human cooperative action, since such an assumption is contrary to the essential nature of human behavior. It seems to me that his approach to the problem of human communication is rather behavioristic and mechanical, although his insight into such problem is profound and valuable. I assume that human action is not an automatic stimulus-response type of behavior, but rather a stimulus-free one. Hence, it might be possible to develop a study of human language and action from the point of view of language as a spontaneous voluntary and creative action. We can then learn a lot more about the true relationship between language and action in a new light.

We will only examine here one of Hayakawa's problems concerning the presymbolic use of language. He accounts for the presymbolic use of language as a tension-releasing mechanism which establishes communion by opening new lines of communication, and also by maintaining already opened communication lines by talking. It is true that we sometimes talk for fear of silence or a lack of language; but we sometimes talk to enjoy talking itself. We talk, because talking is a lot of fun. We enjoy a mutual "catch-ball" of chats.

Where does the enjoyment of talking come from? If we talk for some distinct reason or the other, there is

no such enjoyment in our talking. We can enjoy talking when talking is entirely a spontaneous, voluntary action. If we are obliged or forced to talk or to use certain effective uses of language because it is necessary for survival just as we are forced to eat or sleep to maintain better health, there is no true enjoyment, and therefore, no spontaneous cooperation among people. Mutual understanding among people and desirable relationships brought about by language may not be through its effective uses, but through enjoyable, voluntary talking-together or getting-together. Let us take an example from Hayakawa's book.<sup>30</sup>

WIFE: Wilbur, why don't you talk to me?

HUSBAND: (interrupted in his reading of Schopenhauer or *The Racing Form*): What's that?

WIFE: Why don't you talk to me?

HUSBAND: But there isn't anything to say.

WIFE: You don't love me.

HUSBAND: (thoroughly interrupted, and somewhat annoyed): Oh, don't be silly. You know I do. (Suddenly consumed by a passion for logic.) Do I run around with other women? Don't I turn my paycheck over to you? Don't I work my head off for you and the kids?

WIFE: (way out on a logical limb, but still not satisfied): But still I wish you'd say something.

HUSBAND: Why?

WIFE: Well, because.

Why does the wife feel unhappy when her husband does not talk to her? If he just talks to her, does he satisfy her? I guess the situation is not so simple. The amount of talking can hardly have anything to do with her feeling. Even if the husband talked a lot to his wife, her anxiety would not pass away, unless they both enjoyed their talking together and being together. She feels anxious that her husband may not enjoy living with her, since he does not want to talk to her. The real breakdown of communication is seen in the lack of enjoyment in talking.

We have discussed the great contributions and the insufficiency of Hayakawa's *Language in Thought and Action* so far. This book is worth reading for several reasons. First, the book is quite instructive and helpful in calling our attention to the use of language; and second, it raises so many crucial and current issues for those who regard language in its full context, in relation to thought and action. Above all, we can conclude that this book stimulates our interest not only in the English language – its various uses and expressions – but also in the American culture and society and the way of thinking of its people, because Hayakawa takes the English language as living behavior in the full context of the American society. Suffice it to say that anybody who has much interest in the role that communication plays in our human society would never fail to appreciate reading it, and applying the author's suggestions to practical situations.

#### Notes

1. S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action*, 3rd edition, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 21-30.
4. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 34-40.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
6. Cf. Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*, Lancaster, Pa.: Science Press Printing Company, 1933. Conn.: The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company, 4th edition, 1958, pp. 56-65. "The only usefulness of a map or a language depends on the similarity of structure between the empirical world and the map-language." (*Ibid.*, p. 61).
7. Cf. S. I. Hayakawa, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-72.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
9. *Loc. cit.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 63. Referents are on the physical process level, but meanings are on the intensional abstract level. It is a fundamental confusion in general semantics that it stresses the importance of the former (the extensional world, but what it

actually deals with is the latter (the intensional world defined by words). This confusion ultimately seems to be a problem of empiricism which underlies general semantics; however such a fundamental problem of philosophy is outside the scope of my present paper.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
12. *Loc. cit.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
17. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 40-41.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
22. Cf. S. I. Hayakawa, *Through the Communication Barrier*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1979, pp. 75-79.
23. See N. Yokoo, "The Theoretical Basis of General Semantics," *The Bulletin of Tokyo Kasei Daigaku*, No. 25, 1985, pp. 41-52.
24. Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," C. K. Ogden & I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, p. 315, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1923.
25. S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action*, 3rd ed., p. 79.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
27. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-98.
28. Alfred Korzybski, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
29. Cf. Sec., 1.2 of this paper.
30. S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action*, 3rd ed., p. 81.

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6. S. Ullmann, *Principles of Semantics*, Glasgow: Jackson, 1951.
7. —, *Semantics: an Introduction to the Science of Meaning*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962.

#### 言語の意味機能

—S. I. ハヤカワ「思考と行動における言語」をめぐる一般意味論研究—

〔概要〕

S.I.ハヤカワは『思考と行動における言語』において一般意味論の立場から、言語と思考と行動の関係を豊富な実例を使って克明に述べている。一般意味論の提唱者A.コージブスキーは「ことばの意味はことばそのものにあるのではなくて意味論的反應にある」という基本的想定に立って非要素主義的な意味考察を展開したが、S.I.ハヤカワはその言語思想を発展的に継承しこの概念を基盤として言語の意味機能を包括的・実証的に説明している。本稿はハヤカワの同書を中心に、ことばの感化的な働き、行動を誘発する指令的な用法、人と人をつなぐ社交的な機能など表面にあらわれない、ことばのいわば不透明な側面に焦点をあて意味の多様性やことばの可能性を探った。しかし、言語を記号として道具視することはその効果的な利用を強調する結果となる。意味作用を刺激と反応という行動主義的な枠組で捉えることに対する批判からもっと自由で内発的な言語行動のあり方を示唆したが、意味論的反應という概念自体についても若干の疑問が生ずることになる。