

Russian 607
Slavic Contributions to Linguistics
Tulane University
Spring 2007

Topic: Jakobson and Chomsky: Empiricist v. Generativist

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Hours to be determined

Website: www.tulane.edu/~gcummins; select Russian 607.

Course Description

This course is designed for (1) Russian students interested in the structure and theory of Russian linguistics (2) non-Russianists interested in learning more about formal (Chomsky) as well as empirical (Jakobson) approaches to language theory (3) all students interested in Prague School structuralism, Russian Formalism, Prague and Moscow semiotics, acoustic distinctive features (4) combinations of the above. Students are *not* required to have a background in any one of these areas, but ought to bring at least *one* of the following to their study: (a) some knowledge of Russian or a language other than English (b) some knowledge of formal linguistic theory (c) curiosity about kinds of theory about language. Generally accessible works by Roman Jakobson, the premier exponent of Slavics in the past century, will be our first focus, followed by study of the thought of Chomsky.

Texts

The following texts are available at the bookstore for this course. Don't buy them until we have discussed them on the first day! I am concerned about the cost of these books, while I am pleased that we may have them.

1. Adger, D.avid. 2002 *Core Syntax. A Minimalist Approach*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
2. RJ (=Roman Jakobson). 1972 (and other editions). *Child Language, Aphasia, and Phonological Universals*. The Hague: Mouton.
3. RJ. 1956 (and later editions). *Fundamentals of Language*. The Hague: Mouton.
4. Haegeman, Liliane. 1997 *Elements of Grammar. Handbook of Generative Syntax*. Kluwer: Dordrecht.
5. NC (=Noam Chomsky). 2003. *Minimalism*.

6. RJ. 1984. Waugh, Linda and Morris Halle, eds. *Russian and Slavic Grammar*. The Hague: Mouton.

Goals and Methodology

I see the first half to two-thirds of this course as readings and discussions of classic texts (and, in the case of Chomsky, explications of his texts as well). We will have regular daily assignments and questions to prepare for discussion. The second one-third to one-half of the course will be devoted to individual readings and the preparation of a course-final presentation on a topic derived from our study. While individual readings are going on, I will present some problems and solutions to language theory problems and, each meeting, students will give brief progress reports on their emerging talks. At the term's end, each student will give a presentation (forty minutes).

We will have weekly announced quizzes on the readings, no midterm, no final. Final grade will be based on quizzes (30%), class discussion (20%), and presentation (50%). Attendance is absolutely required. See me right away if you have a disability.

Readings will be short but difficult; it will be a lot of fun explaining and digesting this! Don't be daunted. *When this is over you will have party conversation fodder for the rest of your life.*

I will probably put some volumes on reserve for reading in the library. See my site for assignments as they develop.

Suggestions for Further Readings

The literature in this field is vast. I cite below just a few of my favorites.

7. RJ. *Selected Writings*, Vols. I-VIII. The Hague: Mouton.

The great compendium of Jakobson's writings. Vol. I is on phonology, II on morphology; later volumes include poetics, epic studies, verse studies, other.

8. RJ. 1962. "The Concept of the Sound Law and the Teleological Criterion." In *Selected Writings*, I, 1-2.

Birth certificate of the Prague school (1927).

9. RJ. 1971. "Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb." In *Selected Writings*, II, 130-147. [also in 1 above].

Study of the relationship of categories and their morphophonemic expression. Russian is the model.

10. RJ. 1948. "Russian Conjugation." In *Selected Writings*, II, 119-129.

Tiny (13 page) article with enormous influence on the beginnings of generative grammar.

11. RJ. 1988. Stephen Rudy, ed. *Completion Volume One: Major Works, 1976-1980*. (= *Selected Writings*, Vol. VIII.)

12. 3. Haegeman, Liliane. 1991 (and later editions). *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Last, summarizing and often popularizing works of Jakobson, including "Six lectures sur le son et le sens," "Preliminaries to Speech Analysis," others.

Semiotics, Poetics

12. RJ. 1971. "Quest for the Essence of Language." In *Selected Writings*, II, 345-359.

Major speech on the application of Peirce's semiotic to language and art.

13. RJ. 1988. Krystyna Pomorska, ed. *Language in Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University.

Collection of Jakobson's best known works of literary analysis and poetic theory, translated into English.

Formalism and Prague School linguistics

14. Erlich, Victor. 1969. *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine*. The Hague: Mouton.

15. Wellek, René. 1969. *Literary Theory and Aesthetics of the Prague School*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan.

Chomsky Classics

16. NC. 1957. *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton.

17. NC. 1965. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

18. NC. 1972. *Language and Mind*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

19. NC. 1981. *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.

20. NC. 1986. *Barriers*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

21. NC. 1991. "Linguistics and Cognitive Science: Problems and Mysteries." In A. Kasher, ed., *The Chomskian Turn*. Oxford: Blackwell, 26-33.

