

TABLE OF CONTENTS
HISTORIOGRAPHIA LINGUISTICA IX: 1/2

Editorial iii

ARTICLES / AUFSÄTZE

Jakob Hornemann Bredsdorff: On the Causes of Linguistic Change (1821),
transl., with an essay by Henning Andersen (Copenhagen) 1
Robin N. Campbell (Sterling, Scotland) and Robert Grieve (Perth, Australia):
Royal Investigations of the Origin of Language 43
Geneviève Clerico (Reims): A Propos du *César Chesneau Du Marsais et son*
rôle dans l'évolution de la Grammaire Générale (1928) de Gunnvor Sahlin . 75
Martin L. Manchester (Somerville, Mass.): Philosophical Motives in Wilhelm von
Humboldt's Defense of the Inflectional Superiority Thesis 107
Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade (Leiden): Benjamin Martin the Linguist . . . 121

REVIEW ARTICLE / RAPPORT CRITIQUE / FORSCHUNGSBERICHT

Stanley S. Newman (Albuquerque, N.M.) Toward a History of American Lin-
guistics 135

REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS / BESPRECHUNGEN

N. A. Kondrašov, *Istorija lingvističeskix učenij* (Moskva, 1979), reviewed by
David L. Olmsted (Davis, Calif.) 145
Konrad Koerner, Hans-J. Niederehe, and R. H. Robins, eds., *Studies in Medieval*
Linguistic Thought (Amsterdam, 1980), reviewed by Charlene McDermott
(Albuquerque, N.M.) 152
Peter C. Rollins, *Benjamin Lee Whorf* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1980), reviewed by
Stephen O. Murray (Berkeley, Calif.) 156
R. W. Hunt: *The History of Grammar in the Middle Ages: Collected papers*,
ed. by G. L. Bursill-Hall. (Amsterdam, 1980), reviewed by Sten Ebbesen
(Copenhagen) 161

MISCELLANEA: DISCUSSIONS / DISKUSSIONEN - NOTES / NOTIZEN

Robert A. Hall, Jr. (Ithaca, N.Y.): Karl Bartsch (1832-88) 165
Jan Noordegraaf (Amsterdam): The Port-Royal Grammar: A bibliographical
note 169
Pierre Swiggers (Leuven): 'Portraits of Linguists' anno 1927 175
Dominik Wujastyk (Oxford): Bloomfield and the Sanskrit Origin of the Terms
'exocentric' and 'endocentric' 179
Frederick J. Newmeyer: Reply to Murray's Review 185
Stephen O. Murray: The Reviewer responds 187

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED / OUVRAGES REÇUS / EINGEGANGENE
SCHRIFTEN 189

Wujastyk, Dominik: "Bloomfield and the Sanskrit Origin of the Terms 'Exocentric' and 'Endocentric'". In: *Historiographia Linguistica*, Volume IX, no1/2 (1982).

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BLOOMFIELD AND THE SANSKRIT ORIGIN OF THE TERMS 'EXOCENTRIC' AND 'ENDOCENTRIC'

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As pointed out by Lyons (1968:231-32, 468), the terms 'exocentric' and 'endocentric' were introduced into linguistic terminology by Leonard Bloomfield in *Language* (1933:194ff., 235-36).

In fact, Bloomfield discusses these terms twice in his influential book. The first occasion is in his chapter on syntax (1933:194-97). There, the terms are presented as describing properties of open syntagmata, or phrases. *John ran* is exocentric because "the resultant phrase belongs to the form class of no immediate constituent"; *poor John* is endocentric because "the forms *John* and *poor John* have, on the whole, the same functions" (1933:194). Furthermore, 'endocentric' constructions are subdivided into "co-ordinative (or serial) and subordinative (or attributive)" (1933:195). Broadly, an endocentric construction is co-ordinative when "the resultant phrase belongs to the same form-class as two or more of the constituents", and subordinative when "the resultant phrase belongs to the same form-class as one of the constituents" (1933:195). Examples are *boys and girls* and *poor John* respectively. Finally, Bloomfield notes that these constructions may nest: "there can be several ranks of subordinative position" (1933:195).

The explication of these terms is taken up a second time in the chapter on morphological types, in the discussion on compound constructions (1933:233ff.). Bloomfield introduces the Sanskrit classification of compounds into *dvandva*, *tatpuruṣa*, *āmreḍita*¹ and *karmadhāraya*. These he describes as endocentric constructions. Next he mentions the *bahuvrīhi*, the other main type of Sanskrit compound, and calls it exocentric (1933:235). After some explanation of these compound types, with examples, he briefly mentions two further types, the *dvigu* and the *avyayībhāva* (1933:237).

Thus Bloomfield introduces and characterises the terms 'exocentric' and

'endocentric' in two distinct contexts in *Language*: as types of phrase and as types of nominal compound. The description of the latter case is intimately bound up with his description of Sanskrit compound types. It would appear, then, that Bloomfield first worked out the idea of this distinction in dealing with phrases, then applied it to compound constructions and used the distinction to highlight some features of Sanskrit compound classification. I hope in what follows to show that the opposite is true: Bloomfield found the distinction being applied by the Sanskrit grammarians to their compounds, turned the device to his own use in classifying English compounds, and then extended the notion to apply to phrases too.²

It is a fact not requiring extensive justification that Bloomfield, whose uncle was a professor of Sanskrit,³ was himself very familiar with Sanskrit, in particular with the superb grammar of that language by Pāṇini. His admiration for Pāṇini was often expressed explicitly in *Language* (1933:11, 19, 63) and elsewhere (e.g., 1929:273-74). He called Pāṇini's grammar "one of the greatest monuments of human intelligence" (1933:11), a remark which has often been repeated by western linguists who study Pāṇini. Bloomfield wrote articles such as "On Some Rules of Pāṇini" (1927) and the review of Bruno Liebich's *Konkordanz Pāṇini-Candra* (1929), which demonstrate his detailed knowledge of Pāṇini's system, and of the history of traditional Sanskrit grammars in general. The first article is an excellent example of specialist investigation, while the second could be given to any student today as a useful introduction to the Indian grammatical tradition. Other writings of his, such as the famous "A Set of Postulates for the Science of Language" (1926) and "Menomini Morphophonemics" (1939) are deeply influenced by Pāṇinian methodology, as is plain to anyone familiar with Pāṇini (e.g., Allen 1955:112). Bloomfield's attraction to the scientific rigour of Pāṇini's system has frequently been noted by those who knew him closely (e.g., Bloch 1949:90; Hall 1950:121), and by those who know his work and Pāṇini's system (e.g., Staal 1972:264).

Having established that the terms 'exocentric' and 'endocentric' were part of Bloomfield's apparatus for describing compounds, in particular Sanskrit compounds, and bearing in mind the influence which the Indian grammarians appear to have had on him, let us turn to the Pāṇinian description of compounds, and its development by his earliest commentators.⁴

Pāṇini divides compounds into four major groups: *avyayībhāva*, *tatpuruṣa*, *bahuvrīhi* and *dvandva*. All other compound types belong to subsets of these groups. The purpose of the classification is to group together items which

will later be subject to the same syntactic, grammatical or morphophonemic operations. Therefore the groups are distinguished by a number of different criteria, some formal, some syntactic, some semantic and some enumerative.

Thus, following Pāṇini's sequence, first *avyayībhāvas* are defined by enumeration, with semantic conditioning (P.2.1.5-21).

Tatpuruṣas are defined by enumeration and by form, with syntactic as well as semantic conditioning (P.2.1.22-2.2.22).

Bahuvrīhis are defined in a very interesting way. First a rule declares that "what remains is a *bahuvrīhi*" (P.2.2.23: *śeṣo bahuvrīhiḥ*). A second rule then states that a *bahuvrīhi* is "two or more nouns [in composition] when the sense is that of another word" (P.2.2.24: *anekam anyapadārthe*). Further rules give special cases (P.2.2.25-28). The point of the first rule, P.2.2.23, is rule ordering. Suppose a compound were formed which satisfied the conditions for classification both as an *avyayībhāva* and as a *bahuvrīhi*. By P.2.2.23 the compound would be classified as the former, because only those forms which "remain", that is remain after applying the rules for *avyayībhāvas* and *tatpuruṣas*, are liable to be classified as *bahuvrīhis*. The second rule, P.2.2.24, is the chief criterion for classifying *bahuvrīhis*. In particular, the term *anyapadārtha* which appears in this rule will be relevant to our discussion below.

Finally, a *dvandva* is defined simply in a single rule by the purely semantic criterion that it should consist of "two or more nouns [in composition] when the sense 'and' is present" (P.2.2.29: *cārthe dvandvaḥ*).

Although Pāṇini obviously took great care in framing these definitions, even his earliest commentators have attempted to reduce the criteria to a set of simple, purely semantic conditions.⁵ Thus, on three occasions Patañjali (fl.140 BC) has said:

In this connection, some compounds have as their head the sense of their first word, some have as their head the sense of their last word, some have as their head the sense of another word, some have as their head the sense of both words. The *avyayībhāva* has the sense of the first word as its head. The *tatpuruṣa* has the sense of the last word as its head. The *bahuvrīhi* has the sense of another word as its head. The *dvandva* has the sense of both words as its head.⁶

In other places, when contrasting the *bahuvrīhi* with the other types of compound, Patañjali lumps the others together as "those whose sense is one of their own words (*svapadārtha*)" (Kielhorn 1880 I,404. See also pp.405-420), as opposed to the *bahuvrīhi*, "whose sense is some other external word (*anyapadārtha*)" (ibid.).

Thus we see that Patañjali, whose *Mahābhāṣya* is our earliest commentary on Pāṇini, described compounds in terms of the locus of their head, and in particular drew a clear distinction between a compound whose head is a word outside the compound itself, and one whose head is a word within the compound. The terms used by him are *anyapadārtha* and *svapadārtha*, the first of which is actually introduced by Pāṇini in P.2.2.24. Thus one may trace the fundamental distinction to Pāṇini, although Patañjali generalized it into a full classificatory system for all compounds.

Finally, it remains to be said that the English terms 'exocentric' and 'endocentric' are most apt translations of the Sanskrit *anyapadārthapradhāna* and *svapadārthapradhāna*. In view of Bloomfield's acquaintance with Pāṇini and his followers it does not seem too much to see in the Sanskrit words and in Patañjali's compound theory the source of Bloomfield's own writing on the subject, and his resulting inceptive use of the terms 'exocentric' and 'endocentric'. This is endorsed when one sees that his subclassification of the endocentric construction into co-ordinative and subordinative types corresponds exactly to Patañjali's description of the *dvandva* and the *tatpuruṣa*, and that furthermore Bloomfield himself equates the terms 'subordinative' and *tatpuruṣa* (1933:235).

If this thesis is correct, then Bloomfield took the description of the Sanskrit grammarians, which they apply only the categorization of nominal compounds, and generalized it to describe in addition the syntax of certain phrase constructions. In more modern works, however, the terms are used exclusively to describe phrase constructions, and their origin in and application to compound classification is forgotten, or at least not mentioned (e.g., Lyons 1963:231ff; Crystal 1980:131, 136-37).⁷

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NOTES

1) Contrary to Bloomfield's statement (1933:235), the term 'āmredita' is not the name of a compound type for the Hindu grammarians. Pāṇini defines the term precisely as the

second of two repeated words (P.8.1.2: *tasya dviruktasya param āmreditam*).

2) Pāṇini treats nominal compounds and phrase constructions strictly as optional syntactic transformations of one another (P.2.1.11: *vibhāṣā*). This may have suggested to Bloomfield the application of the classification of compounds to their transformationally equivalent phrase forms.

3) Maurice Bloomfield (1855-1928), professor of Sanskrit and comparative philology at Johns Hopkins University, published distinguished works on Vedic and other topics.

4) What follows is a mere thumbnail sketch of Pāṇini's treatment. For a slightly fuller description in English see Roodbergen's introduction (1974).

5) These, though easier to grasp and apply, are seriously inadequate in several cases and cannot properly replace Pāṇini's treatment (Whitney 1893:187-91; Cardona 1976: 213-14).

6) Kielhorn 1880 I,378-79, repeated p.382, 392: "iha kaś cid samāṣaḥ pūrvapadārthapradhānaḥ kaś cid uttarapadārthapradhānaḥ kaś cid anyapadārthapradhānaḥ kaś cid ubhayapadārthapradhānaḥ / pūrvapadārthapradhāno 'vyayībhāvaḥ / uttarapadārthapradhānaḥ tatpuruṣaḥ / anyapadārthapradhāno bahuvrīhiḥ / ubhayapadārthapradhāno dvandvaḥ /".

7) This process has come full circle with the publication of Coulson's *Sanskrit* (1976) in which the term 'exocentric' is employed to help the beginner in Sanskrit in his first steps towards grasping the character of the *bahuvrīhi* (Coulson 1976:117).

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