

1965, 1972, 1991.

Chomsky, Labov, Sinclair.

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 **Universität Trier**

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Overview

This talk is the last session of my course *Core Readings in 20th Century Linguistics* and my last class before retirement from the University.

I will discuss three topics:

Paradigms ... Progress ... Curricula ...

Overview

1. On paradigms

As a student and teacher of linguistics from 1966 to the present, I have been trained in / have passed through / have taught and written about three very different paradigms in linguistics, which have been formed by three major scholars: Noam Chomsky, William Labov and John Sinclair. Their work is not always compatible, so it cannot all be true, and shows that language must be studied from different points of view.

Overview

2. On progress

Some things which I was taught as a student have turned out to be untrue. Others have turned out to be poorly formulated. It is often thought that knowledge progresses because we discover more and more true facts and theories about the world. On the contrary: we learn from our errors. We learn from the past, but keep discovering new and different ways of visualizing language.

Overview

3. On curricula

Much educational reform (including the "new" BA-MA degrees) pays little attention to the past 1,000 years of curricular theory. I will give an example from the Middle Ages, and make a proposal for one way of organizing a coherent curriculum in language, linguistics and literature.

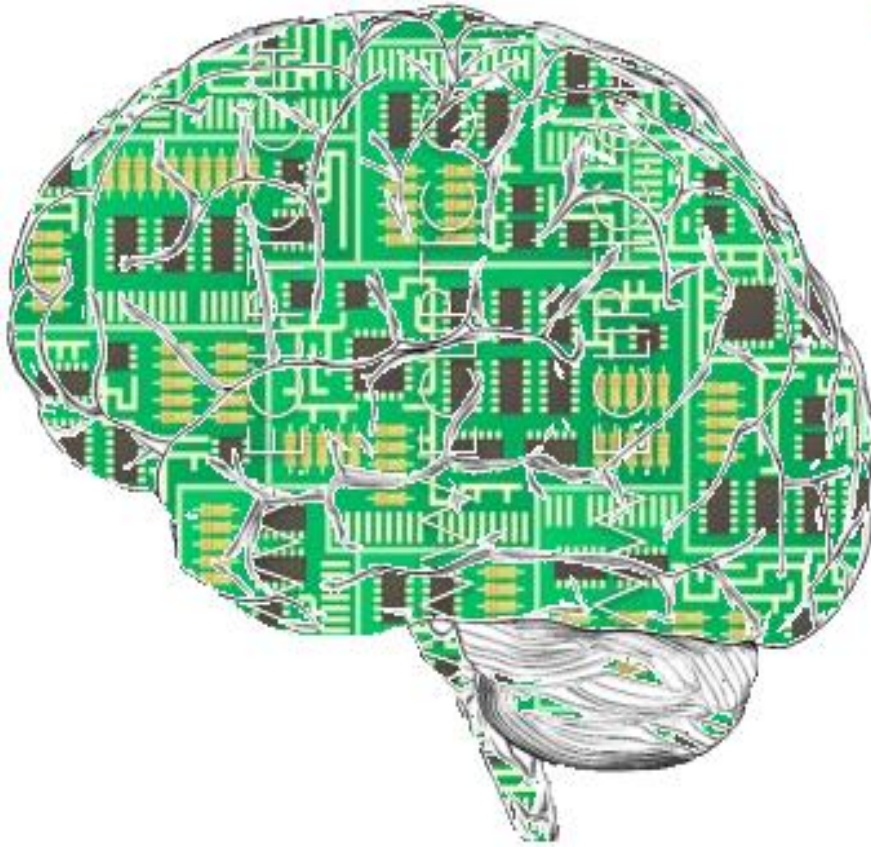
All this has implications for what is (fashionably) called "transferable skills".

1. On paradigms.

Three paradigms.

- **Noam Chomsky (1928 -)**
1965 *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax.*
- **William Labov (1927 -)**
1972 *Sociolinguistic Patterns.*
- **John Sinclair (1933 - 2007)**
1991 *Corpus Concordance Collocation.*

Chomsky et al. TG et al.



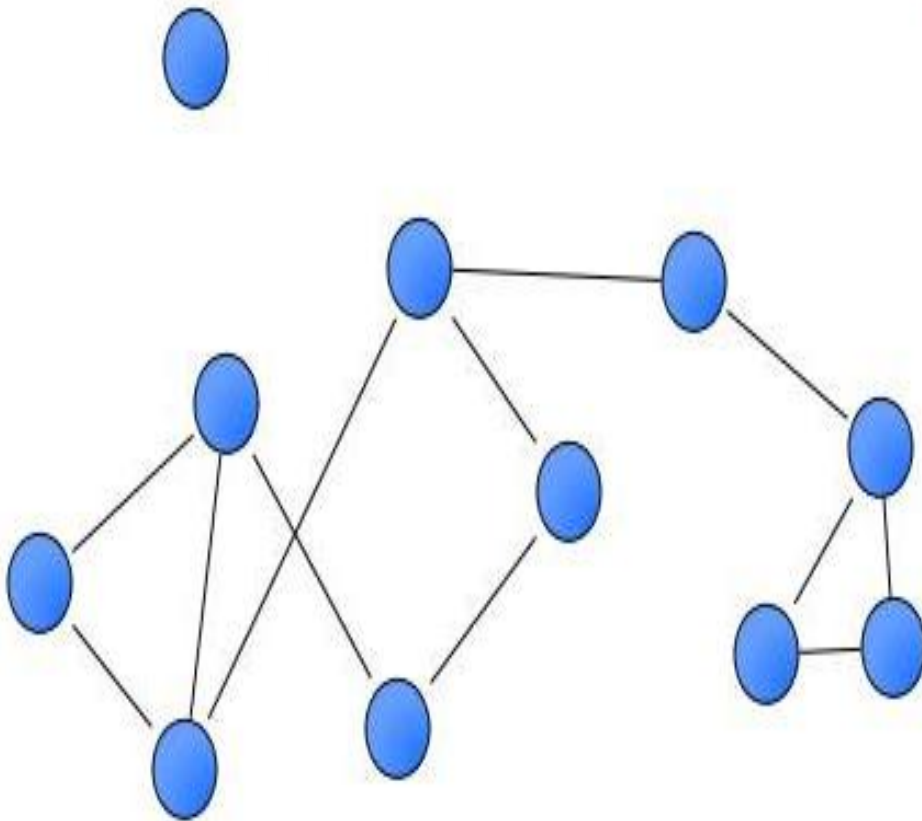
Post-1965 or so ...

the cognitive turn

Labov et al. Sociolinguistics.

Post-1970 or so ...

the social turn



Wikipedia encyclopedia <http://wapedia.mobi/en/Sociogram>

Sinclair et al. Corpus linguistics.

Post-1985 or so ...

the computational
turn



Three paradigms.

- **Chomsky 1965**

grammar, the mind

rationalism

- **Labov 1972**

variation, social groups

empiricism

- **Sinclair 1991**

lexico-grammar, texts

empiricism

Three paradigms.

- Chomsky 1965

Cartesian Linguistics (1966)

- Labov 1972

"sociolinguistics: an oddly redundant term"

- Sinclair 1991

Trust the Text (2004)

Three paradigms.

- **Chomsky 1965**
 structure of the human mind
- **Labov 1972**
 structure of society / social groups
- **Sinclair 1991**
 structure of phrasal units of meaning

Three paradigms.

- **Chomsky 1965**

introspection

universals

- **Labov 1972**

fieldwork recordings

linguistic variables

- **Sinclair 1991**

digital corpora

phrasal units

New data lead to new paradigms:

- **historical-comparative data**
- **native languages of North America**
- **native-speaker introspection**
- **audio-recorded interviews / conversations**
- **socially stratified surveys**
- **computer-readable corpora**

The ironies of academic progress.

- **Skinner's behaviourism (1940s-50s) purged psychology of its central problem (i.e. thought!).**
- **Chomsky (1959) destroyed the credibility of behaviourism.**
- **Chomsky's formalism (1950s-60s) purged linguistics of its central problem (i.e. meaning!).**

2. On progress.

On progress.

If you are going to be a teacher of English for the next 30 years ...

... around half of what I've been teaching you will turn out to be false (at least poorly formulated)

... but the evaluation criteria (empirical, testable, replicable, public, etc) will still be relevant.

**Things I was told as a student
which are not true:**

There are 50 words for "snow" in Eskimo.

Things I was told as a student which are not true:

There are 50 words for "snow" in Eskimo.

**Schultz-Lorentzen's dictionary of Inuktitut gives
two words for snow: *qanik*, *aput*.**

**In English ... *snow, ice, icicle, hail, sleet, slush, ...
frost, hoarfrost, rime, ... glacier, iceberg, ...
snowball, snowdrift, snowflake, snowman ...***

Schultz-Lorentzen, C. (1927) *Dictionary of the West Greenlandic Eskimo Language*. Medelser om Grønland 69, C.A. Reitzels 1945.

See: Pullum, G. (1991) *The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax*. U Chicago Press. p.167.

As one Eskimo said to another:

**"Did you know that American
suburban males have over
100 words for *lawn*?"**

**Things I was told as a student
which are not true:**

**There are 50 words for "snow" in Eskimo.
You can say anything in any language.**

Things I was told as a student which are not true:

**There are 50 words for "snow" in Eskimo.
You can say anything in any language.**

**Many languages have no egocentric co-ordinate
system, only an absolute frame of reference
(similar to cardinal directions). Guugu Yimithirr
has no words for "left", "right", "front", "back".**

S C Levinson (2003) *Space in Language and Cognition*. CUP.

Things I was told as a student which are not true:

There are 50 words for "snow" in Eskimo.

You can say anything in any language.

The phoneme is the basic sound unit.

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- them/then sin/sing singin'/singing
- in Britain in Germany in Greece
bilabial alveolar velar

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The phoneme is the basic sound unit.

Lexis, syntax and semantics are separate.

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Lexis, syntax and semantics are separate.

1. Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.

2. Revolutionary new ideas appear infrequently.

3. Miserly dead bicycles ride bananas happily.

Things I was told as a student which are not true:

There are 50 words for "snow" in Eskimo.

You can say anything in any language.

The phoneme is the basic sound unit.

Lexis, syntax and semantics are separate.

Dictionaries are of no theoretical interest.

**"The lexicon is ... a list of basic irregularities."
(Bloomfield 1933)**

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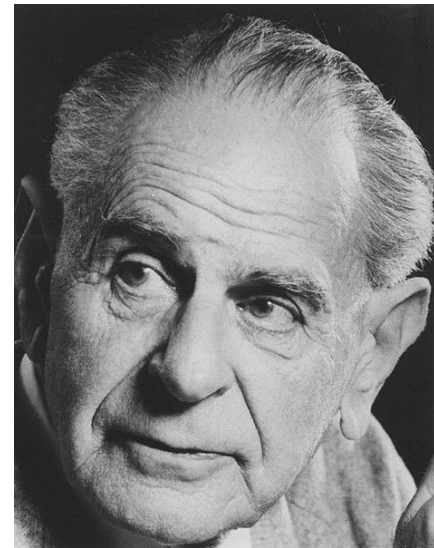
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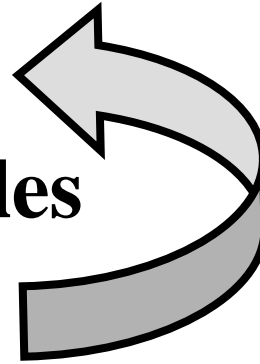
Etc ..

"Science destroys its past".

The falsification paradigm:



- 1. Theory
- 2. Counter-examples
- 3. Better theory



K R Popper (1963) *Conjectures and Refutations. The Growth of Scientific Knowledge.* RKP.

Linguistic formulation ...

**Written language is essential in order to
make statements which are**

explicit, clear, and public ...

**and which therefore make critical
discussion possible.**

We learn from our errors:

"... all models are wrong, but some are useful."

George E P Box (British statistician).

G E P Box & N R Draper (1987) *Empirical Model-Building and Response Surfaces*. NY: Wiley.

We learn from our errors:

**The most important factor
in intellectual progress is often**

- **discovering a new problem**
- **stating it precisely.**

New problems:

Chomsky: Linguistic competence is much deeper and more abstract than previously thought.

Labov: You cannot understand linguistic structures if you ignore social structures.

Sinclair: Individual words are not the main units of meaning.

Areas of study which didn't exist when I was a student:

- **sociolinguistics**
- **discourse analysis**
- **pragmatics**
- **forensic linguistics**
- **corpus linguistics**
- **endangered languages**

first(?) student textbooks

(1974: Trudgill)

(1977: Coulthard)

(1983: Levinson, Leech)

(1994: Gibbons)

(1998: Kennedy, Biber et al)

(2000: Crystal)

More on progress.

First applications, then theory:
the case of dictionaries.

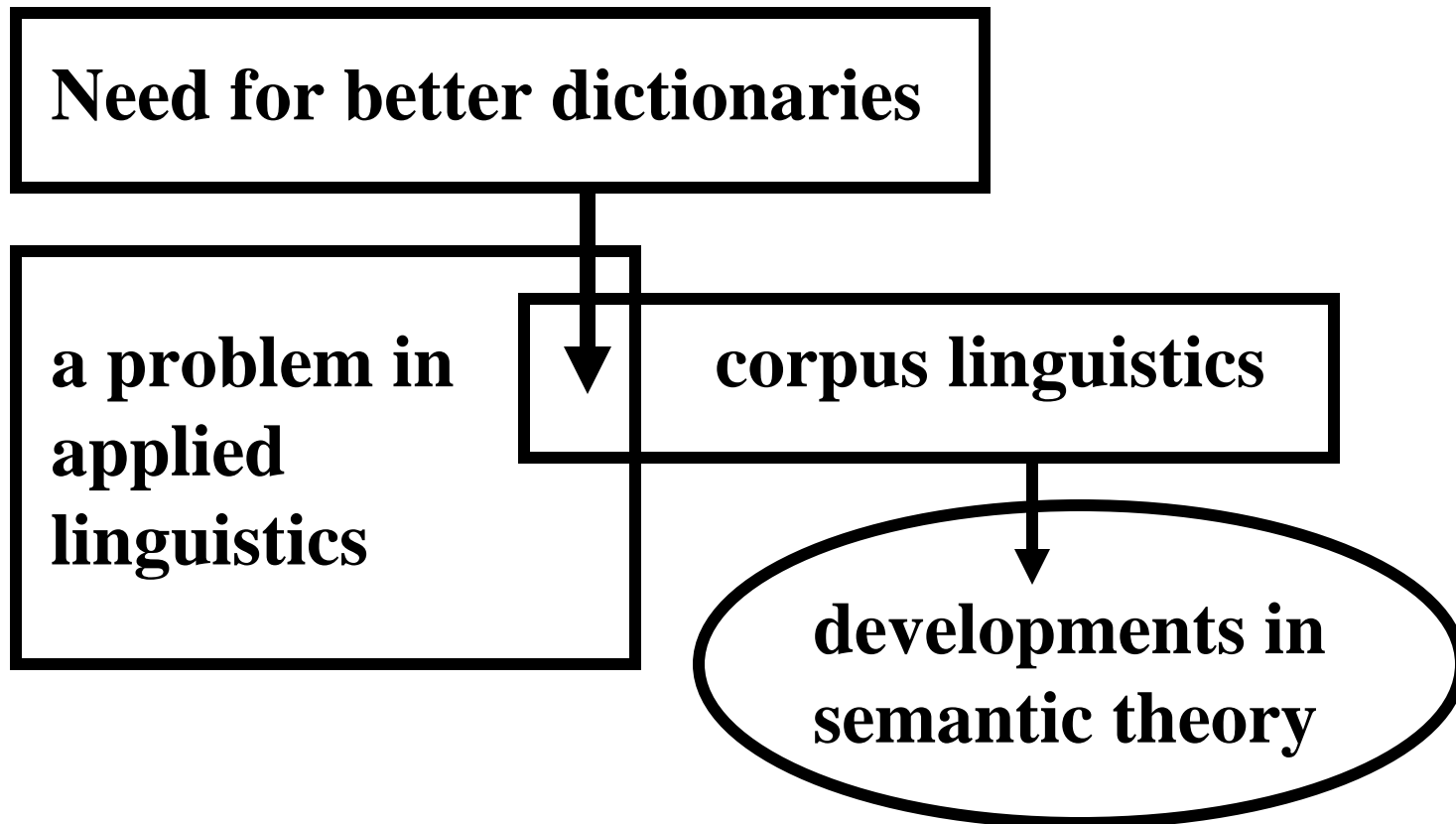
Applied linguistics and corpus linguistics.

"You have to have linguistics before you can apply it." (Pit Corder 1973.) ... ??

Wrong way round:

**It is real world problems
which lead to practical applications
which lead to theoretical developments
(often with help from new technology).**

Applied linguistics and corpus linguistics.



On progress. Dictionaries.

- **Samuel Johnson 1750s**
- **James Murray 1880s on -**
- **John Sinclair 1980s on -**

Samuel Johnson, 1755.

**Data: collection of
citations**

but

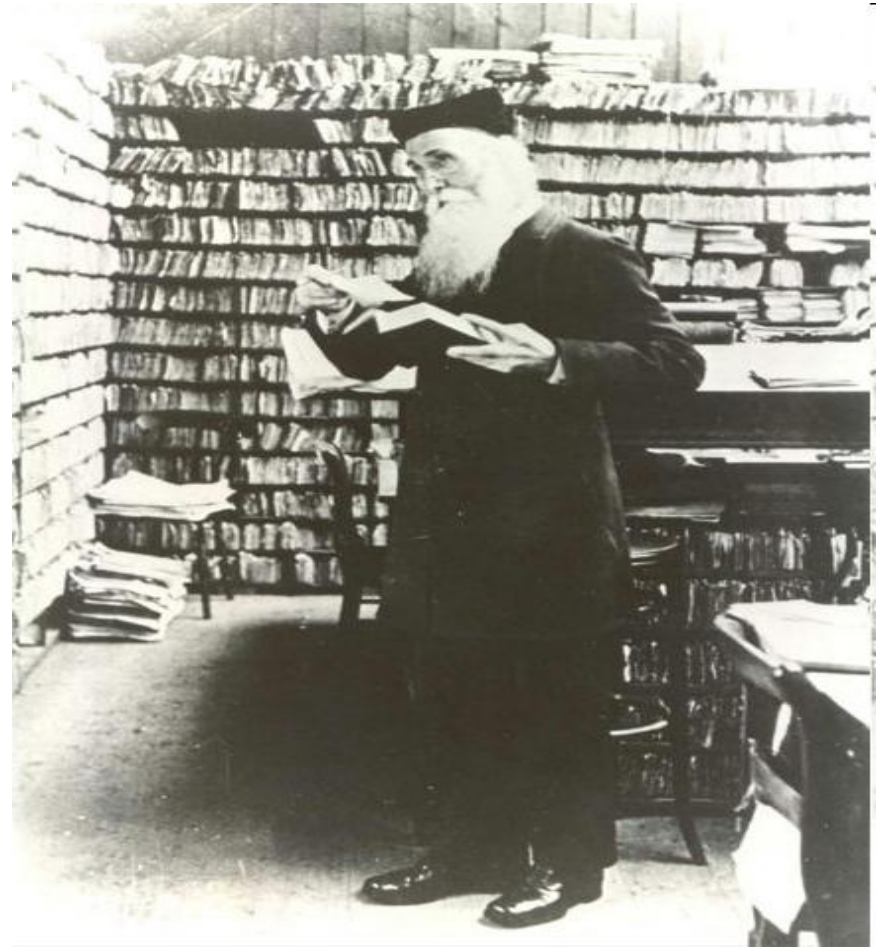
**highly prescriptive
view of data.**



James Murray, pre-1910.

**Data: collection of
citations**

**but
still very literary
sources of data.**

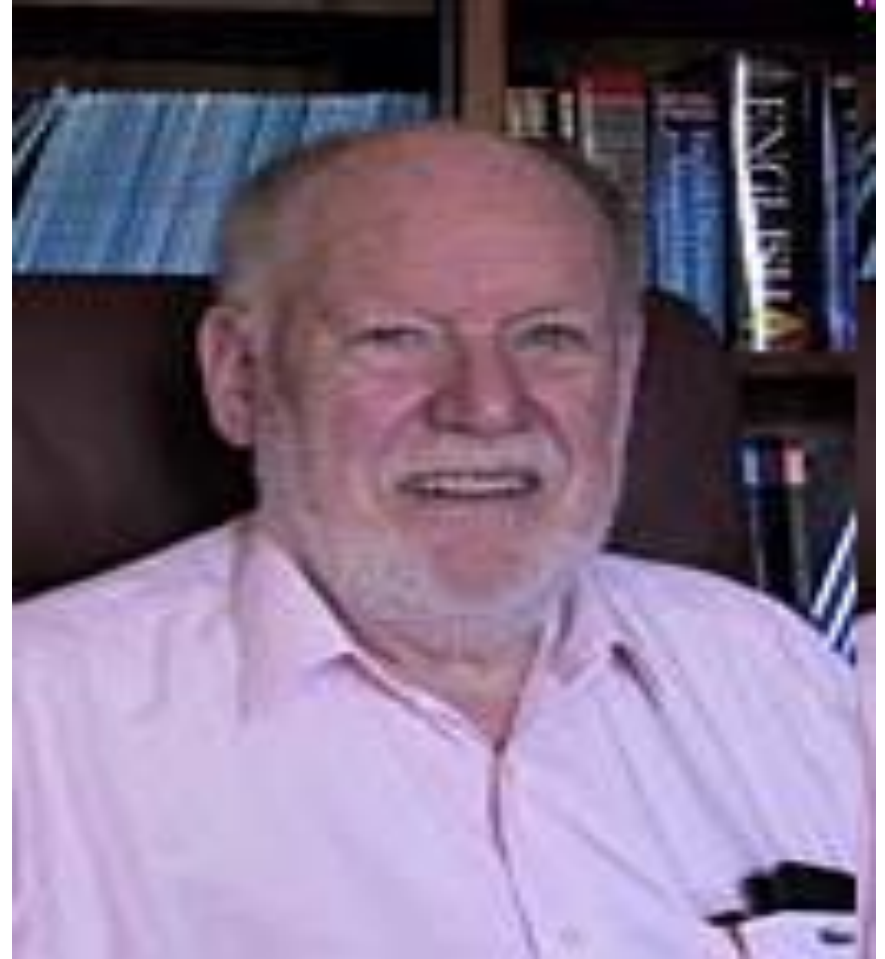


John Sinclair, ca 2005.

**Data: computer-
readable corpora**

but

**still problems with
balanced text
collections.**



On visualization.

John Sinclair (1991)

"Language looks rather different when you look at a lot of it at once."

Visualization of parallel cases.

variation in sequence, span and word-form

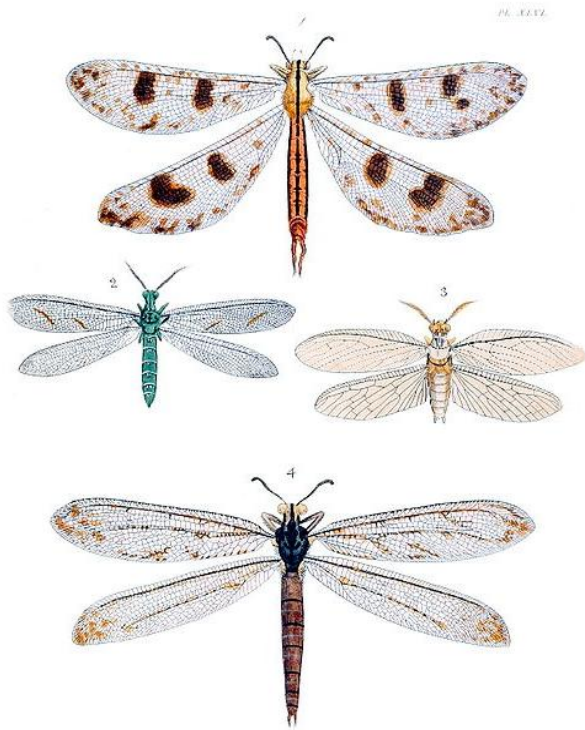
satis* <<5>> conclu

hardly a satisfactory conclusion
very satisfied to have concluded as it did
intense satisfaction at this conclusion
an artistically satisfying climax and conclusion

I reach that conclusion with no satisfaction
a conclusion very much to their satisfaction
these conclusions are less than satisfactory
concluded that the offer was unsatisfactory

Data from BNCweb, Hoffmann et al.

Visualization of parallel cases.



variation in sequence, span and word-form

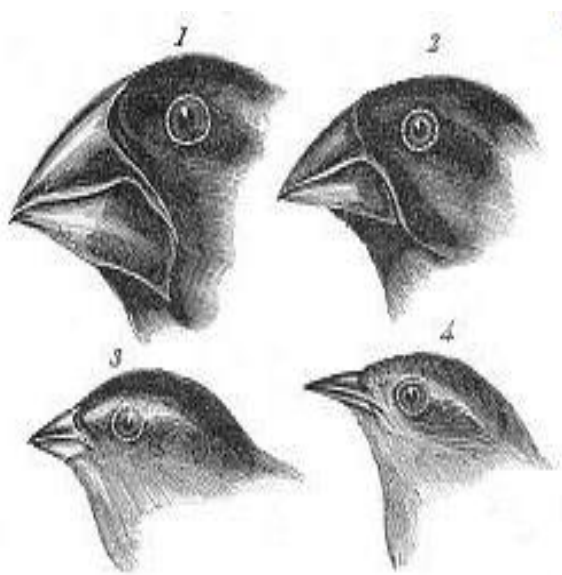
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Visualization of parallel cases.



1. Geospiza magnirostris
3. Geospiza parvula

2. Geospiza fortis
4. Certhidea olivacea

Finches from Galapagos Archipelago

variation in sequence, span and word-form

satis* <<5>> conclu

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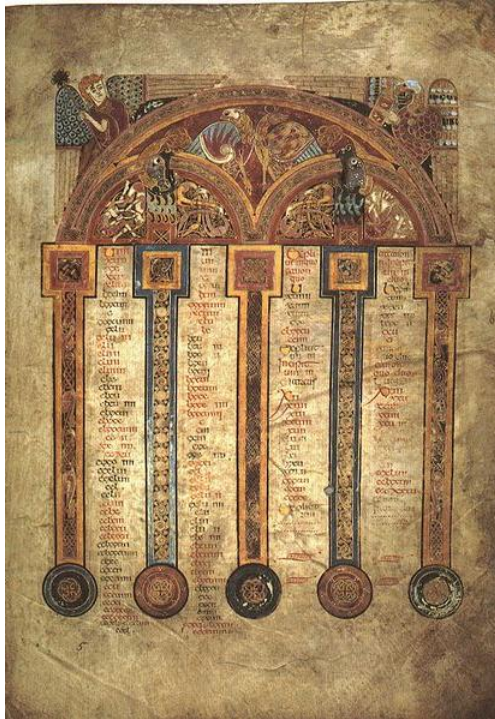
On variation.

**"The whole of linguistics is an attempt
to control variation."**

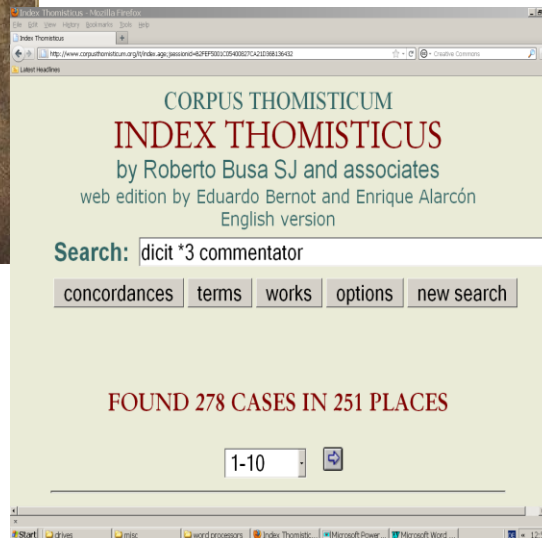
Pieter A M Seuren (ca 1969, over coffee).

Text analysis ... technology ... theory ...

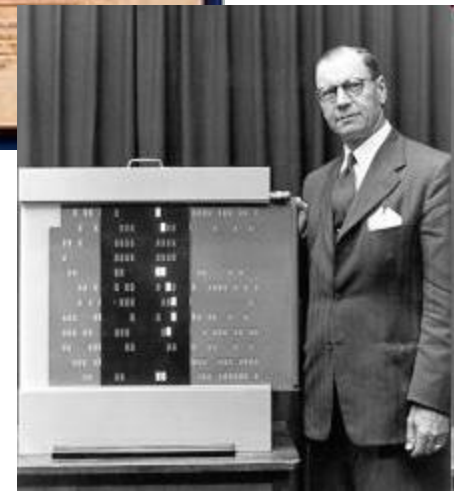
**Eusebius' Canon
Tables ca 300 AD**



**Busa's Concordance
1949-.**



**Cruden's
Concordance
1737**



**Luhn's KWIC index
1940s-50s**

All these approaches to semantic analysis ...

were analysing texts for practical reasons

religious textual exegesis, dictionary making, information retrieval

and were using the latest ideas about

textual comparison, visualization / pattern recognition, technology.

By the 1990s, this combination had led to major progress in semantic theory.

3. On curricula

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**... and on the lack of curricular
planning.**

The medieval curriculum.

The Trivium: the word.

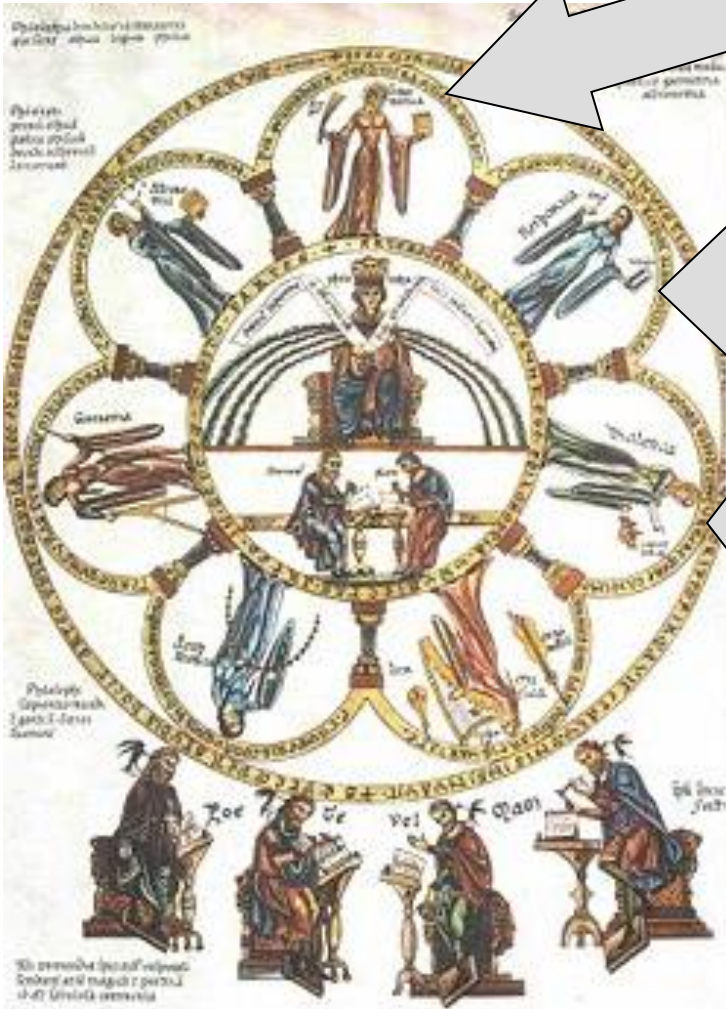
The Quadrivium: the world.

Basil B Bernstein (1996) Thoughts on the trivium and quadrivium. *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity*. Taylor & Francis.

grammar

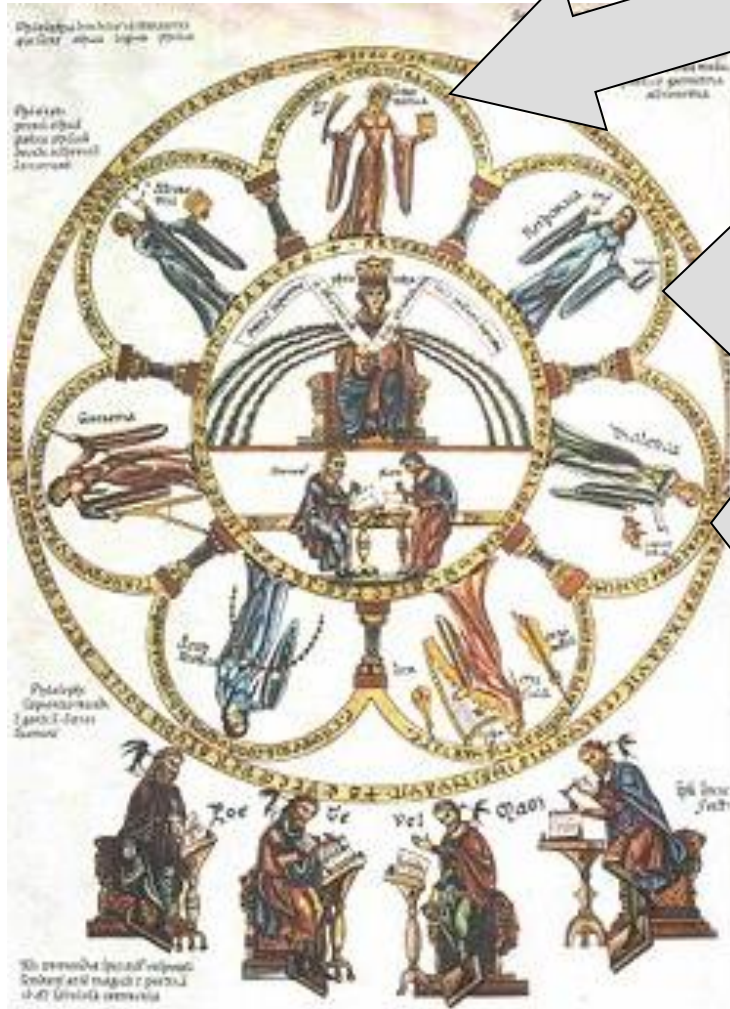
rhetoric

dialectic (logic)



The seven liberal arts.

**From the Hortus deliciarum of
Herrad von Landsberg ca. 1180.**

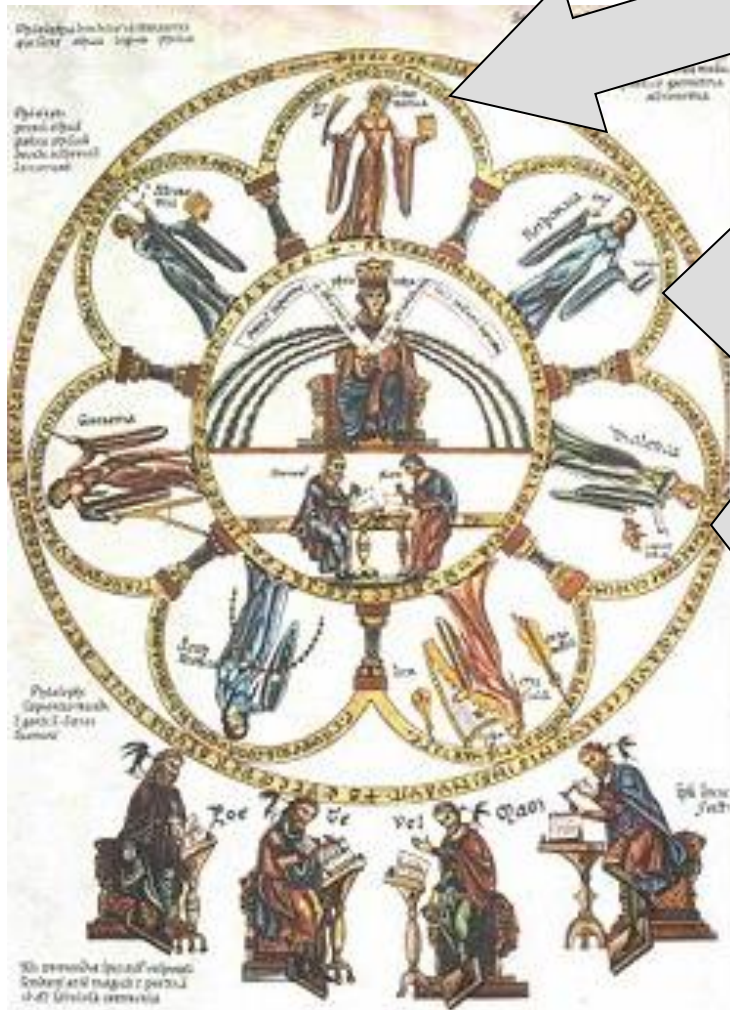


**forms of
language**

rhetoric

dialectic (logic)

**uses of
language**



**grammatical
competence**

rhetoric

dialectic (logic)

**communicative
competence**

astronomy

geometry

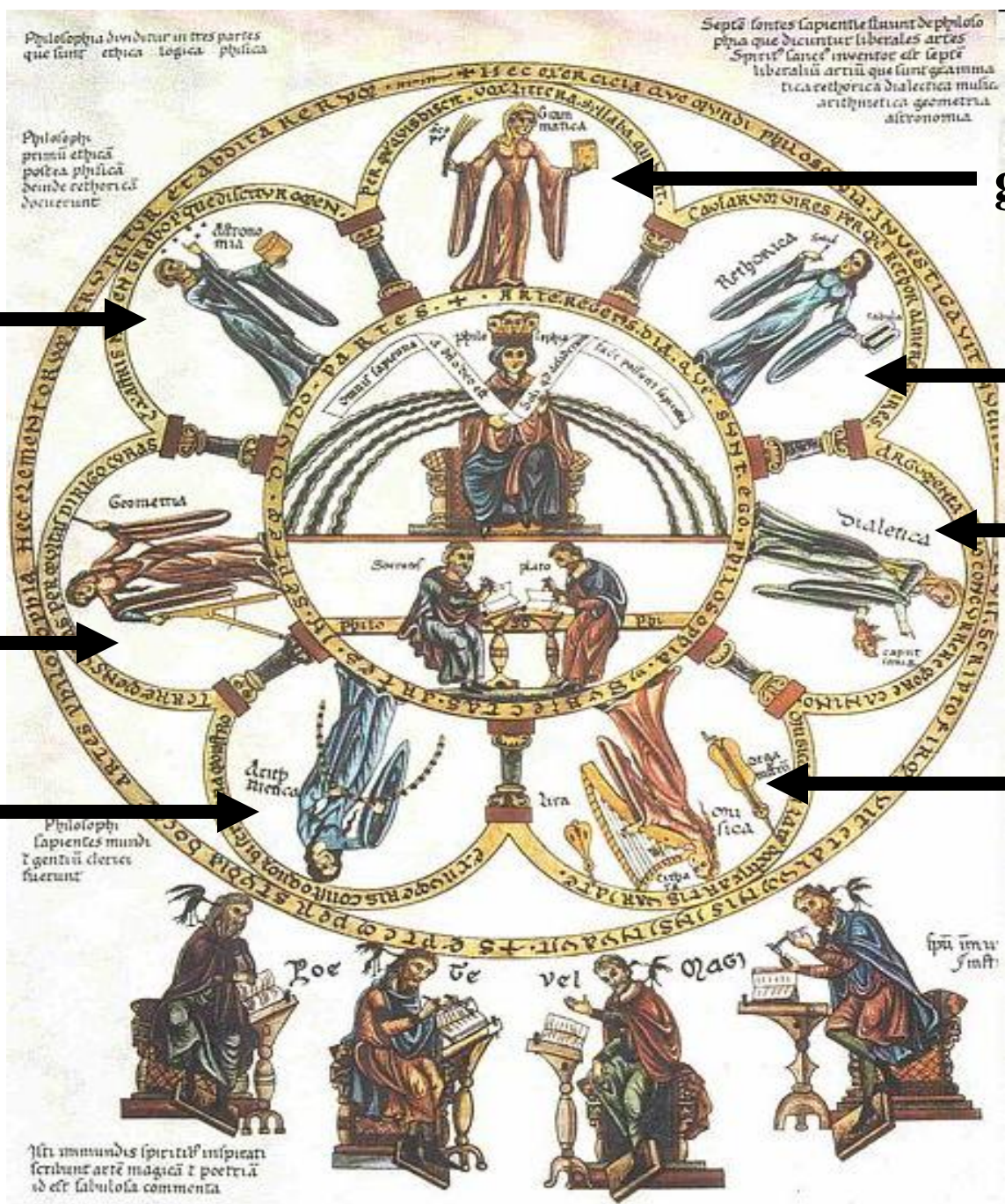
arithmetic

grammar

rhetoric

dialectic

music



[illegible]

A circular medieval manuscript illustration. At the top, a crowned figure representing Philosophy sits on a throne, holding two crossed banners. The left banner reads "Omnia sapientia a domino est" and the right banner reads "Soli qd scilicet facit possunt sapientia". Below her, two figures, labeled "Socrates" and "Plato", are seated at a desk, writing. The entire scene is enclosed in a circular border containing Latin text.

The Trivium and the Quadrivium.

The content and sequence of education.

1. First the WORD, the inner:

Grammar, logic and rhetoric.

Principles of language and mind.

The Trivium and the Quadrivium.

The content and sequence of education.

1. First the WORD, the inner:

Grammar, logic and rhetoric.

Principles of language and mind.

2. Then the WORLD, the outer:

Music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy.

Applications in the material world.

The Trivium and the Quadrivium.

The content and sequence of education.

1. First linguistics.

2. Then everything else ...



Curricula: ideal types

**classical
humanist**

**knowledge-
centred**

elitist?

progressivist

**student-
centred**

romantic?

technocratic

**skills-
centred**

measurable?

reconstructionist

**society-
centred**

democratic?

The "curricular standards" model

- **interventionist**
- **centralized**
- **visible pedagogy**
- **explicit goals**
- **strong classification (subject boundaries)**
- **strong framing (sequence, pace)**
- **shift of authority away from universities**
- **knowledge no longer an end in itself**

Basil B Bernstein (1971) The classification and framing of educational knowledge. In M F D Young ed *Knowledge and Control*. Collier-Macmillan.

Another model ...

none of these ideas are new ...

**Decide what general areas students should
learn to analyse ...**

- **society**
- **aesthetics**
- **technology**
- **rationality**
- **plus whatever else you think is relevant**

Denis Lawton (1983) *Curriculum Studies and Educational Planning*. Hodder & Stoughton.

Matrix planning ...

	linguistic study e.g. ...	literary study e.g. ...	language study e.g. ...
society			
aesthetics	Fill in your own gaps. But make a coherent whole.		
technology			
rationality			
etc			

Matrix planning ... just examples ...

	linguistic study	literary study	language study
society	sociology of language in UK		
aesthetics	quantitative stylistics of literary texts		
technology	corpus linguistics digital humanities		
rationality	in/deduction basic statistics		
etc			

Matrix planning ... just examples ...

	linguistic study	literary study	language study
society	sociology of language in UK		accents, dialects text-types
aesthetics	quantitative stylistics of literary texts		poems, songs, etc fiction/non-fiction
technology	corpus linguistics digital humanities		computer mediated communication
rationality	in/deduction basic statistics		essay planning argument structure
etc			

Matrix planning ... just examples ...

	linguistic study	literary study	language study
society	sociology of language in UK	Gothic novel Lost generation	accents, dialects text-types
aesthetics	quantitative stylistics of literary texts	everything??	poems, songs, etc fiction/non-fiction
technology	corpus linguistics digital humanities	printed texts film adaptations hypertext	computer mediated communication
rationality	in/deduction basic statistics	objective text vs subjective reader reception	essay planning argument structure
etc			

On empiricism:

New forms of empiricism arise:

testable statements

Chomsky

ethnographic fieldwork

Labov

corpus analysis

Sinclair

and so on ...

**Technology changes what it is possible to
observe ...**

The "digital humanities".

The most famous Scottish empiricist.



David Hume (1711–76)

1748:

*An Enquiry Concerning
Human Understanding.*

Hume (1748).

When we read a book, we should ask:

**"Does it contain any abstract reasoning
concerning quantity or number?"**

No ...

Hume (1748).

When we read a book, we should ask:

"Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?"

No ...

"Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?"

No ...

Hume (1748).

When we read a book, we should ask:

"Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?"

No ...

"Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?"

No ...

"Commit it then to the **flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."**

So, on transferable skills ...

... principles of

empiricism and rationalism

(e.g. from Hume and Popper).

That should be sufficient ...

**Thank you
for your attention!**



bye bye



**drinks and
nibbles**

**anglistik
essecke**



 **Universität Trier**