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## Jim McCawley: Scholar, Teacher, Salikoko S. Mufwene Inspiration

Jim was the Andrew MacLeish Distinguished Service Professor of Linguistics and East Asian Languages and Civilizations, at the University of Chicago, when he died—a massive heart attack having brought his life to an abrupt end on 10 April 1999.

He was born 30 March 1938, in Glasgow, Scotland, the son of James Q. McCawley, a journalist, and Monica Maud Bateman McCawley, a physician. He was almost 6 when his family immigrated to the United States and settled in Chicago in 1944. He then bore the birth name James Latrobe Quillan McCawley, “in honor of Benjamin Latrobe, a distinguished architect and engineer in the family and architect of the American White House” (Goldsmith and Sadock 1999, 257). He changed it to *James David McCawley* at the age of 21, when he became a naturalized American citizen.

Jim enrolled as an undergraduate student at the University of Chicago in 1954, earned an MS in mathematics in 1958, and came one course short of a BS in biology in 1961. He spent a year in Münster, Germany (1959–1960), where he attended classes at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität. In the summer of 1961, he attended the Linguistic Institute (of the Linguistic Society of America) at the University of Texas. The following autumn, he enrolled in the first PhD class in linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he would earn his PhD in 1965, having studied with Noam Chomsky, Morris Halle, Roman Jakobson, Edward Klima, Hu Matthews, and Paul Postal. His dissertation was titled “The Accentual System of Modern Standard Japanese” (published by Mouton in 1968 as *The Phonological Component of a Grammar of Japanese*; see “Publications by Jim McCawley” in this volume).

This biography is a revised version of Mufwene 2001. I am grateful to Eric Hamp for comments on the draft of that earlier version and to Elaine J. Francis, Larry Horn, and Haj Ross for feedback on the draft of this one. I am alone responsible for any inaccuracies it may contain.

The conditions of his hiring at the University of Chicago in 1964—namely, that he was to teach transformational syntax in addition to generative phonology—led Jim to train himself in syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. In collaboration with fellow MIT graduates George Lakoff and John Robert (Haj) Ross, he developed the Generative Semantics approach (see below), which was very influential in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although this research program had crested by the late 1970s, its mark on Jim's own brand of syntax and semantics, which he would resist identifying by any name, was embodied in both *Everything That Linguists Have Always Wanted to Know about Logic—but Were Ashamed to Ask* (1981, revised 1993) and *The Syntactic Phenomena of English* (1988, revised 1998). Throughout his career, he distinguished himself as a leading authority in phonology, syntax, semantics, lexicology/lexicography, and other areas, such as philosophy of language and philosophy of science. He was one of the most eclectic and encyclopedic linguists of his time, and indeed of the twentieth century. He was highly regarded even among those who did not practice his brand of linguistics.

Jim argued that semantics played a significant role in determining syntactic structures. According to him, an adequate representation of meaning entails not only breaking the meanings of words into smaller semantic features but also using notions from predicate calculus and intensional logic. He used logical tools such as quantifier scope and possible-world semantics to shed light on a wide range of linguistic facts. Thus, he offered an explanation for why sentences such as *The boys did not like all the girls* and *All the girls were not liked by the boys* are not necessarily synonymous (namely, the quantifier and the negator do not have scope over the same constituents in each sentence). By the same token, he showed that it is possible to derive passive sentences from active deep structures in a transformational framework of syntax, without deriving the above pair from exactly the same deep structure. His wonderfully rich logic book continues to instruct and inspire new generations of semanticists.

When reading Jim's list of publications, one is struck by how many of his papers have been reprinted and translated into other languages, reflecting the extent of his influence on the development of generative linguistics and philosophy of language. Because he published generously, even in places where one wouldn't think to search for linguistics (e.g., *Playboy* and *Liberty* magazines) and in professional anthologies and journals with limited circulation in the West, it is a blessing for historiographers that he republished numerous essays, typically revised and/or annotated, in *Grammar and Meaning* (1973), *Adverbs, Vowels, and Other Objects of Wonder* (1979), and *Thirty Million Theories of Grammar* (1982). Most of these republished papers are classics that shaped not only his approach to syntactic analysis but also the kinds of issues addressed by linguists today: for instance, levels of representation, tests for

constituent structure, coordinate structures, deep and surface structure constraints, negation and polarity, presupposition, implicature, illocution, ellipsis, and anaphora.

Jim wrote *Everything That Linguists Have Always Wanted to Know about Logic* . . . largely to liberate linguistics from a philosophical tradition that underrepresented important semantic distinctions so relevant to linguistic analysis, such as distinctions among the various universal quantifiers (e.g., *all*, *every*, *each*, *many*). On the other hand, he used to advantage some distinctions already established in logic (such as possible worlds) that shed light on linguistic representations. Perhaps to avoid the abstractness that was partly responsible for driving Generative Semantics under, Jim shifted to a practice of syntax that showed less and less of the abstract semantic structures and focused instead on many syntactic phenomena that deserve articulating (more) explicitly. He pointed out clearly what then-current approaches to syntax accounted for and what they left unexplained. *The Syntactic Phenomena of English* is the compendium of this keen flair for interesting data and outstanding perception for problematic cases and thorny issues. It is marked by an impressive sense of modesty, which clearly articulates the limits of Jim's own understanding of the facts. The same curiosity about interesting facts is evidenced in *A Linguistic Flea Circus* (first circulated in 1991), a collection of attested linguistic examples that Jim updated annually and shared with colleagues and students. Based mostly on English, but increasingly on Spanish, and drawing richly from broadcasts and journalism, it reflects his commitment to (participant) observation as a data collection technique and his reliance on natural linguistic behavior in addition to elicited data.

When he died, Jim was about to complete a book manuscript on the philosophy of science as it applies to the development of linguistics as a discipline, a subject he had taught for several years. The history of linguistics was also one of his interests, and the work of Otto Jespersen fascinated him. He published numerous discussions on Jespersen's approach to the study of language, and he wrote the introduction to a reprint of Jespersen's *Analytic Syntax* (1984) and an introduction and index for a reprint of his *Philosophy of Grammar* (1992). This fascination with Jespersen's work, especially regarding his attention to details and to perplexing and recalcitrant data, should not be surprising to those familiar with Jim's own scholarship. According to Larry Horn (pers. comm., 2004), "it might be said that Jim's standing with respect to his generation of linguists is comparable to Jespersen's within his."

Overall, Jim spoke and wrote knowledgeably about many other earlier linguists. One can only wish now that he had lived long enough to publish his own history of the development of linguistics, which would surely include comparison with the evolution of other disciplines, on which he was equally well versed. Jim's other interests included music (on which Yoko Sugioka's 1999 obituary is informative) and cuisine. He composed a piece that was performed at a concert of linguist-composers at the

1997 annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, held in Chicago. He published *The Eater's Guide to Chinese Characters* (1984), a glossary of characters that helps diners order meals in a more informed way than by just reading the English menu, as they reveal the authentic Chinese descriptions of the dishes. Eric Hamp (pers. comm., 2000) reminds me of his parties: St. Cecilia's Day, at which guests had to perform, sing in chorus, or turn music pages, etc.; Hangul Day, which is, according to Jim, "the only national holiday devoted just to linguistics"; and Bastille Day, which featured potluck cuisine from any country that has thrown off French rule.

Jim's career was marked by several nondegree honors and distinctions. He was invited to teach repeatedly at the institutes of the Linguistic Society of America: at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1968), the University of Hawaii (1977), the University of New Mexico (1980), the University of Maryland (1982), Georgetown University (1985), and the University of Arizona (1989). He was scheduled to teach again at the LSA institute at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the summer of 1999. He also taught as a visiting professor, typically during the North American summer months, at numerous other universities, including the University of Michigan (1970), the University of California at Santa Cruz (1971), the Australian National University (1973), the University of Illinois at Chicago (1978), the University of Delhi (1985), and National Tsing Hua University (in Taiwan, 1994). He was scheduled to teach at Riga (Latvia) in 1999.

Among the honors that Jim received in his academic life were membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1983–death), an honorary doctorate from the University of Göteborg (1991), the presidency of the Linguistic Society of America (1996), and two festschrifts celebrating his accomplishments: *Studies out in Left Field: Defamatory Essays Presented to James D. McCawley on the Occasion of His 33rd or 34th Birthday* (Zwicky et al. 1971) and *The Joy of Grammar* (Brentari, Larson, and MacLeod 1992). The essays included in both collections come close to representing the breadth of Jim's intellectual interests. The first volume, which is light-spirited (including titles such as "A Note on One's Privates" and "Well Donne" by pseudonymous authors, respectively P. R. N. Tic Douloureux and Forthcoming Larynx-Horn), captures the ambience of the times when generative semanticists disputed established positions on syntax and semantics. Those were also the times when Jim did not hesitate to contribute an equally formative essay on the semantics of verbs for lovemaking to *Playboy* magazine, nor, as I was reminded by Eric Hamp (pers. comm., 2000) "to include in his serious publications references or linguistic examples alluding to or naming, never with rancor or bad taste but always with wit, matters political or naughty viewed through Jim McCawley's liberated lens."

Politically, Jim was a Libertarian. Under this ticket, he ran twice or so, without success, for a position on the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. This

experience was in sharp contrast with his academic life, where he served on the Executive Committee of the Linguistic Society of America (1978–80) and in several capacities on the editorial boards of *Language* (1969–72, 1988–90), *Linguistic Inquiry* (1970–75), *Foundations of Language* (1974–76), *Papers in Japanese Semantics* (1972–death), *Linguistics* (1979–92), *Journal of Semantics* (1981–death), *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* (1983–86), *Revista Argentina de lingüística* (1985–death), and *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* (1991–death). His wisdom and expertise were indeed very much in demand. As busy as he was, he spared time to read voraciously, devouring contemporary publications and works in progress and commenting on many of them. According to John Lawler (2003, 616), “Jim was a very gregarious person” even in this respect; “his line was busy half the night, as he talked to people all over the world and in his local community.” (Jim operated on a peculiar circadian cycle, going to bed in the early hours of the morning and waking up at midday.) He was indeed very generous in sharing his insights and knowledge on issues in linguistics and science in general. He wrote insightful reviews of many books, especially the most central and/or influential ones in the field. I remain impressed by the length—over 100 pages—of his 1975 review article on Noam Chomsky’s *Studies on Semantics in Generative Grammar*.

Jim also distinguished himself by an encyclopedic knowledge of the scholarly history of several topics and could cite wide-ranging and obscure references bearing on them. Rare were the occasions when a colleague was better informed on a current topic in the field. While appreciating the diversity of approaches in syntax and semantics in particular, he did not abandon his own analytical framework but constantly adapted it with an inspiring eclecticism. He learned much from the large number of professional meetings he attended and commented accurately on the contents of presentations he had attended months or years earlier. His elephant-like memory for names of people and places was also unequalled, a capacity that helped him remember restaurant and street names all over the world, not to mention who he had been there with. Jim had a tremendous sense of detail, accuracy, and comprehensiveness, which are well reflected in his publications. Those of us who interacted on a more regular basis with him at the University of Chicago will remember how well he knew the city, being current on the place and time of most cultural events and ready to update his directory of ethnic restaurants every year. This is very impressive for a person who did not own or drive a car and typically got around either on his bicycle (even during the coldest Chicago winters) or by mass transit. Yes, those of us who attended the University of Chicago and/or had him as a colleague will remember him, among other things, not only for his preeminent academic stature, his enthusiasm for new ideas, and the warmth of his personality but also for his preferred mode of transportation and, in the 1960s and 1970s, his very interesting somewhat hippie look. I can’t forget his bulging shirt pocket overfilled with a

notebook and a row of pencils and pens, which he occasionally pulled out to note down something he did not want to forget from our discussions. Who would not appreciate full-time field research “at home” after working with such an inspiring teacher!

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