

PREFACE

The Conference on Language Universals was held at Gould House, Dobbs Ferry, New York, April 13-15, 1961, under the sponsorship of the Linguistics and Psychology Committee of the Social Science Research Council with a grant from the National Science Foundation. Although the topic of universals of language was one of the first to receive interdisciplinary interest from linguists and psychologists in the course of collaboration under the aegis of the S.S.R.C. Committee, the immediate stimulus for the Conference came during the academic year 1958-1959 from Joseph B. Casagrande, at that time a staff member of the Council. He suggested that the three members of the Committee who were resident Fellows that year at the Ford Center for Advanced Studies at Stanford, California — Joseph H. Greenberg, James J. Jenkins, and Charles E. Osgood — prepare a memorandum on the subject of universals in language which might serve as a basis for theoretical investigation in this area, and for the planning of a Conference. This document, "Memorandum Concerning Language Universals," was subsequently distributed in slightly revised form to those invited to the Conference and was itself one of the subjects of discussion at the meeting. It is printed on page xv of this book.

The original plan for papers for the Conference was based on a cross-cutting division of the field of universals into those of phonology, grammar, and semantics on the one hand, and synchronic and diachronic on the other. While it was realized that such a scheme might cause neglect of topics which did not readily fit into such a pattern of organization, it was felt that in view of the exploratory nature of the meeting no great harm would re-

sult. Moreover, no viable alternative had presented itself. As it turned out, various modifications in individual instances largely obscured this ground plan, and this was perhaps just as well. In addition to these invited papers, prepared and circulated in advance, final oral summaries from the viewpoints of linguistics, cultural anthropology, and psychology were presented by Roman Jakobson, Joseph B. Casagrande, and Charles E. Osgood, respectively. These summaries, as subsequently edited by the authors, appear as the three final chapters of this book.

The results of the Conference as reported in this book do not contain either verbatim or edited reports of the highly stimulating and productive discussions which took place. However, the recordings of these discussions and subsequent written comments and criticisms were circulated and have been incorporated in essential ways.

In addition to individual bibliographies, a general bibliography of language universals has been compiled as the final section of this work. This bibliography is obviously not exhaustive. It necessarily overlaps to some extent with bibliographies of the individual chapters but contains many items not cited elsewhere in the present work. I have sought to include specific proposals regarding universals, discussions of the nature of universals, typological analyses from which universals might be derived through empirical investigation, and, in a few cases, analytical discussions which seem suggestive from this point of view. I am aware of the looseness of these criteria. The present brief compilation is intended merely as a general orientation for the non-professional to the problems discussed in the book. I am grateful to Uriel Weinreich for advice and assistance in its preparation.

I wish to thank all those who participated so enthusiastically and effectively in the work of the Conference. A complete list of participants is included on page ix of this book. In particular, I wish to thank Dr. Francis H. Palmer of the S.S.R.C. staff, to whom fell the task of final preparation of the meeting and the further responsibilities arising from it including aid and advice in the editing of this volume.

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