

Manfred Krifka and Hans-Martin Gärtner

Editorial

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Theoretical Linguistics (TL) was launched in 1974 by Helmut Schnelle, then professor of linguistics at Technical University Berlin. On the diagnosis that “linguistics was ripe for a theory in the mathematical and formal sense,” TL was to serve as direct home to the emerging field of theoretical linguistics, tasked with the “development [...] discussion and analysis of the form, scope and applicability of such theories” (Schnelle 1974, 2001). Particularly important at the time were the approaches to syntax by Chomsky and semantics by Montague, which could be seen as first culminations of an ongoing cross-fertilization between logic, philosophy of language, and linguistics. A theory of communication and language use was equally beginning to take shape with Searle’s work on speech acts as focal point.

One of Schnelle’s early concerns was the “meta-linguistic sophistication” required of work in theoretical linguistics, due to the way different conceptualizations of language, grammar, formal system, and theory were meant to figure in accounts of each other (cf. Schnelle 1973). Debates in the philosophy of science – for example regarding axiomatization and the statement view of theories as well as the status of theoretical terms – played a significant role here too. Gradually it became clear, though, that particular disciplines were posing *sui generis* challenges to be dealt with individually (cf. Wunderlich 1976).

The surge of theoretical linguistics responsible for the founding of TL can further be traced through the peculiar institutional rivalries between the “traditional” philologies and their new neighbors from philosophy, computer science, and mathematics, as well as cognitive science and neurosciences. And, locally, it was sustained by the special enthusiasm and competence of Berlin linguists such as Manfred Bierwisch, Hans-Heinrich Lieb, and Dieter Wunderlich, to name just three of the most important ones (cf. Ballmer 1985). A scholar deserving special mention is Yehoshua Bar-Hillel, mentor, collaborator, and friend of Helmut Schnelle’s, who had made original publications in all of the relevant tributary subfields. His partiality to the cause was clearly reflected in his highlighting the “long overdue adjective ‘theoretical’” in the title of John Lyons’ pioneering introduction (Bar-Hillel 1969; cf. Lyons 1991).

Now, this is not the place to go into detail about the enormous lasting success of TL under Helmut Schnelle’s editorship. A mere glance at the tables of contents, which we invite our readers to take, will bear out such unqualified praise. In his final editorial in 2001, Schnelle recognized a trend toward “contributions [that] were not

strictly theoretical but rather systematically empirical in clarifying specific linguistic phenomena in such a way that theories might refer to them,” a sign of shifting grounds.

When Helmut Schnelle signaled his wish to step down as an editor after his retirement in 1997, the landscape of outlets for theoretical linguistic work had decidedly changed. Linguistic research flourished in many parts of the world, new theoretical approaches had been developed, new empirical tools for gathering evidence were emerging, and new journals with a theoretical bend but more specialized focus had established themselves, such as *Linguistics and Philosophy* and *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*. At the same time, the danger of theoretical parochialism and lack of in-depth discussion was increasing.

When Ursula Kleinhenz as representative of the publisher De Gruyter approached Manfred Krifka, then professor for semantics at the University of Texas at Austin, he suggested a format that should foster thorough discussion of linguistic contributions with potential significance for linguistic theories, in the way established by the journal *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* since 1978, which itself was inspired by the format of *Current Anthropology* since 1959. Further details were developed with Hans-Martin Gärtner, who joined Krifka as editor at the Centre for General Linguistics (ZAS) in Berlin. For the smaller scale and greater focus of *Theoretical Linguistics*, a format for each volume with one target article, about five discussion papers, and a reply by the author(s) of the target article, suggested itself. This necessitated the addition of *An Open Peer Review Journal* to the title. The new format started with a contribution by John A. Hawkins on OV/VO asymmetries and five commentaries in the second issue of 2002. As of now, 50 target articles with their commentaries have been published, and it goes without saying that TL is greatly indebted to everyone participating in these debates, whether as target author, commentator, or issue editor.

Likewise, we are very grateful for continuing support by the members of the TL editorial board, the late Edit Doron, Bart Geurts, Katalin É. Kiss, Scott Myers, Maria Polinsky, Hans Uszkoreit, and Stephen M. Wechsler. Thanks are also due to a large number of researchers helping out with advice and reviews, namely, Luis Alonso-Ovalle, Elena Anagnostopoulou, Peter beim Graben, Gábor Berend, Hans Broekhuis, San Duanmu, Atle Grønn, Martin Haspelmath, Stefan Hinterwimmer, László Kálmán, Mikhail Kissine, Udo Klein, Wolfgang Klein, Gregory Kobele, Andrew Koontz-Garboden, Clemens Mayr, Louise McNally, Krzysztof Migdalski, Christopher Piñón, Halldór Sigurðsson, Antonella Sorace, Peter Svenonius, Miklós Törkenczy, Ralf Vogel, Thomas Weskott, Marta Wierzba, and Marzena Żygis. And last but not least, major thanks go to the TL production editors Monika Wendland and Esther Markus.

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